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FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS

By Heman White Chaplin

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I.

Captain Philo's sail-loft was a pleasant place to sit in, and it was much frequented. At one end was a wide, sliding door, that opened on the water, and through it you saw the little harbor and the low, glistening sand-

bar at its entrance, and whitecaps in the sea beyond, and shining sails. At the other end another wide door led, by a gently descending cleated platform, to the ground.

It was a pleasant place to rest and refresh the mind in, whether you chose to look in or out. You could rock in the hair-cloth chair by the water door, and join in conversation with more active persons mending seines upon the wharf; or you could dangle your heels from the work-bench, and listen to stories and debates inside, and look on Captain Philo sewing upon a mainsail.

It was a summer afternoon: warm under the silver poplars, hot in the store, and hotter in the open street; but in the sail-loft it was cool.

"More than once," Captain Bennett was remarking from the rocking-chair, while his prunella shoes went up and down,—“more than once I've wished that I could freight this loft to Calcutta on speculation, and let it out, so much a head, for so long a time, to set in and cool off.”

"How about them porious water-jars they hev there?" asked Uncle Silas, who had never sailed beyond Cape Pogue; "how do they work?"

"Well," said the captain, "they 're so-so. But you set up this loft, both doors slid open, air drawing through and all, right on Calcutta main street, or what they call the Maiden's Esplanade, and fit it up with settees like a conference-meeting, and advertise, and you could let out chances to set for twenty cents an hour."

"You 'd hev to hev a man to take tickets, to the door," said Uncle Silas, who had been looking for an easy job for forty years.

"That's Si all over." said Captain Bennett, with a wink; "that berth would be just his size."

"Well," said Uncle Silas, faintly smiling, "'t is no use rubbin' the fur the wrong way; stroke the world from head to tail is my rule."

"Speaking of folks being easy," said Captain Bennett, "it seems there 's quite a little story about David Prince's voyage on the 'Viola.'" "I thought he went off whaling rather in a hurry," said Captain Philo, "and if it had been 'most anybody else, I should have thought there was something up."

"It seems," said Captain Bennett, "it was like this: You know, Delia was n't much over ten years old when her mother died, along a piece after her father, and she come to live with us. And you know how she was almost like one of the family. Well, about eight years ago, when she 'd got to be towards nineteen, it was then that David first set out to shine up to her; and when he begun to come home from singing-school with her that winter, and got to coming to the house quite often the next spring along, I begun to feel a little shaky. Finally, one Sunday afternoon I was sitting out on the porch and she was singing hymns inside,—you know she was always singing,—and I called to her to quit and come out, and sit down alongside of me, and says I,—“Delia, it can't be you 're thinking of taking up with David Prince?"

"Well, she flared a little, but finally says she:

"'Why should n't I, or anybody that has the chance, take David Prince?"

"'Well,' says I, 'I don't think you need to ask why; I should say that a smart girl wouldn't want more than to travel once along the Lower Road and see those two run-down houses,—one deserted, and the other, handy by, about as bad,—and the barn across the road, that was raised and boarded in over forty years ago, and never shingled, and stood so till it's all rotted and sunk in.'

"'What's that got to do with David?' says she.

"'It's got this to do with David,' says I, 'that his father and his Uncle Ezekiel and their father before 'em—good, kindly men—all seemed to settle, settle, somehow; and it was all to-morrow, and to-morrow, with 'em; 'and then I told Delia how they sold off their wood and then their land, piecemeal, all but the spot where the old buildings stand,—and that's worth nothing.

"'And that's the way,' says I, 'it 'll be with David when he gets over being a boy and settles down; it's in the blood; and I don't want to see you, Delia, keel-hauled there—'"

"'Like David's mother,—Prudence Frost, that was,'" said Uncle Silas; "originally she was a good, smart girl, and full of jingle; but finally she give up and come to it,—lef sweepin'-day out o' the almanic, washed dishes in cold water, and made up beds at bedtime; and when she ironed a shirt, jes' 's like's not she 'd iron a hoss-fly right into the bosom."

"'And lived a dog's life generally,'" said Captain Bennett. "So I laid the whole thing out to Delia, the best way I knew how.

"'Well,' says she, 'I know you mean my good, Captain Bennett,—but I shall take my chances.' And so she did. Well—"

"Speakin' o' the barn," said Uncle Silas, "do you remember that high shay that David's father hed? I was up to the Widow Pope's vendue the day he bid it off. He managed to spunk up so fur's to hitch the shafts under his team and fetch the vehicle home, and then he hed n't no place to put it up out o' the weather,—and so he druv it along under that big Bald'n apple-tree that used to stand by the pantry window, on the north side o' the house, and left it there, with the shafts clawin' down in the ground. Then the talk was, he was goin' to build him a sort of a little tabernacle for it before winter set in; and he hed down a load of lumber from Uncle Joe's mill and hed it dumped down alongside o' the shay. But the shay was n't never once hitched up, nor the tabernacle built; and the timber and the shay jes' set there, side by side, seein' who 'd speak first, for twenty year, to my cer-ting knowledge; and you go by there when it was blowin' fresh, and the old curtings would be flappin' in and out, black and white, till finally the whole arrangement sunk out o' sight. I guess there 's more or less wrack there now, 'f you sh'd go poke in the grass."

"It was thirty-one year ago, come October, that he bought the shay," said Captain Philo; "it was the fall I was cast away on the Tombstones, and lost every dollar I had. I remember it because the old man came down to the house of his own accord, when I got home, and let me have two hundred dollars. He 'd just been selling the West New Field; and when he 'd sold land and had money on hand, it was anybody's that wanted it. But what was it about David's going off so sudden on the 'Viola'?"

"Oh, yes, I forgot my errand," said Captain Bennett; "and now I 've got adrift in my story, and I shall have to

take an observation; let's see, where was I?"

"Delia allowed she 'd take her chances," said Uncle Silas.

"Oh, yes," said Captain Bennett. "Well, you know how it was when they got married: David fixed the old house up a little, and mother put in some furniture and things for her, and all went on first-rate awhile; and then you know how David begun to settle, settle, just the old way; could n't seem to keep up to the wind; appeared to carry a lee helm, somehow; and Delia begun to take in work and go out to work, and quit singing. She never said a word, even to my wife; but I could see 't it cut her a good deal—"

"But all this time," said Uncle Silas, "she 's kep' up smart,—allers hed a high crower's-feather 'n her bunnet, and kep' her little boys a-lookin' like nine-shillin' dolls."

"I should n't have ever called David lazy," said Captain Philo. "He could n't seem to make up his mind what to do next, that 's all; but get him going—you remember how he worked at Jason's fire; and I know of my own knowledge he was in the surf for sixteen hours, when that Norwegian bark was on the Bar."

"I think there's some folks," said Uncle Silas, "that their mind works all the time—runs a day gang and runs a night gang. You know how a hard sum 'll shake itself out in your head overnight; and I think it's the most natural thing that a man with a A No. I active mind always should feel sort of tired and not know what ails him. George, won't you jes' git up and hand me that pipe—you ain't doin' nothin'."

"However it was," said Captain Bennett, "Delia saw that he was drifting to leeward, and she was worried. Well, you know when the reformation set in, that winter, and run crowded houses,—one night in the West Church and the next in the other. One night David surprised his wife by going; and he set in a back seat, and come away and said nothing; and the same the next night; and the same for seven or eight nights right along. Finally, one night, they had a pretty searching sermon,—'*Choose ye this day,*' et cetera,—and I suppose the Deacon, here, was rather expecting David to rise for prayers; but, instead of that, as soon as Amen was said, he gets right up, and off he goes, and leaves Delia there, without saying a word to her or to anybody, and goes right up to Captain Westcott's house and agrees to ship. And glad enough Captain W. was to have him, and next day off he went. Now here he is, gone two years and over, and comes home night before last; his lay 'll figure out five hundred dollars; and the biggest thing is"—here the Captain brought down his heavy hand, for emphasis, on Uncle Silas's knee—"that Delia 's kept herself and the children, and never drawn one cent against the voyage; so they've got the whole clear, and they 've been up this morning early and traded for the Callender place, and they 're going to move in to-morrow. And I guess he means business now."

"But they don't git paid off till Monday," said Uncle Silas. "They 're all goin' up to town to be paid off then."

"Well, he moves in to-morrow, anyway," said Captain Bennett. "Monday night, I believe, he's going to pay down what he has, and take a deed, and give a mortgage back for the balance."

But Uncle Silas gravely shook his head.

"I can't indorse this runnin' in haste," he said. "I never, in all my experience, knew a man before to buy real estate without sort of goin' up street and talkin' it over, and comparin' notes 'round generally. Now, we could have given him points down here about the Callender place."

"Oh, he's made a good trade there," said Captain Bennett.

"That all may be," said Uncle Silas, "but it 's the principle, not the five cents, I 'm lookin' at. I should have hed more faith in his holdin' out if he hed n't jumped quite so quick. 'Slow bind, fast find,' I say."

Captain Bennett rose, and drew on a grass-cloth coat that showed his suspenders through.

"I must be on my winding way," he said. "But did you hear how close he came to never coming back? No? Well, it was like this: It was blowing a gale, and considerable sea on, one night when they were rounding Cape Horn on the home voyage, and she was pitching pretty bad, and David was out on the jib-boom taking in jib, and somehow she pitched with a jerk, so he lost his hold and went off, and, as he fell in the dark, naturally he struck out both hands, blind, like this; and he just happened to catch, by sheer accident, a gasket that was hanging from the jib-boom, and so he saved himself by a hair's breadth. And when he came up they thought it was his ghost."

"Well, I always make it a point to look on the bright side, without exception," said Uncle Silas; "nevertheless, I prophesy it won't be two years before he 'll have the place all eat up, and sold out under the mortgage. This jumpin' so quick,—looks as if he was sca't to trust himself for a day."

"Well, we shall see," said Captain Bennett; "time will tell."

There are many little farms along the New England sea-board, which the currents of life, diverted from ancient channels, have left one side, pleasant and homelike often, but of small money value. The Callender place was such a farm.

It lay a mile from the village, in a hamlet of half-a-dozen dwellings. There was a substantial house, with four large rooms below, besides an L kitchen, and above, two sunny chambers, each with a dormer and a gable window. From the front fence projected, for a hitching-post, a Minerva, carved from wood,—a figure-head washed up years before from the wreck of a brig with the bodies of the crew.

The house was on a little elevation, and looked across the road, near which it stood, and over a sloping field or two, to sea. From the windows you could count the sail in the North Channel, and look down the coast and follow with the eye the long, low curving line of shore until at Indian Point it vanished; or look up shore ten miles to where the coast-line ended in a bold, wooded headland, which seemed, by a perpetual mirage, to bear foliage so lofty as to show daylight through beneath the branches. At night you could see the flash of the revolving light on Windmill Rock, and the constant rays from the lightship on the Rips. So that by day or night you could never be lonesome, unless, perhaps, on some thick night, when you could see no light, and could only hear a grating knell from the bell-buoy, and could seem to see, through the white darkness, the waters washing over its swaying barrel.

There was a good-sized boarded barn, well shingled on the roof, with hay-mows, and with room for two or three cows and a horse and a wagon, and with wide doors "fore and aft," as the neighbors put it; through its big front door you could look out to sea. Then there were twenty acres of land, including a wood-lot which

could be thinned out every year to give one all his fire-wood, and what was cut would hardly be missed.

Such was the place which, on the death of the Widow Callender, had been offered for sale for eight hundred dollars. For months it had stood empty, stormed by all the sea-winds, lit up by the sun, when at last an unexpected buyer had turned up in David Prince.

It was a happy Sunday that he passed with his little family at the new home. They went all over the house again and again, and looked from every window, and planned where flower-frames should be put, to take the sun. Then, going out of doors, they inspected the revolving clothes-dryer, which David, with a seaman's instinct, had already rigged with four little sloops to sail about on the ends of the projecting arms, on Mondays, tacking after shirts and stockings. Then they went to the barn, and David showed how he was going to cover the sides with spruce shingles, so that he could have a warm place to work in in the winter. Then they went over the fields, and planned a garden for the next spring; and then they went down to the shore, and, where a little arm of the sea made in, David showed where he would haul up his dory, and would keep his boat, when he could afford to get one together: in the mean time he was going to fish on shares with Jacob Foster, who lived a few rods up the road. Then they all strolled back to the house, and dined on shore-birds shot on Saturday afternoon, and new potatoes and turnips which Jacob Foster had brought in.

After dinner, they all sat at the front windows, in the room which they were pleased to call the parlor, David holding on his knees the two oldest boys, delighted with the recovery of such a Sindbad of a father, while the third, still a little shy of him, stood by his mother. David told of the voyage, repeating, by request, full half-a-dozen times, the story of the night when he was snapped off the end of the jib-boom; to do which he had to set the boys down and stand, to make the swift, sudden clutch, with his eyes shut, at the towing rope; at which the boys screamed on every repetition.

After supper, David and his wife, leaving the children with orders to go to bed at the first flash from the Windmill, went to church.

They took the same back seat which they had the night that David shipped. There was much the same scene before them. There was bald-headed Deacon Luce, in his usual Damocles' seat exactly beneath the dangling chandelier, which children watched in morbid hope of a horror; there was the president of the Dorcas Society, a gray-haired woman who had navigated home a full-rigged ship from the Gold Coast; there were grave-faced men who, among them, could have charted half the globe. In the pulpit was the same old-fashioned, bookish man, who, having led his college class, had passed his life in this unknown parish, lost in delight, in his study, in the great Athenian's handling of the presumptuous Glaucon, or simply unfolding parables in his pulpit.

That former night came vividly back to Delia Prince. Through the opening hymn, in which she did not join; through the story of the feast in Simon's house, she was thinking of the time when David told her he had shipped, and she had made up her mind to save a home.

But in the second hymn she joined; and in her joy she forgot herself and sang,—as she had been used to sing when she was the leader of all the singing. In a moment they all knew that she was there.

*"Thus far the Lord hath led me on;
Thus far His power prolongs my days;
And every evening shall make known
Some fresh memorial of His grace."*

II.

"M. Isaacs" was over the door; Mr. Isaacs was within. Without, three golden balls were hanging, like apples of the Hesperides; within was an array of goods which the three balls had brought in.

Mr. Isaacs was walking to and fro behind the counter, and briskly rubbing his hands.

"My good wife Sarah," he said, with a strong Semitic accent, "those sudden, raw east winds! I am so frozen as if I was enjoying myself upon the skating-rink,—and here it is the summer. Where is that long spring overcoat that German man hypotecated with us last evening? Between the saddle and the gold-lace uniform, you say?"

And taking it down, by means of a long, hooked pole, he put it on. It covered his ears and swept the ground: "It make me look like Aaron in those pictures," he said.

It would have been a grasping disposition that could not be suited with something from out Mr. Isaacs's stock. It would have been hard to name a faculty of the human soul or a member of the human body to which it could not lend aid and comfort. One musically inclined could draw the wailing bow or sway the accordion; pucker at the pensive flute, or beat the martial, soul-arousing drum. One stripped, as it were, on his way to Jericho, could slink in here and select for himself a fig-leaf from a whole Eden of cut-away coats and wide-checked trousers, all fitting "to surprise yourself," and could be quite sure of finding a pair of boots, of whatever size was needed, of the very finest custom hand work,—a misfit, made for a gentleman in New York. A devout man, according to his leanings, could pray from the prayer-book of an impoverished Episcopalian, or sing from the hymn-book of an insolvent Baptist.

"So help me gracious!" Mr. Isaacs used to say, raising his shoulders and opening wide his palms; "when you find a man so ungrateful that he cannot be fitted out with somethings from my stock, I really suppose you could not fit that man out in Paradise."

Mr. Isaacs was looking nervous. But it was not by the images which his ordinary stock in trade would naturally cause to arise that he was disturbed,—images though they were of folly, improvidence, and distress.

There was indeed hardly an article in the shop, except the new plated jewelry in the window, that was not suggestive of misery or of sin. But in Mr. Isaacs's well-poised mind no morbid fancies arose. "Those hard winters makes me cheerful," he was wont to say in the fall; "they makes the business lively."

Still, Mr. Isaacs was a little troubled this afternoon, and, singularly enough, about a most happy purchase that he had just made, at ninety per cent below value. There the articles lay upon the counter,—a silk hat, a long surtout, a gold-headed cane and a pair of large rubbers; a young man's Derby hat and overcoat and rattan cane, and a pair of arctics; a lady's bonnet and dolman and arctics; a young girl's hat with a soft bird's-breast, and her seal-skin sack and arctics; besides four small boys' hats and coats and arctics. It seemed as if some modern Elijah, a family man, expectant of translation, had made with thrifty forethought an "arrangement" that Mr. Isaacs's shop should be the point of departure, and flying off in joyous haste, with wife and children, had left the general raiment on the counter. You would naturally have looked for a sky-lit hole in the ceiling.

"So help me gracious!" said Mr. Isaacs, turning the articles over; "I suppose there 's some policemen just so wicked and soospicious to say I must know those garments are stolen—scooped off some hat-tree, the last winter, at one grab."

"Why do you enter dose on de book to-gedder?" said Mrs. Isaacs. "If you put dose separate on de book, how de policeman know dey came in togedder?"

"That is a great danger, Sarah. That's just the way they fix our good friend Greenbaum. When they caught the thief, and he tell them where he sell some things, and Greenbaum had put down those earrings and those bracelets and that Balmoral skirt for three different times, they say he must know those things was stolen,—if not, why did he put those things down different from each other?"

"But so help me gracious!" he added, presently, "I have not the least soospicions, like the babes unborn, those goods are stolen. The man that brought them in was very frank, and very much of a gentleman; and he lay his hand upon his bosom-pin, and swear he sell those things because he has no more use for them,—his family all sick of tyvoid fever, and cannot live the week out. But I suppose there's some policemen just so soospicious to say I must know those things are stolen."

"And so cruel soospicions," said Mrs. Isaacs,— "and your heart so pure and white like your shirt-bosom." She meant his ideal shirt-bosom.

"Just like those evil-minded policemen," he said. "You remember how they lock up our old friend Abrahamson? So help me gracious! sent that good old man to prison, just because he buy two gold watches and two pairs of gold spectacles and an ivory-handled knife and two empty pocket-books and two silk umbrellas and a seal ring and two bunches of keys and two black wigs from a red-headed laboring man; they say he must know that two old gentlemen were robbed of that personal property."

But here his attention was diverted by the sight of two men, seamen to appearance, who were looking into the show-window.

"I like so much," he said, "to see the public enjoying themselves in my window; it give them so happy pleasure to see those lovely things; and often they comes in and buy somethings. This young man," he added, after a pause, "seem to admire those broad neck-wear; he look at both those two,—the Four-in-hand and the Frolic."

"I think he look most at de Frolic," said Mrs. Isaacs; "I think he would come in if you go outside and take him by de arm like a true frient, and bring him in. My broder Moses walk outside de whole day long, and take each man when he go by and talk to him like his own broder, wid tears in his eyes, and make dem come in and buy somedings."

But Mr. Isaacs only wrapped the long coat more closely about his linen garments, and watched the younger man as he turned his eyes away from the Four-in-hand and the Frolic and bent them on the trays in which were glittering tiers of rings and pins, and rows of watches labelled "Warranted genuine, \$14;" "Dirt-cheap, \$8.75;" "Doct's Watch, Puls-counting, \$19.50."

"He look like he had some money," said Mrs. Isaacs. "Perhaps he would come in and buy a watch if you go out and pull him in. How can he buy someding through de glass? My broder Moses say, 'So many folks is bashful.'"

But at last the men, after talking awhile, apparently of the goods in the window, came in.

"What's the price of some of those ear-rings in the window?" said the younger. "Let's see what you've got for a couple of dollars or so."

"So help me gracious!" said Mr. Isaacs, as he took from the show-window three or four cards of plated ear-rings. "I knew you would come in to buy somethings. When I saw you look in—the very first moment—I say to my wife, 'There is a good young man that will give a present to some lovely young lady.' Yes, sir, the very words I said to Sarah."

"What's the price of this pair? I haven't got any girl to treat, but I 've just got paid off for a whaling voyage, and my lay figured up a twenty-dollar bill above what I expected, and I don't care if I do lay out a couple of dollars on my wife besides what I 've brought home for her."

"Well, sir," said Mr. Isaacs, "the good wife is the very best jewelry. Those are two dollars. But only study this pair. Hold those up to the light and take a bird's-eye view through those lovely stones, so round and large like green peas. Now look. So! Now let your friend look!"

"I 'm no judge," said the other man, "I know what pleases me—that's all. But them would make a great display, David, wouldn't they?"

"You 're right, sir," said Mr. Isaacs. "'Display' is the very word. My wife wear just the twins of this pair to the congregation, every week."

Mrs. Isaacs raised her eyebrows: she wore nothing but diamonds.

"What's the price of these green ones?" asked David.

Mr. Isaacs shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose those are the finest articles of the kind in the whole creation," he said. "We can let you have those to-day," and he lowered his voice to a whisper, and put his hand up beside his mouth, "to close out stock—for six dollars. They cost us only last week eight-fifty, but we are obliged to reduce stock prior to removal. The building is to be taken down."

"I would like those tip-top; but I don't know—it's a good deal of money for gewgaws; my wife would take me to do for it; I guess I must keep to the two-dollar ones. I come pretty hard by my dollars, and a dollar means a good deal to me just now."

"But just once look again," said Mr. Isaacs, and he stepped briskly behind his wife and held up an ear-ring to each of her ears. "See them on a chaste and lovely form. With these your wife will be still more lovely. All those other men will say, 'Where did that graceful lady find so rich ear-rings?' You will see they are a great success: her most bosom friends will hate her; they will turn so green like the grass on the ground with envy. It is a great pleasure when my wife wears those kind: her very sisters cannot speak for anger, and her own mother looks so rigid like the Cardiff Giant."

"Well, I guess I shall have to take them," said David, "and you 'll have to wrap them right up: we have n't got more than about time to get the train, have we, Calvin?"

"So help me gracious!" said Mr. Isaacs, "is there no time to sell our friend Calvin a pair? He will repent not to secure those other pair, until his dying day; so sorry like he lose his ship some day upon those rocks. I suppose there is no others like those in the whole creation."

But he wrapped the purchase up in a bit of white paper and gave David Prince four trade dollars in change for a ten-dollar bill, and the two men went out, leaving Mr. Isaacs free to attend to a timid woman in black who had just come in to raise fifty cents upon a ring, while Mrs. Isaacs looked after a carpenter who proposed to pawn his edge-tools for rent-money.

Mr. Isaacs waved his hand and smiled as the men went out of the door. "You will find they are a success, to surprise yourself," he called out: "her most bosom friends will writhe and scream with envy."

The winding line of the long New England coast faces the sea, in its sweeping curves, in every direction. From the Callender place, the ocean lay to the south. Though elsewhere east winds might be blowing harsh upon the coast, here, almost every day, and all day long, in summer, the southwest wind came pouring in from the expanse of waters, fresh and cool, boisterous often, but never chill; and even winds from the east lost edge in crossing miles of pitch-pine woods, of planted fields, of sandy ponds, of pastures, and came in softened down and friendly.

A gentle breeze was drifting in from sea. All day long it had been blowing, salt and strong and riotous, tossing the pine-tops, bending the corn, swaying the trees in the orchards, but now it was preparing to die away, as was its wont, at sundown, to give to the woods, the cornfields and the orchards a little space of rest and peace before it should rise again in the early evening to toss them all night long. The blue of the sky was blue in the water. Every object stood out sharp and clear. Down the low, curving shore-line, curls of smoke rose from distant roofs, and on the headland, up the coast, the fairy forest in the air was outlined with precision. Distant ships were moving, like still pictures, on the horizon, as if that spell were laid on them which hushed the enchanted palace. There was just sea enough to roll the bell-buoy gently, and now and then was rung an idle note of warning. Three fishing-boats lay anchored off the Spindle, rising and falling, and every now and then a sea broke on the rock. On the white sand beach, waves were rolling in, dying softly away along the shore, or heavily breaking, with a long, flying line of foam.

The sun was fast descending. Delia Prince went out to the corner of the house and shaded her eyes to look at the sunset. The white clouds turned to a flaming red, and the reflection dyed to crimson the surface of the creeks; the sun descended toward the wooded bluff that flanked the bay, sent a thousand shattered, dazzling rays through the trees, and disappeared.

The red of the clouds and the red of the water gave place to gray. The wind died down. The silence was intense,—all the more marked because of the few sharp sounds that broke it now and then. Across the bay, near shore, a man was raking oysters; he stood in the stern of his skiff, and the bow was up in the air. Near by a girl was driving sluggish cows along the beach, and her shrill cries came over the water; by a cottage on the bank a boy was chopping brush upon a block, and Delia watched the silent blows, and heard the sound come after. He smiled as she looked; for every night she saw the boy's mother stand at the door to call him, and saw him come reluctant to his task.

There was a sense of friendly companionship in all these homely sights and sounds. It was different from the old house, shut in close by a second growth of birch and oak.

The table was standing ready for a late supper. The children had gone for berries to the Island, and they would soon come home, and David was due, too, with his money.

She smiled as he appeared. The ascent to the brow of the hill was so sharp that first you saw a hat in movement, then a head, then shoulders, body, legs, and feet. She ran quickly down the road to meet him, and took his arm.

"You couldn't catch the noon train?" she said. "Captain Wells stopped at the door a little while ago to see what time we should be down to get the deed, and luckily I told him that we might not be down until into the evening. He said he 'd stay at home and wait till we came."

"Delia," said David, when he had seated himself in the house, "I 've got bad news to tell you, and I may as well out with it first as last."

"You have n't shipped for another whaling voyage?"

"No; that would be nothing," he said.

Delia stood and looked at him.

"Well," she said, "didn't you get as much as you counted on?"

"Yes,—twenty more."

"It isn't anything about the children? I expect them home every minute."

"No."

"Delia," he said, "you was a great fool ever to have me. You ought to have taken advice."

"What is the matter?" she said. "Why don't you tell me?"

"I 've lost the money," he said. "The Captain warned me how apt a seafaring man is to lose money; but I did n't take any heed, and I went off with Calvin Green—"

"With Calvin Green! What did I tell you!" she said.

"Wait a minute—and I stopped into a jewelry store and bought you a pair of ear-rings, and I came off and left my wallet on the counter, the way that fool Joe Bassett did, to Gloucester. When I went back, the rascal claimed he never saw me before—said he didn't know me from the Prophet Samuel, as if I was born that minute. And now they'll all say—and it's true—that I'm a chip of the old block, and that I 'm bound to come out at the little end. There!" he said, as he opened a little parcel and took out the earrings. "There 's what 's left of five hundred and twenty dollars, and you must make the most of 'em. Hold 'em up to the light and see how handsome they are. I don't know, after all, but they are worth while for a man to pitch overboard off Cape Horn and harpoon whales two years for. All is, just tell folks they cost five hundred dollars, and they 'll be just as good as hen's-egg diamonds.

"In fact, I don't know but I sort o' like the situation," he went on, in a moment. "It seems sort of natural and home-like. I should have felt homesick if I 'd really succeeded in getting this place paid for. 'T would have seemed like getting proud, and going back on my own relations. And then it 'll please everybody to say, 'I told you so.' There 'll be high sport round town, when it gets out, and we back water down to the old place.

"Come, say something, Delia!" he said, in a moment. "Why don't you say something about it? Don't you care that the money's lost, that you stand there and don't say a word, and look at nothing?"

"I don't want to say anything now," she said, "I want to think."

"Well!" said Captain Bennett, the next day, to his wife, "Delia 's got more spunk! I should have felt like laying right down in the shafts, in her place; but instead of that, to actually go and talk them into letting her keep the Cal-lender place and pay for it so much a month! And David's signed a paper to do it."

"I guess if the truth was known," said Mrs. Bennett, knitting on, "that, come to think it over, she was more scared of David's settling back than she was for losing the money."

"She 's got a pull on him now," said the Captain, "anyway, for if he once agrees to a thing he always does it."

III.

No one fully knows the New England autumn who has not seen its colors on the extreme Old Colony sea-board. There are no mountain ranges, opening out far reaches of burning maples; but there are miles of salt-marsh, spreading as far as the eye can reach, cut by countless creeks, displaying a vast expanse of soft, rich shades of brown; there are cranberry-meadows of twenty, thirty, or fifty level acres, covered with matted vines and crimson with berries; there are deserted pastures, bright with golden-rod and asters. And everywhere along the shores, against the dark pine woods, are the varied reds of oaks, of blackberry vines, of woodbine, and of sumach.

It was a bright fall afternoon; most of the boats were in, and lay near, shore before the sail-loft door; the sails were up to dry,—for it had been wet outside,—looking doubly white against the colors of the shore.

In the sail-loft they were telling stories.

"No, I don't think myself," said Deacon Luce, from the rocking-chair, "that ministers always show what we call horse sense. They used to tell a story of Parson Allen, that preached in the Old Town, in my father's time, that pleased me. One spring the parson took a notion to raise a pig. So he went down to Jim Barrows, that lived there handy by, and says he, 'Mr. Barrows, I hear you have a litter of young pigs, and I should like to have one to raise.' So Jim he got his stilyards and weighed him out one, and the minister paid him, and Jim he sent it up. Well, the minister kep' it some three months, and he used to go out every day and put on his spectacles and take his scythe down from the apple-tree and mow pig-weed for him, and he bought corn-meal to feed him up with, and one way and another he laid out a good deal on him. The pig fattened well, but the whole incessant time he was either rooting out and gitting into the garden, or he'd ketch his foot in behind the trough and squeal like mad, or something else, so that the minister had to keep leaving his sermon-writing to straighten him out, and the minister's wife complained of the squealing when she had company. And so the parson decided to heave the enterprise up, and Jim sent up and took the pig back. Come to settle, 'How do we stand?' says the minister. 'Oh, just as you say,' says Jim, 'I'll leave it to you.' 'Well,' says the minister, 'on the one hand you've got back a pig that you've been paid for; but, on the other hand, I 've had the use of him for some three months,—and so I guess we 're square.'" "Talking of preachers," said Caleb Parker, "reminds me of a story they tell of Uncle Cephas Bascom, of Northhaven. Uncle Cephas was a shoemaker, and he never went to sea much, only to anchor his skiff in the Narrows abreast of his house, and catch a mess of scup, or to pole a load of salt-hay from San-quitt Island. But he used to visit his married daughter, in Vermont, and up there they knew he come from the sea-board, and they used to call him 'Captain Bascom.' So, one time when he was there, they had a Sabbath-school concert, and nothing would do but 'Captain Bascom' must talk to the boys, and tell a sea-yarn, and draw a moral, the way the Deacon, here, does." The Deacon gravely smiled, and stroked his beard. "Well, Uncle Cephas was ruther pleased with his name of 'Captain Bascom,' and he did n't like to go back on it, and so he flaxed round to git up something.

seems he had heard a summer boarder talk in Sabbath-school, at Northhaven; he told how a poor boy minded his mother, and then got to tend store, and then kep' store himself, and then he jumped it on them. 'That poor boy,' says he, 'now stands before you.' So Uncle Cephas thought him up a similar yarn. Well, he had never spoke in meeting before, and he hemmed and hawed some, but he got on quite well while he was telling about a certain poor boy, and all that, and how the boy when he grew up was out at sea, in an open boat, and saw a great sword-fish making for the boat Hail Columbia, and bound to stave right through her and sink her,—and how this man he took an oar, and give it a swing, and broke the critter's sword square off; and then Uncle Cephas—he 'd begun to git a little flustered—he stops short, and waves his arms, and says he, 'Boys, what do you think! That sword-fish now stands before you!' I cal'late that brought the house down." Captain Philo, who had laid down his three-cornered sail-needle, to listen to this exciting story, readjusted the leather thimble that covered his palm, and began to sew again. Uncle Silas, sitting near the water door, in his brown overalls made with a breast-apron and suspender-straps, looked out at the boats. A silence fell on the company.

It was broken by Calvin Green.

"A man was telling me rather a curious story, the other night," he said. "I was just explaining to him exactly how 't was that David Prince lost his money, and so he told this:—

"There was a boy that was clerk in a store, and one day they sent him over to the bank to git some money. It was before the war, and the bank gave him twenty ten-dollar gold pieces. But when he got back to the store there was one short. The boy hadn't nothin' to say. He admitted he had n't dropped none, because he 'd put 'em in a leather bag where he could n't lose one without he lost all, and the cashier knew *he* had n't made any mistake. The storekeeper he heard the story, and then he put his hand on the boy's shoulder, and says he, 'I don't know what to make o' this; but I believe this boy,' says he, 'and we 'll just drop it, and say no more about it.' So it run along, and the next day that it rained, one of the clerks in the store took down an old umberella, and, come to unfurl it, out falls a ten-dollar gold piece. Seems that the boy had that umberella that day, and hooked it on to the counter in the bank, by the handle, and one of the coins must have slid off into it when he was countin' 'em, and then he probably did n't spread the umberella coming back. And, as this man said that was telling me, it don't do to bet too much on suspicion. Now, only for that Jew's being such a hard character, according to the newspapers, I should be loath to charge him with taking David's money; I should say David might have lost it somewhere else."

Nobody spoke. Captain Bennett whistled softly.

"I never felt so bad in my life," continued Green, "as I did when he missed his money. When we come up into the depot he was telling me a kind of a comical story about old Jim Torrey, how he wanted to find out if all his hens was laying, or if any of 'em was disposed to shirk, and he got him a pass-book ruled in columns, and opened a ledger account with every hen, by a name he give her; and we got up to the ticket-window, and he put his hand into his breast-pocket for his wallet—by George! I 've seen him chaff and joke, sort of quiet, when we was going to ride under every minute; but he turned as white then as that new mainsail, and off he went, like a shot But 't was no use. Of course, the jewelry feller would n't disgorge on David's say-so, without no proof."

"It was like this," he went on; "the counter was here,—and David stood here,—and I was here,—and we both come off together. But I tell you,—the way David looked when he put in his hand for his wallet! He stopped laughing, as if he see a ghost; I can't get it out of my head. And how the man that stole the money can stand it I can't figure out."

"Perhaps he 's calloused," said the Deacon, "by what the paper said the other night about his buying a parcel of clothes hooked out of some man's entry. We concluded 'twas the same man—by the name."

"Can't believe all that's in the paper," said Perez Todd; "you know the paper had me to be married, once; the boys put it in for fun; they made up the name for the female, I guess, for I 've been kind of shyin' round for her this ten year, and have n't seen no such woman."

"Yes, sir, he's a hard ticket," said Green; "that's so, every time. Well, I must be going; I agreed to go and help Elbridge over at half flood."

"Half flood about five," said Captain Bennett; "you have n't any great time to spare."

Green went to the shore, rattled a skiff down over the beach to the water, and pulled away, with quick, short strokes. First the skiff was cut off from sight by the marsh-bank; then the rower's head alone was seen above the tall brown grasses; and then he pulled around the bend and was lost to view behind a mass of flaming woodbine; and still, in the distance, could be heard across the water the rattle of his oars in the thole-pins.

"Well, Silas?" said Captain Bennett.

"Well?" said Uncle Silas.

"Oh! I 've nothing to say," said Captain Bennett

"Nor I," said Uncle Silas.

"Calvin's always seemed to be a good-hearted fellow," said Captain Philo, "since he's lived here."

"Oh, yes," said Captain Bennett; "seems to feel for David surprisingly. Told me all about the losing of the money, told my wife, told my boy, told Uncle Joe, told our minister, told the Doctor, told Zimri Cobb, told Cyrus Bass, told Captain John Wells, told Patrick Coan; and proves it out to 'em all that 't was the Jew that did it."

"Kind of zealous, like the Apostle Paul supplying the pulpit to the Gentiles," said the Deacon; "won't let alone of a man, till he gives in 't the Hebrew's in the wrong."

"But I 've nothing to say," said Captain Bennett.

"Oh, no, nor I," said Uncle Silas.

From the distance, borne on the gentle breeze, a click as even as a pulse-beat came faintly over the water.

"He may be a good-hearted fellow," said the Deacon, "but I don't know as I hanker to be the man that's

pulling that skiff. But then,—that may be simply and solely because I prefer a hair-cloth rocker to a skiff.”

“Delia,” said David Prince to his wife, one afternoon, “Calvin Green has bought four tickets to that stereopticon show that's going to be in the West Church to-night, and he gave me two, for you and me.”

“I don't want his tickets,” she replied, ironing away at the sunny window.

“Now, what's the use of talking that way?” said her husband, “as much as to say—”

“I have my opinion,” she said.

“Well,” said her husband, “I think it's a hard way to use a man, just because he happened to be by when I lost my money.”

“I 'll tell you,” said Delia, stopping her work; “we will go, and all I 'll say is this—you see if after the lecture's over he does n't find a text in it to talk about our money. Now, you just wait and see—that's all.”

“Ladies and gentlemen,” said the lecturer, standing by a great circle of light thrown on the wall, behind the pulpit, “I have now, with a feeling of awe befitting this sacred place, thus given you, in the first part of my lecture, a succinct view of the origin, rise, and growth of the globe on which, as the poet has justly said, 'we dwell.' I have shown you—corroborating Scripture—the earth, without form and void, the awful monsters of the Silurian age, and Man in the Garden of Eden.

“I now invite you to journey with me—as one has said—'across the continent.'”

“Travelling has ever been viewed as a means of education. Thus Athenian sages sought the learning of the Orient. Thus may we this evening, without toil or peril, or expense beyond the fifteen cents already incurred for the admission-fee, journey in spirit from the wild Atlantic to the sunset coast. In the words of the sacred lyricist, Edgar A. Poe, 'My country, 't is of thee,' that I shall now display some views.

“Of course we start from Boston. On the way to New York, we will first pause to view the scene where Putnam galloped down a flight of steps, beneath the hostile fire. See both mane and coat-tails flying in the wind, and the eyes of steed and rider wildly dilated with excitement.

“Next we pause in Brooklyn. And from my immense variety of scenes in the City of Churches, I choose the firemen's monument in Greenwood Cemetery.

*'Here they lie low who raised their ladders high;
Here they still live,—for heroes cannot die!'*

[A voice: “How many are buried there?”]

“I should say, at a venture, eighteen. [A rustle of sympathy among the women.]

“Passing on, and coming thence to the metropolis of New York, I am greatly embarrassed, so vast is the richness and variety of views. But I will show first the 'Five Points.' [Great eagerness, and cries, “Down front!”] Of late, philanthropy and religion, walking in sweet converse, hand in hand, have relieved the horrors of this region, and now one may walk there comparatively safe. [Sudden cessation of interest]

“I will give even another view of the metropolis: a charming scene in Central Park. [Here wavered dimly on the screen five bushes, and a nursery-maid with a baby-carriage.] From this exquisite picture you may gain some faint idea of the charms of that Paradise raised by the wand of taste and skill in a waste of arid sands.

“Passing westward, I next present the Suspension Bridge at Niagara, erected by drawing over the majestic stream a cord, a small rope, then a wire, until the whole vast framework was complete. The idea was taken from the spider's web. Thus the humblest may guide the highest; and I love to recall, in this connection, that the lamented Lincoln, some years before signing the Emancipation Proclamation, heard me lecture on slavery, in Peoria.

“Next we come to Cleveland; and our attention is seized by three cannons taken in the famous naval battle on the lake. Every visitor pauses here, and with uncovered head and eyes suffused with tears recalls the sacrifices of the Fathers.

“Next we view Chicago the morning after the fire; on every hand are blackened ruins,—painful proofs of the vicissitudes of human fortune! [A voice: “I was there at the time.”] I am delighted to know it Such spontaneous corroboration from the audience is to the lecturer's heart as a draught from the well of Baca. [Laughter, and a voice: “What Baker?”]

“But, in order to cross so broad a continent, we must not dally, and next I show you the Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City, the seat of a defiant system of sin. All things, however, have their uses, and I can recommend this religion to any young lady present who does not find it easy to secure a helpmeet. [Appreciative laughter.]

“And now, for a view of the Pacific States, I choose two of the famed Big Trees. Judge of them by the two men who stand, like the Widow's mites, beside them. These trees are called 'Father and Daughter.' [A voice: “Which is Father, and which is Daughter?”] I am not informed, but from their appearance I judge that the nearer is the Father. [Derisive laughter.]

“And now we approach a climax.

“When the Ten Thousand, in their storied march, reached at last the blue waters of the Euxine, thrilled with joy they loudly cried: 'The Sea! The Sea!' So we, travellers likewise, reach at last the Western Ocean; and for a striking scene upon its waters, I present a Pacific Mail steamer at her dock in the harbor of San Francisco. In the left foreground is a Chinese laundry. And now I can hardly restrain myself from passing on to Asia; for imagination, taking fire, beckons to Nippon and the Flowery Kingdom. But remorseless Time says no, and we pause at the Golden Gate.

“In closing, now, I will, as is usual, give one or two moral views, relieved by others of a somewhat playful character.

“First is Napoleon's grave. He who held Europe struggling in his hand, died a prisoner in solitudes remote, far from home endearments.

“Next you see Daniel Lambert, whose greatness was of a more solid cast. Less grasping in his pretensions

than Napoleon, he lived an honored life, and died, I understand, among his relatives.

"Next is a picture of the guillotine, calling up thoughts of severed heads from memory's cloisters. On the left you see a ghastly head; on the right the decapitated trunk. By the victim stand the bloody actors in the tragedy. Ladies and gentlemen! When I review the awful guilt of Marat and Robespierre, humbly do I give thanks that I have been kept from yielding, like them, to fierce ambition and lust of power, and that I can lay my head upon a peaceful pillow at my home in Fall River.

"Next is the Serenade. Part one: The Spanish lover with bow-knot shoes, pointed hat, and mantle over shoulder, stands, with his lute, on the covered water-butt, while at the casement above is his lady's charming face. Part two: The head of the water-butt has given way, and the angry father, from his window, beholds a scene of luckless misery.

"I turn now to a more pleasing view,—the Village Blacksmith. The mighty man is at his work, and by a triumph of art I am enabled to show his fine physique in action: now you see his arm uplifted,—and now the hammer is on the iron. Up—down—up—down. [A voice: "There are two right arms!"] That arises from some slight defect in the arrangement of the light; the uplifted arm does not entirely vanish when the lowered arm appears. But to the thoughtful observer, such slight contrasts only heighten enjoyment.

"Ladies and gentlemen! A single word in closing. Our transcontinental journey this evening ended at the Golden Gate. When life's journey ends, may we not so pause, but, as the poet Judson Backus sweetly sings:—

*'May we find an angel wait
To lead us through the "golden gate."'*

"Meanwhile, adieu."

David Prince and his wife walked slowly home in the clear, cold moonlight.

"Did you notice," said Delia, "how the man kept saying that he didn't know just what to pick out, to show? Well, I heard the Kelley boy, that helped at the lamps, say that they showed every identical picture there was. I suppose they are a lot of odds and ends he picked up at an auction."

"I think he was a kind of a humbug," said Calvin Green, who, with his wife, had come up close behind. "See how he kept dragging in his morals, jes like overhauling a trawl and taking off a haddock, every once in so often."

"What away to travel," said his wife; "to go ker-jump from New York City to Niagara, and from there to Cleveland. He must have thought we had long stilts."

"The pictures were rather here and there and everywhere, to be sure," said David; "but I have a good deal of charity for these men; I s'pose they 're put to it for bread and butter."

"Well, I don't know," said Green; "I don't think it has a good influence on young people to show such a picture as that man that they murdered by slicing his head off with that machine. I don't like such things to be brought up."

"I should think the opposite," said his wife, laughing, "by the way you 've told every man in town about David's money, and the way he blanched when he missed it. I think you 'd better take a lesson yourself about bringing up dreadful things."

When they reached Green's house, a low, black cottage, they stopped a moment for the women to finish a discussion about croup.

"How did that look to you now, David?" said Green. "Did n't you think it would have been a good deal better to have left that picture out?"

"Which one?" said David.

"Why, the one where they'd chopped the man's head off with that machine, and were standing by, looking at the corpse. I don't like to see such things, for my part."

"I don't know," said David. "I did n't think about it particularly. I understood it was in the French Revolution."

"Well, see all that flummer-diddle he got off about it," said Green; "just as if any fool did n't know that a man could n't sleep that was haunted by a thing like that."

"Well, some can stomach anything, and I suppose some can sleep on anything," said David. "I guess it would take more than slicing one man's head off to make that Jew lie awake nights. If he 'd only admitted that I 'd been there! But as soon as I said I 'd left something, then for him and his wife to claim they never saw me! They 're cool ones!"

"Well, right here,—about what my wife flung out," said Green, glancing over his shoulder to where the women were talking, both at once, woman-fashion; "you know my wife's way,—you haven't ever heard any such talk going round, have you, as that I was hounding folks about your bad luck? I say an honest man speaks right out,—no fear, no favor. Ain't that so?"

It was a bitterly cold, clear night, a few weeks later. Runners squeaked and boot-heels crunched in the road. David had passed Green's house at seven o'clock, going to the store; he always went by there at that time, Saturdays, and passed again, returning home, at about eight.

When he reached the gate, on his return, Green was standing there, apparently waiting.

"Come into the house a minute, David," he said; "I want to see you."

He led him into the kitchen.

"My wife's gone over to Aunt Nathan's for the evening," he said.

He shut the door, and locked it.

"There!" he said; "I can't stand it any longer;" and he laid upon a table at David's side a wallet. David took it up and opened it; it held a great roll of bills.

"What does this mean?" he said; "why—this is mine! You don't mean—"

"I mean I stole it," said Green.

David sat down. "I wish you had put it in the fire," he said, "and never told me."

"There 's just one thing I want to say," said Green. "I picked it up, first, to give it to you, and when I saw that you 'd forgot it, I thought I 'd have a little joke on you for a while; and then, when I saw how things was going, I kind o' drifted into keeping it. You know how I come home,—all my voyage eat up, and a hundred dollars' debts besides, and children sick. But every dollar 's there.

"Now, what I ask," he added, "is four days' time to ship and get away. What are you going to do?"

"Nothing," said David; "settle your debts and pay me when you can." And taking five twenty-dollar bills from the wallet, he left them on the table and went away.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS ***

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