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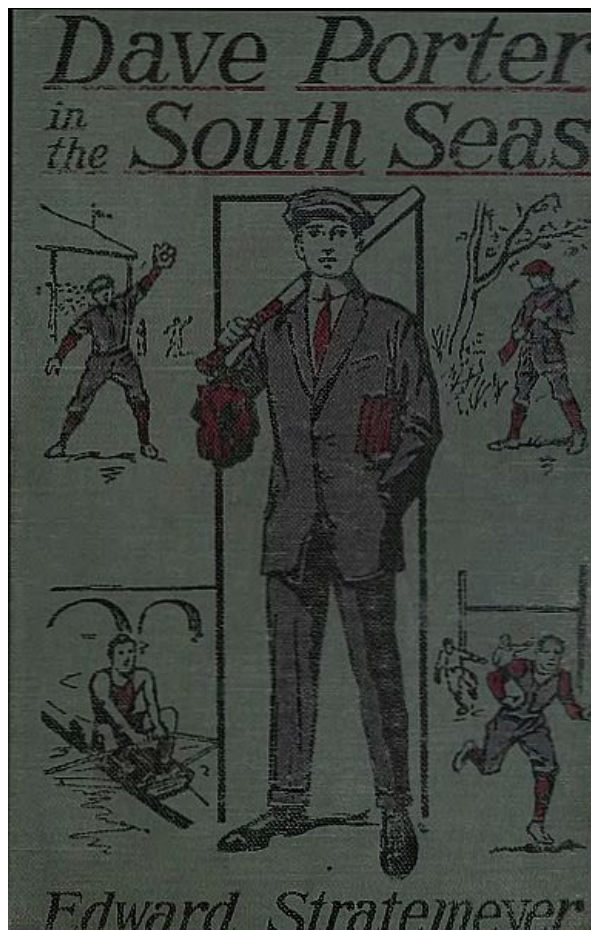
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THE STRANGE CRUISE OF THE STORMY PETREL ***



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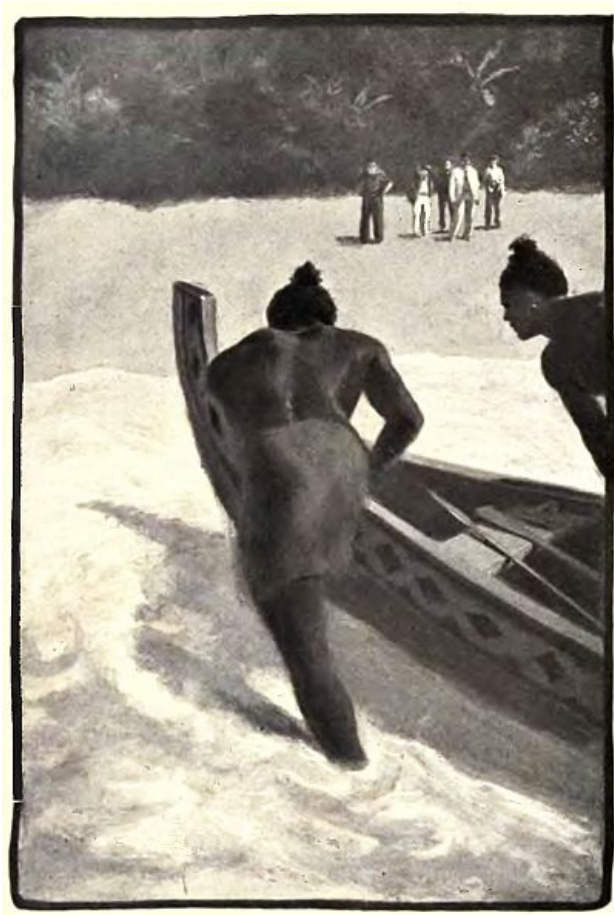
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The canoe was sent closer and finally beached.—*Page 258.*

Dave Porter Series

DAVE PORTER IN THE SOUTH SEAS

OR

THE STRANGE CRUISE OF THE STORMY PETREL

BY

EDWARD STRATEMEYER

Author of "Under Togo for Japan," "Under the Mikado's Flag," "At the Fall of Port Arthur," "Old Glory Series," "Pan-American Series," "Colonial Series," "American Boys' Biographical Series," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY I. B. HAZELTON

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DAVE PORTER IN THE SOUTH SEAS

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[iii]

PREFACE

"Dave Porter in the South Seas" is a complete story in itself, but forms the second volume in a line issued under the general title of "Dave Porter Series."

In the first volume of this series, called "Dave Porter at Oak Hall," I introduced a typical American boy, and gave something of his haps and mishaps at an American boarding school of to-day. At this school Dave made a number of warm friends, and also a few enemies, and was the means of bringing one weak and misguided youth to a realization of his better self. Dave was poor and had to fight his way to the front, and this was not accomplished until he had shown those around him what a truly straightforward and manly fellow he was.

The one great cloud over Dave's life was the question of his parentage. He had been raised by those who knew practically nothing of his past, and when he thought that he saw a chance to learn something about himself, he embraced that opportunity eagerly, even though it necessitated a long trip to the South Seas and a search among strange islands and still stranger natives. Dave makes the trip in a vessel belonging to the father of one of his school chums, and is accompanied by several of his friends. Not a few perils are encountered, and what the boys do under such circumstances I leave for the pages that follow to tell.

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In penning this tale, I have had a twofold object in view: first, to give my young readers a view of a long ocean trip and let them learn something of the numerous islands which dot the South Seas, and, in the second place, to aid in teaching that old truth—that what is worth having is worth working for.

Again I thank the many thousands of boys and girls, and older persons, too, who have shown their appreciation of my efforts to amuse and instruct them. I can only add, as I have done before, that I sincerely trust that this volume fulfills their every reasonable expectation.

EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

April 10, 1906.

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DAVE PORTER IN THE SOUTH SEAS

CHAPTER I

THE BOYS OF OAK HALL

"Hello, Dave; where are you bound?"

"For the river, Phil. I am going out for a row. Want to come along?"

"That suits me," answered Phil Lawrence, throwing down the astronomy he had been studying. "But I can't stay out late," he added, reaching for his cap. "Got two examples in algebra to do. Have you finished up?"

"Yes," answered Dave Porter. "They are not so hard."

"And your Latin?"

"That's done, too."

Phil Lawrence eyed the boy before him admiringly. "Dave, I don't see how you manage it. You're always on deck for fun, and yet you scarcely miss a lesson. Let me into the secret, won't you?"

"That's right, Dave; pull the cover off clean and clear," came from a youth who had just entered the school dormitory. "If I can get lessons without studying——" [2]

"Oh, Roger, you know better than that," burst out Dave Porter, with a smile. "Of course I have to study—just the same as anybody. But when I study, I study, and when I play, I play. I've found out that it doesn't pay to mix the two up—it is best to buckle your mind down to the thing on hand and to nothing else."

"That's the talk," came from a boy resting on one of the beds. "It puts me in mind of a story I once heard about a fellow who fell from the roof of a house to the ground——"

"There goes Shadow again!" cried Roger Morr. "Shadow, will you ever get done telling chestnuts?"

"This isn't a chestnut, and I haven't told it over twice in my life. The man fell to the ground past an open window. As he was going down, he grabbed another man at the window by the hair. The hair—it was a wig—came off. 'Say,' yells the man at the window. 'Leave me alone. If you want to fall, 'tend to business, and fall!'" And a smile passed around among the assembled schoolboys.

"Perhaps Roger would like to come along," continued Dave. "I was going out for a row, and Phil said he would go, too," he explained.

"That suits me," answered Roger Morr. "It will give us an appetite for supper." [3]

"What about you, Shadow?" and Dave turned to the youth on the bed.

Maurice Hamilton shook his head slightly. "Not to-day. I am going to take a nap, if I can get it. Remember, I was up half the night."

"So he was," affirmed Phil Lawrence. "But he hasn't said what it was about."

"Not much," growled the boy called Shadow. He was very tall and very thin, hence the nickname. Turning over, he pretended to go to sleep.

"There is something wrong about Shadow," said Dave as he and his two companions left the school building and hurried for the river at the back of the grounds. "He has not been himself at all to-day."

"I think he has had something to do with that bully, Gus Plum," said Phil. "I saw them together two days ago, and both were talking earnestly. I don't know exactly what it was about. But I know Shadow has been very much disturbed ever since."

"Well, the best he can do is to leave Plum alone," returned Dave, decidedly. "I can tell you, fellows, that chap is not to be trusted; you know that as well as I do."

"Of course we know it," said Roger Morr. "Didn't I warn you against Gus Plum before you ever came to Oak Hall? And now that Chip Macklin has turned over a new leaf and refused to be Plum's toady any longer, the bully is worse than ever. Only yesterday Buster Beggs caught him back of the gym., abusing one of the little fellows. Buster is generally too lazy to rouse up, but he said it made him mad, and he told Plum to stop, or it would be the worse for him, and Plum went off grumbling." [4]

"It's a great pity Plum can't reform, like Macklin. I declare, Chip is getting to be quite a decent sort, now."

"It's not in Plum to reform," exclaimed Phil Lawrence. "If I were Doctor Clay, I'd get rid of him. Why, such a chap can keep a whole school in hot water."

"Somebody said that Plum's father had lost a good bit of his money," observed Roger Morr. "If that is so, it must be a bitter pill for Gus to swallow."

"Well, I wouldn't taunt him with it, if it's true," replied Dave, quickly.

"Oh, I shan't say a word—although he deserves to have it rubbed in, for the way he treated you, Dave."

"Yes, that was a jolly shame," commented Phil. "It makes me angry every time I think of it."

"I am willing to let bygones be bygones," said Dave, with a little smile. "As it was, it only showed me who my true friends were, and are. I can afford to get along without the others."

"And especially after we waxed Plum and his crowd at baseball, and then won our great victory over the Rockville boys," said Roger. "Oh, but wasn't that a dandy victory! And didn't we have a dandy celebration afterwards!" [5]

"And do you remember the big cannon cracker we set off in the courtyard?" Dave's eyes began to twinkle. "I heard afterwards that Pop Swingly, the janitor, was scared almost to death. He thought somebody was trying to blow up the building."

"Yes, and Job Haskers said if he could catch the fellow who——" Phil broke off short. "Here comes Gus Plum, now," he whispered.

The others looked up, and saw coming toward them across the school grounds a tall, broad-shouldered individual, loudly dressed, and with a shock of uncombed hair and a cap set over on one ear.

"Hello, Plum," said Dave, pleasantly, while his two companions nodded to the newcomer.

"Hello, yourself," came shortly from Gus Plum. "Hold up a minute," he went on, planting himself in front of the three.

"What's wanted?" questioned Phil, in a little surprise.

"I want to know if Shadow Hamilton has been saying anything about me to you," growled the bully of Oak Hall.

"I haven't heard anything," answered Phil, while Dave and Roger shook their heads. [6]

"Humph! He had better not!" muttered Plum, with a scowl. "If he does——" The bully did not finish.

"I hope there is no more trouble in the air," was Dave's comment.

"There will be trouble, if Hamilton opens his trap. I won't allow anybody in this school to talk about me, and all of you had better understand it," and the bully glared at the others defiantly.

"I am sure I don't know what you are talking about," said Dave. "I haven't said anything about you."

"And you haven't heard anything?" inquired Gus Plum, with a look of keen anxiety showing on his coarse face.

"I've heard some roundabout story about your father losing money," said Roger, before Dave could answer. "If it is true, I am sorry for you, Gus."

"Bah! I don't want your sympathy. Did Hamilton tell you that story?"

"No."

"I suppose you are spreading it right and left, eh? Making me out to be a pauper, like your friend Porter, eh?" continued Gus Plum, working himself up into a magnificent condition of ill-humor.

"I am not spreading it right and left," answered Roger, quietly. [7]

"And I am not a pauper, Plum!" exclaimed Dave, with flashing eyes. "I thought we had settled that difference of opinion long ago. If you are going to open it up again——"

"Oh, don't mind what he says, Dave," broke in Phil, catching his chum by the arm. "You know nobody in the school pays attention to him."

"I won't let any of you run me down!" roared Gus Plum. "Now, just you remember that! If any of you say a word about me or my father, I'll make it so hot for you that you'll wish you had never been born. My father has lost a little money, but it ain't a flea-bite to what he is worth, and I want everybody in this school to know it."

"And I want you to know that you cannot continue to insult me," blazed out Dave. "I am not as rich as most of the boys here, but——"

"He is just as good as any of us, Plum, remember that," finished Phil. "It is an outrage for you to refer to Dave as a pauper."

"Well, didn't he come from the poorhouse, and ain't he a nobody?" sneered the bully.

"He is a better fellow than you will ever be, Plum," said Roger, warmly. He and Phil were both holding Dave back. "Don't listen to him, Dave."

"Yes, but, fellows——" Dave's face was white, and he trembled all over.

"I know it cuts you," whispered Roger. "But Plum is a—a brute. Don't waste your breath on him." [8]

"Ho! so I am a brute, am I?" blustered the big bully, clenching his fists.

"Yes, you are," answered Roger, boldly. "Any fellow with a spark of goodness and honor in him would not speak to Dave as you have done. It simply shows up your own low-mindedness, Plum."

"Don't you preach!" shouted the bully. "Say another word, and I'll—I'll——"

"We are not afraid of you," said Phil, firmly. "We've told you that before. We intend to leave you alone, and the best thing you can do is to leave us alone."

"Bah! I know you, and you can't fool me! You say one thing to my face and another behind my back. But don't you dare to say too much; and you can tell Shadow Hamilton not to say too much, either. If you do—well, there will be war, that's all—and all of you will get what you don't want!" And with this threat, Gus Plum hurried around a corner of the school building and out of sight.

"What a cad!" murmured Phil.

"He is worked up; no disputing that," was Roger's comment. "He acts as if he was afraid

something was being told that he wished to keep a secret."

The hot blood had rushed to Dave's face, and he was still trembling.

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"I wish I had knocked him down," he said in a low tone.

"What good would it have done?" returned Roger. "It would only get you into trouble with the doctor, and that is just what Plum would like. When it comes to a standing in the class, he knows he hasn't as much to lose as you have. He is almost at the bottom already, while you are close to the top."

"But, Roger, he said—oh, I can't bear to think about it! I suppose he blabs it to everybody, too, and they will think——"

"Don't give it another thought, Dave," said Phil, soothingly, and he turned his chum toward the river again. "Dismiss Plum and all his meanness from your mind."

"I wish I could," answered Dave, and his voice had a great deal of seriousness in it.

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CHAPTER II

A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

As the three boys hurried to the river, Dave Porter felt that all his anticipated sport for that afternoon had been spoiled. He had been brought face to face once more with the one dark spot in his history, and his heart was filled with a bitterness which his two loyal chums could scarcely comprehend.

Dave was indeed a poorhouse boy, and of unknown parentage. When but a few years of age, he had been found one evening in the summer wandering close to the railroad tracks just outside of the village of Crumville. How he was found by some farm hands and taken to a house and fed and cared for otherwise, has already been related in the first volume of this series, entitled "Dave Porter at Oak Hall."

At first, every effort to learn his identity was made, but, this failing, he was turned over to the poorhouse authorities. He said his name was Dave, or Davy, and sometimes added Porter, and then Dun-Dun, and from this he was called Dave Porter—a name which suited him very well.

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Dave remained at the poorhouse until he was about nine years old, when he was taken out of that institution by a broken-down college professor named Caspar Potts, who had turned farmer. He remained with the old professor for several years, and a warm friendship sprang up between the pair. Caspar Potts gave Dave a fair education, and, in return, the boy did all he could for the old man, who was not in the best of health, and rather eccentric at times.

Unfortunately for Professor Potts, there was in the neighborhood a hard-hearted money-lender named Aaron Poole, who had a mortgage on the old educator's farm. The money-lender had a son named Nat, who was a flippant youth, and this boy had trouble with Dave. Then the money-lender would have sold out the old professor, had not aid come opportunely from a most unexpected quarter.

In this volume it is unnecessary to go into the details of how Dave became acquainted with Mr. Oliver Wadsworth, a rich manufacturer of the neighborhood, and how the boy saved Jessie Wadsworth from being burned to death when the gasoline tank of an automobile exploded and enveloped the young miss in flames. For this service the Wadsworths were all more than grateful, and when Dave told his story Oliver Wadsworth made the discovery that Caspar Potts was one of the professors under whom he had studied in his college days.

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"I must meet him and talk this over," said the rich manufacturer, and the upshot of the matter was that the professor and Dave were invited to dine at the Wadsworth mansion.

This dinner proved a turning point in the life of the poorhouse youth. Mr. Wadsworth had lost a son by death, and Dave reminded him strongly of his boy. It was arranged that Caspar Potts should come to live at the Wadsworth mansion, and that Dave should be sent to some first-class boarding school, the manufacturer agreeing to pay all bills, because of the boy's bravery in behalf of Jessie.

Oak Hall was the school selected, a fine institution, located not far from the village of Oakdale. The school was surrounded by oaks, which partly shaded a beautiful campus, and the grounds, which were on a slight hill, sloped down in the rear to the Leming River.

Dave's heart beat high when he started off for Oak Hall, and he had a curious experience before he reached that institution. The house of a Senator Morr was robbed, and the boy met the robber on the train, and, after a good deal of trouble, managed to recover a valise containing a large share of the stolen goods. This threw Dave into the company of Roger Morr, the senator's son, and the two became warm friends. Roger was on his way to Oak Hall, and it was through him that Dave became acquainted with Phil Lawrence—reckoned by many the leader of the academy; Maurice Hamilton, generally called Shadow; Sam Day, Joseph Beggs,—who always went by the

[13]

name of Buster, because he was so fat,—and a number of others. In Crumville Dave had had one boy friend, Ben Basswood, and Ben also came to Oak Hall, and so did Nat Poole, as flippant and loud-mouthed as ever.

But Dave soon found out that Nat Poole was not half so hard to get along with as was Gus Plum, the big bully of the Hall. There was a difference of opinion almost from the start, and Plum did all he could to annoy Dave and his friends. Plum wanted to be a leader in baseball and in athletics generally, and when he found himself outclassed, he was savagely bitter.

"I'll get square!" he told his toady, Chip Macklin, more than once; but his plans to injure Dave and his chums fell through, and, in the end, Macklin became disgusted with the bully and left him. Most of the boys wanted nothing to do with the boy who had been the bully's toady, but Dave put in a good word for him, and, in the end, Macklin was voted a pretty fair fellow, after all.

With the toady gone, Gus Plum and Nat Poole became very thick, and Poole lost no opportunity of telling how Dave had been raised at the poorhouse. Gus Plum took the matter up, and for a while poor Dave was made miserable by those who turned their backs on him. But Doctor Clay, who presided over the academy, sided with Dave, and so did all of the better class of students, and soon the affair blew over, at least for the time being. But now the bully was agitating it again, as we have just seen. [14]

During the winter term at Oak Hall one thing of importance had occurred, of which some particulars must be given, for it has much to do with our present tale. Some of the boys, including Dave, had skated up the river to what was locally called the old castle—a deserted stone dwelling standing in a wilderness of trees. They had arrived at this structure just in time to view a quarrel between two men—one a sleek-looking fellow and the other an elderly man, dressed in the garb of a sailor. The sleek-looking individual was the man who had robbed Senator Morr's house, and just as he knocked the old sailor senseless to the ground, the boys rushed in and made him a prisoner.

When the old sailor came to his senses, he stared at Dave as if the boy were a ghost. He said his name was Billy Dill and that he had sailed the South Seas and many other portions of the briny deep. He insisted that he knew Dave well, and wanted to know why the youth had shaved off his mustache. The boys imagined that the tar was out of his head, and he was removed to a hospital. Later on, as Dave was so interested in the man, Mr. Wadsworth had him taken to a private sanitarium. Here he lingered for awhile between life and death, but at last grew better physically, although his mind was sadly unbalanced, and he could recall the past only in a hazy way. [15]

Yet he insisted upon it, over and over again, that he had met Dave before, or, if not the youth, then somebody who looked exactly like him, although older. Pressed to tell his story, he said he had met this man on Cavasa Island, in the South Seas. He also mentioned a crazy nurse and a lost child, but could give no details, going off immediately into a wild flight about the roaring of the sea in his ears and the dancing of the lighthouse beacon in his eyes.

"He must know something of my past," Dave said, when he came away from visiting the old tar. "Oh, if only his mind were perfectly clear!"

"We must wait," answered Oliver Wadsworth, who was along. "I think his mind will clear after awhile. It is certainly clearer now than it was some months ago."

"The man he knows may be my father, or some close relative."

"That may be true, Dave. But don't raise any false hopes. I should not like to see you disappointed for the world." [16]

Dave knew that Phil Lawrence's father was a shipping merchant of considerable standing, owning an interest in a great number of vessels. He went to Phil and learned that the boy was going to take a trip to the South Seas that very summer, and was going to stop at Cavasa Island.

"I am going on business for my father," explained Phil. "It is something special, of which he wishes the supercargo to know nothing." And then he told Dave all he knew of Cavasa Island and its two towns and their inhabitants. After that, Dave sent a letter to both of the towns, asking if there were any persons there by the name of Porter, or if any English-speaking person had lost a child years ago, but so far no answer had been received.

Of course, Phil wanted to know why Dave was so anxious to learn about his proposed trip, and, in the end, the poorhouse boy told his story, to which his chum listened with interest.

"Phil, what would you say if I wanted to go with you on that trip to Cavasa Island?" Dave had said, after his story was finished.

"Do you really mean it, Dave?" had been the return question, and Phil's face had shown his astonishment.

"I do—if matters turn out as I think they may."

"That is, if that old sailor gets around so that he can tell a pretty straight story?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'd like your company, first-rate. But—" Phil drew a deep breath—"I'd hate to see you go on a wild-goose chase. Think of traveling thousands of miles and then being disappointed at the end [17]

of the trip. That old sailor may simply be crazy."

"I don't think so. Why should he mention a lost child—a boy?"

"Well, that is the only thing that makes it look as if there was something in the story. But couldn't I do the looking for you?"

"No, I'd prefer to do that myself. Besides, you must remember, that sailor did not come directly from Cavasa Island to this country. So, whoever was on the island—I mean the person I may be interested in—may have gone elsewhere—in which case I should want to follow him."

"I see. Well, Dave, do what you think is best, and may good luck go with you!" Phil had said; and there the conversation on the subject had come to a close.

It was not until a week later that Dave had called on Billy Dill again—to find the old tar sitting on a porch of the sanitarium, smoking his pipe contentedly.

"On deck again, my hearty!" had been the greeting. "Give us your flipper," and a warm handshake had followed.

But the visit had been productive of little good. Billy Dill could remember nothing clearly, [18] excepting that he knew a man who looked very much like Dave, and that that man had been his friend while he was stranded on Cavasa Island and looking for a chance to ship. He said he could recall a bark named the *Mary Sacord* and a crazy nurse called Polly, but that was all.

"I had a picter o' that man once—the feller that looks like you," he said. "But I dunno what's become o' it," and then he had scratched his head and gone off into a rambling mumble that [19] meant nothing at all. And Dave had gone back to Oak Hall more mystified than ever.

CHAPTER III

THREE CHUMS ON THE RIVER

Down at the boathouse the three boys procured a round-bottomed rowboat, and were soon on the river. Roger took one pair of oars and motioned to Phil to let Dave take the other.

"Let him do the most of the rowing—it will help him to forget his troubles," he whispered, and Phil understood.

It was a beautiful afternoon in the early summer, with just the faintest breeze stirring the trees which lined the river bank on either side. The boys pulled a good stroke, and Roger purposely kept Dave at it, until both were thoroughly warmed up.

"You're improving in your stroke," remarked Dave, as they came to a bend in the watercourse and rested on their oars for a minute. "Perhaps you are training for the boat races."

"Well, I shouldn't mind going into a race," returned the senator's son. "It would be lots of sport, even if I didn't win."

"I am going into some of the field contests this summer," said Phil. "That is, if they come off [20] before I go away."

"When do you expect to start?"

"I don't know yet. It depends upon when one of my father's vessels gets back to San Francisco and ships her cargo."

"I've heard a rumor that the Hall is to be shut up early this summer," said Dave. "The doctor is thinking of building an addition before the fall term begins, and he wants to give the masons and carpenters as much of a show as possible."

"Do you remember that day we were on the river, and Gus Plum ran into us with that gasoline launch?" observed Phil. "My, what a mess we were in!"

"I've had trouble with him ever since I clapped eyes on him," answered Dave.

"Oh, let's talk about something else!" cried Roger. "No matter where we start from, we always end up with Gus Plum. And, by the way, do you notice how thick he is with Nat Poole since Macklin has refused to toady to him?"

"They are almost of a stripe, Roger," answered Dave. "I know Nat Poole thoroughly. The only difference is that Poole is more of a dandy when it comes to dress."

"Poole says he is going in for athletics this summer," said Phil. "I overheard him telling Luke [21] Watson so."

"Is Luke going into training?"

"I don't think so. He loves his banjo and guitar too much."

"Well, I'd love them, too, if I could play as he does," returned Dave.

"Luke told me he had noticed something strange about Shadow," put in Roger. "He asked me if I knew what made Shadow so worried. He said he hadn't heard a funny story out of him for a week, and that's unusual, for Shadow is generally telling about a dozen a day."

"It is possible that he may be fixing for a regular spell of sickness," was Dave's comment. "That's the way some things come on, you know."

The boys resumed their rowing, and Roger put on a burst of speed that made Dave work with a will in order to keep up with him. Then, of a sudden, there came a sharp click and the senator's son tumbled over backwards, splashing the water in every direction.

"Whoop! look out!" yelled Phil. "I don't want any shower-bath! Did you catch a crab, Roger?"

"N—no, I didn't," spluttered the senator's son, when he had regained a sitting position. "There's the trouble," and he pointed to a broken oarlock.

"That's too bad," declared Dave. "Boys, we shall have to have that fixed before we take the boat back to the boathouse—or else we'll have to tell Mr. Dale." The man he mentioned was the first assistant instructor at the Hall. [22]

"Let us row down to Ike Rasmer's boathouse and see if he will sell us an oarlock," suggested Roger. "He ought to have plenty on hand."

"All right," said Phil; "and, as both of you must be tired now, I'll take my turn," and he motioned to Dave to change seats with him, while Roger drew in his remaining oar.

The man whom Roger had mentioned was a boatman who rented out craft of various kinds. His boathouse was about half a mile away, but Phil covered the distance with ease. They found Rasmer out on his little dock, painting a tiny sloop a dark green.

"How do you do, boys?" he called out, pleasantly. "Out for an airing?"

"No, we came down to see if you needed any painters," answered Dave.

"Well, I dunno. What do you think of this job of mine? Ain't it pretty slick?" And Ike Rasmer surveyed his work with evident satisfaction.

"It's all right, Ike," answered Roger. "When you give up boating, take to house-painting, by all means."

"House-painting?" snorted the man. "Not fer me! I ain't goin' to fall off no slippery ladder an' break my neck. I'd rather paint signs. What's that you've got, a broken oarlock?" [23]

"Yes, and I want to know if you'll sell me one to match?"

"Sure I will," answered Ike Rasmer, with a twinkle in his eye. He threw down his paint brush and walked into his boathouse. "Here you be, my boy!" And he held up the parts of a broken oarlock.

"Well—I—I didn't want a broken one," stammered the senator's son.

"Didn't ye say you wanted one to match? Ho, ho! I reckon I cotched you that trip, didn't I?" And the man continued to laugh, and Dave and Phil joined in.

"Ike must have swallowed a whetstone this morning," observed Dave.

"A whetstone?" queried the old boatman. "Why?"

"You're so awfully sharp."

"Ho, ho! That's one on me, sure enough." The man slapped Dave on the shoulder. "You Hall boys are the cute ones, ain't ye? Well, if you want a good oarlock, you shall have it," and he brought forth a number, that Roger might make his selection. The senator's son did so, and paid for it out of his pocket-money.

"We ought to pay for part of that," said Dave, always ready to do what was fair.

"Oh, don't bother, Dave; it's only a trifle," answered his chum. [24]

"Say, some of you boys are out pretty late nights," observed Ike Rasmer, as he resumed his painting, and while Roger was adjusting the new oarlock to the gunwale of the Hall boat.

"Out late?" queried Phil.

"Yes, mighty late."

"I haven't been out for a month."

"Nor I," added Dave and Roger.

"I see that young Hamilton not long ago—the fellow that tells stories whenever he can get the chance. And I saw Gus Plum, too."

"Together?" asked Dave, with sudden interest.

"Oh, no. But they were out the same night."

"Late?"

"I should say so—after twelve o'clock."

"What were they doing, Ike?" asked Phil.

"Rowing along the river. Each had a small boat—I guess one from the school. It was bright moonlight, and I saw them quite plainly when they passed Robbin's Point, where I was fishing."

"And each was alone?"

"Yes. Hamilton was right ahead of Plum, and both rowing along at good speed, too. I thought it was mighty strange, and made up my mind I'd ask you boys about it. But, say, I don't want you to get them into trouble," added the old boatman, suddenly. "They are both customers of mine, sometimes."

"I shan't say anything," answered Roger. "But this puzzles me," he continued, turning to his friends. [25]

"Each boy was alone in a boat?" queried Dave.

"Yes."

"And Plum was following Hamilton?"

"He seemed to be. Anyway, his boat was behind the other."

"Was anybody else around?" asked Phil.

"I didn't see a soul, and the river was almost as bright as day."

"Did you see them a second time?" asked Dave.

"No, for I was getting ready to go home when they came along. I don't know where they went, or when they got back."

Ike Rasmer could tell no more than this, and as it was getting late the three boys lost no time in shoving off once more and pulling for the Hall boathouse.

"This stumps me," declared the senator's son. "What do you make of it? Do you think Shadow and Plum are up to something between them?"

"No, I don't," answered Dave, decidedly. "Shadow is not the fellow to train with Gus Plum. He doesn't like the bully any more than we do."

"No wonder Shadow feels sleepy, if he spends his nights on the river," said Phil. "But I can't make out what he is up to, I must confess. If it was some fun, he would surely take somebody with him." [26]

The boys pulled with all their strength, yet when they arrived at the Hall boathouse, they found that they were exactly twelve minutes behind the supper hour.

"No time to wash up," said Roger. "We'll be lucky if we can slip into the dining room without being observed."

With all speed they tied up their craft and ran for the school building. They were just entering the side door when they were brought face to face with Job Haskers, the second assistant teacher and a man who was very dictatorial in his manner.

"Stop!" cried Job Haskers, catching Dave by the shoulder. "What do you mean by coming in at this hour?"

"We were out on the river and broke an oarlock, Mr. Haskers," replied Dave.

"Humph! an old excuse."

"It is the truth, sir," and Dave's face flushed.

"I broke the oarlock," said Roger. "We got back as soon as we could—as soon as we got a new lock at Ike Rasmer's boathouse."

"We cannot allow pupils to come in half an hour late," went on Job Haskers, loftily. "Directly after supper, report to me in classroom 7," and he passed on.

"We are in for it now," grumbled Phil. "It's a shame! It wasn't our fault that the oarlock broke." [27]

"Wonder what he will make us do?" came from the senator's son.

"Something not very pleasant," answered Dave. He had encountered the second assistant many times before and knew the harsh instructor well.

They were soon in their seats at the table. Some of the other students looked at them inquiringly, but nothing was said. Not far from Dave sat Gus Plum and Nat Poole, and both favored the poor boy with a scowl, to which Dave paid no attention.

The meal finished, Dave, Phil, and the senator's son brushed up a bit, and then hurried to classroom 7, located in an angle of the building. They were soon joined by Job Haskers.

"The three of you may remain here and each write the word 'Oarlock' two hundred times," said the second assistant. "As soon as all of you have finished, ring the bell, and I will come and inspect the work. It must be neatly done, or I shall make you do it over again." And then he left them to themselves, going out and closing the door tightly after him.

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CHAPTER IV

A PLOT TO "SQUARE UP"

"Phew! but this is a real picnic!" came softly from Phil. "He's as kind as they make 'em, isn't he?"

"It's a jolly shame," grumbled the senator's son. "To make us stay in this stuffy classroom on such a fine evening as this."

"I am glad I finished with my lessons," was Dave's comment. "But I am sorry for you two. But, as there is no help for it, we might as well get to work. The sooner begun, the sooner done, you know." And he began to write away vigorously on one of the pads the teacher had pointed out to them.

"I wish old Haskers had to write it himself," growled Roger, as he, too, went at the task. "Oh, but isn't he the mean one! I don't see why the doctor keeps him."

"He's smart, that's why," answered Phil. "I wish we could get square for this. I'm sure Doctor Clay would have excused us, had he known the facts. I've a good mind to go to him about it."

"Don't you do it, Phil," cried Dave. "It's not worth it. Get to work—and we'll think about squaring up afterwards."

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In a minute more all three of the boys were writing as rapidly as their fingers could travel over the paper. Roger was the best penman of the three and finished several minutes before the others. He began to walk up and down the room, whistling softly to himself.

"Yes, I go in for squaring up with old Haskers," he said, rather loudly. "He's about as mean——" And then he stopped short, as the door swung open and the second assistant appeared.

"Huh!" he snorted. "Were you alluding to me, Master Morr?" he demanded.

Roger stammered, and his face turned red.

"Her—here are the words," he stammered.

"Two hundred, eh? Well, you may write a hundred more, and after this be careful of what you say." And then Job Haskers turned to Dave and Phil. "That is all right, you two can go."

"Can I stay with Roger?" asked Dave.

"No, I shall remain here myself," was the cold answer, and then Dave and Phil had to leave.

"I'll wager Roger feels like hugging him," was Phil's comment. "He will want to get square now, sure."

The two boys went out on the campus for awhile and then up to their dormitory, where they found a small crowd assembled, some talking, and a few studying. The door to the adjoining dormitory was open, and there Luke Watson was playing on a banjo, while another student was singing a negro song in a subdued voice.

[30]

"I say, Dave, will you explain something to me?" said a voice from a corner. The question came from Chip Macklin, Gus Plum's former toady. The small boy was working over a sheet of algebra sums.

"Certainly," said Dave, readily, and sat down by the other's side. "Now, what is it? Oh, I see. I got twisted on that myself once. This is the proper equation, and you can reduce it this way," and he was soon deep in the problem, with Chip looking on admiringly. When the problem had been worked out and explained in detail, the small boy was very grateful.

"And, Dave," he went on, in a low tone, "I—I want to tell you something. Be on your guard against Plum and Nat Poole."

"Why?"

"Because they are plotting mischief. I heard them talking in the gym. I don't know what it is about, but they are surely up to something."

"I'll remember, Chip, and much obliged," answered Dave, and then he turned to the other boys, leaving the small youth to finish his examples.

"Hello, where have you been?" came from stout and lazy Buster Beggs. He was sprawled out on

[31]

the end of a couch. "I noticed you didn't get to supper till late, and went right off, directly you had finished."

"Had a special session with Haskers," answered Dave. "He wants me to improve my handwriting."

There was a smile at this, for all the boys knew what it meant.

"Oh, that fellow is a big peach, he is!" came from Sam Day, who sat in one of the windows. "Yesterday, he made me stay in just because I asked Tolliver for a lead pencil."

"He was mad because Polly Vane caught him in an error in grammar," added another youth. "Didn't you, Polly?" he added, addressing a rather girlish-looking boy who sat near Chip Macklin.

"I did," was the soft answer. "It was rather a complicated sentence, but perfectly clear to me," explained the boy.

"I don't wonder, for Polly fairly lives on grammar and language," put in Phil. "I don't believe anybody could trip him up," and this compliment made Bertram Vane blush like a girl. He was in reality one of the best scholars in the academy.

"Which puts me in mind of a story," came from one of the cots. "An——"

"Hello, are you awake, Shadow?" cried Sam Day. "I thought you were snoozing."

[32]

"So I was, but I am slept out, and feel better now. As I was saying, an old farmer and a college professor went out rowing together. Says the college professor, 'Can you do sums in algebra?' 'No,' answers the farmer. 'Then you have missed a great opportunity,' says the professor. Just then the boat struck a rock and went over. 'Save me!' yells the professor. 'Can't you swim?' asked the farmer. 'No.' 'Then you have lost the chance of your life!' says the farmer, and strikes out and leaves the professor to take care of himself."

"Two hundredth time!" came in a solemn voice from the doorway to the next room.

"Wha—what do you mean? I never told any story two hundred times," cried Shadow Hamilton. "And that puts me in mind——"

"Shadow, if you tell another as bad as that, I'll heave you out of the window," came from Sam Day. "That has moss on it three inches th——"

"Oh, I know you, Lazy; you're jealous, that's all. You couldn't tell a story if you stood on your head."

"Can you, Shadow?" and then a general laugh went up, in the midst of which the door opened, and Job Haskers entered. On catching sight of the unpopular teacher, Sam Day lost no time in sliding from the window-sill to a chair.

"Boys, we cannot permit so much noise up here!" cried Job Haskers. "And that constant strumming on a banjo must be stopped. Master Day, were you sitting in the window?"

[33]

"I—er—I think I was," stammered Sam.

"You are aware that is against the rules. If you fell out, the Hall management would be held responsible. After school to-morrow you can write the words, 'Window-sill,' two hundred times. Hamilton, get up, and straighten out that cot properly. I am ashamed of you." And then the hated teacher passed on to the next dormitory.

"I told you to get out of the window," said Macklin, as soon as they were alone. "I was caught that way myself once, and so was Gus Plum."

"Lazy is going to learn how to write a little better, too," said Dave, with a grin.

At that moment Roger came in, looking thoroughly disgusted.

"Made me write half of it over again," he explained. "Oh, it's simply unbearable! Say, I am going to do something to get square, as sure as eggs is eggs."

"Eggs are eggs," corrected Polly Vane, sweetly.

"Oh, thanks, Polly. What about a tailor's goose?"

"Eh?"

"If one tailor's goose is a goose, what are half a dozen?"

"Tailor's geese, I suppose—but, no, you'd not say that. Let me see," and the girlish youth dove into his books. "That's a serious question, truly!" he murmured.

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"Well, I am willing to get square, too," put in Sam Day.

"So am I," grunted Shadow Hamilton. "There was no need to call me down as he did, simply because the cot was mussed up a bit. The question is, what's to be done?"

The boys paused and looked at each other. Then a sudden twinkle came into Dave's clear eyes.

"If we could do it, it would be great," he murmured.

"Do what, Dave?" asked several at once.

"I don't care to say, unless I am certain we are all going to stand together."

"We are!" came in a chorus from all but Polly Vane, who was still deep in his books.

"What about you, Polly?" called out Roger.

"Me? Why—er—if a tailor's goose is a real goose, not a flatiron goose——"

"Oh, drop the goose business. We are talking about getting square with Haskers. Will you stand with the crowd?"

"You see, we don't want to make geese of ourselves," said Phil, with a wink at Polly Vane.

"I'll stand by you," said Polly. "But please don't ask me to do something ridiculous, as when we dumped that feather bed down from the third-story landing, and caught those visitors, instead of Pop Swingly." [35]

"I was only thinking of Farmer Cadmore's ram," said Dave, innocently. "He is now tied up in a field below here. I don't think he likes to be out over night. He'd rather be under shelter—say in Mr. Haskers' room."

"Whoop!" cried Roger. "Just the thing! We will store him away in old Haskers' closet."

This plan met with instant approval, and the boys drew straws as to which of them should endeavor to execute the rather difficult undertaking. Three were to go, and the choice fell upon Dave, Phil, and Sam Day. The others promised to remain on guard and issue a warning at the first intimation of danger.

"I think the coast will be fairly clear," said Sam Day. "I heard Haskers tell Doctor Clay he was going out to-night and would not be back until eleven, or after. That ought to give us plenty of time in which to do the trick."

The three boys could not leave the dormitory until the monitor, Jim Murphy, had made the rounds and seen to it that all was right for the night and the lights put out. Then they stole out into the hallway and down a back stairs. Soon they were out of the building and making for Farmer Cadmore's place. [36]

As they left the Hall they did not see that they were being watched, yet such was a fact. Nat Poole had been out on a special errand and had seen them depart. At once that student hurried to tell his friend, Gus Plum.

"Going out, eh?" said the big bully.

"Yes, and I heard them say something about making it warm when they got back," returned Nat Poole.

"Humph! Nat, we must put a spoke in their wheel."

"I'm willing. What shall we do?"

"I'll think something up—before they get back," replied the bully of Oak Hall. "They haven't any right to be out, and I guess we've got 'em just where we want 'em." [37]

CHAPTER V

WHAT THE PLOT LED TO

It was a clear night, with no moon, but with countless stars bespangling the heavens. All was quiet around Oak Hall, and the three boys found it an easy matter to steal across the campus, gain the shade of a row of oaks, and get out on the side road leading to the Cadmore farm.

"We don't want to get nabbed at this," was Phil's comment. "If Farmer Cadmore caught us, he would make it mighty warm. He's as irritable as old Farmer Brown, and you'll remember what a time we had with him and his calf."

"Does he keep a dog?" asked Dave. "I haven't any use for that sort of an animal, if he is savage."

"No, he hasn't any dog," answered Phil. "I was asking about it last week." But Phil was mistaken; Jabez Cadmore did have a dog—one he had purchased a few days before. He was a good-sized mastiff, and far from gentle.

Walking rapidly, it did not take the three boys long to reach the first of Farmer Cadmore's fields. This was of corn, and passing through it and over a potato patch, they came to an orchard, wherein they knew the ram was tied to one of the trees. [38]

"Now, be careful!" whispered Dave, as he leaped the rail-fence of the orchard. "Somebody may be stirring around the farmhouse"—pointing to the structure some distance away.

"Oh, they must be in bed by this time," said Phil. "Farmers usually retire early. Cadmore is a close-fisted chap, and he won't want to burn up his oil or his candles."

With hearts which beat rather rapidly, the boys stole along from one tree to another. Then they saw a form rise out of the orchard grass, and all gave a jump. But it was only the ram, and the animal was more frightened than themselves.

"Look out that he doesn't butt you," warned Dave. "Some of 'em are pretty *rambunctious*."

They approached the ram with caution, and untied him. Then Phil started to lead him out of the orchard, with Dave and Sam following. At first he would not go, but then began to run, so that Phil kept up with difficulty.

"Stop!" cried the boy. "Not so fast! Don't you hear?" But the ram paid no attention, and now turned to the very end of the orchard. Here the ground was rough, and in a twinkling all three of the boys went down in a hollow and rolled over and over, while the ram, finding himself free, plunged on, and was hidden from view in the darkness. [39]

"He got away!" gasped Phil, scrambling up. "We must—Hark!"

He stopped short, and all of the boys listened. From a distance came the deep baying of the mastiff. The sounds drew closer rapidly.

"A dog—and he is after us!" cried Dave. "Fellows, we have got to get out of this!"

"If we can!" replied Sam Day. "Which is the way out? I am all turned around."

So were the others, and they stared into the darkness under the apple trees in perplexity. The dog was coming closer, and to get away by running appeared to be out of the question.

"Jump into a tree!" cried Dave, and showed the way. The others followed, clutching at some low-hanging branches and pulling themselves up as rapidly as possible. Dave and Sam were soon safe, but the mastiff, making a bound, caught Phil by the sole of his shoe.

"Hi!" roared Phil. "Let go!" And he kicked out with the other foot. This made the mastiff make another snap, but his aim was poor, and he dropped back to the ground, while Phil hauled himself up beside his companions.

"Phew! but that was a narrow escape and no mistake," was the comment of the big youth, after he could catch his breath. "I thought sure he had me by the foot!" [40]

"We are in a pickle," groaned Sam. "I suppose that dog will camp right at the foot of this tree till Farmer Cadmore comes."

"Yes, he is camping now," announced Dave, peering down into the gloom. The moment the mastiff saw him, the canine set up a loud barking.

For a full minute after that none of the boys spoke, each being busy with his thoughts.

"We are treed, that is certain," said Phil, soberly. "And I must say I don't see any way to escape."

"Yes, and don't forget about the ram," added Sam. "Old Jabez Cadmore will want to know about him, too."

"I've got an idea," said Dave, presently. "Perhaps it won't work, but it won't do any harm to try it."

"Give it to us, by all means!"

"The trees are pretty thick in this orchard. Let us try to work our way from one tree to another until we can reach the fence. Then, perhaps, we can drop outside and get out of the way of that animal."

This was considered a good plan, and they proceeded to put it into execution at once. It was no easy matter to climb from tree to tree, and each got a small rent in his clothing, and Sam came near falling to the ground. The mastiff watched them curiously, barking but little, much to their satisfaction. [41]

At last, they came to the final row of apple trees. A long limb hung over a barbed-wire fence, and the boys paused, wondering if it would be safe to drop to the ground.

"If that mastiff should come through the fence, it would go hard with us," was Phil's comment. "I'd rather stay up here and take what comes."

"I am going to risk it," answered Dave. "I see a stick down there, and I'll grab that as soon as I land," and down he dropped, and caught up the stick with alacrity. The dog pounced forward, struck the sharp barbs of the fence, and retreated, howling dismally with pain. Then he made another advance, with like results.

"Hurrah! he can't get through!" ejaculated Dave. "Come on, fellows, it's perfectly safe." And down his chums dropped, and all hurried away from the vicinity of the orchard.

"We had better be getting back," said Sam, after the orchard and potato patch had been left behind. "That farmer may be coming after us before we know it. He must have heard the dog."

But in this he was mistaken, the distance from the house was too great, and the farmer and his family slept too soundly to be disturbed.

"It's too bad we must go back without the ram," observed Dave. "The other fellows will think we got scared and threw up the job." [42]

"Well, it can't be helped," began Phil, when he caught sight of something moving along the road ahead of them. "Look! Is that the ram?"

"It is!" exclaimed Dave. "Wait! If you are not careful, he'll run away again. Stay here, and I'll catch him. I was brought up on a farm, and I know all about sheep."

The others came to a halt, and Dave advanced with caution until he was within a few feet of the ram. Then he held out his hand and made a peculiar sound. The ram grew curious and remained quiet, while the youth picked up the end of the rope which was around the animal's neck.

"I've got him," he said, in a low, even tone. "Now, keep to the rear and I'll manage him." And on they went. Once in a while the ram showed a disposition to butt and to stop short, but Dave coaxed him, and the trouble was not great.

When they came in sight of the school building, they realized that the most difficult part of the task lay before them. It was decided that Dave should keep the ram behind the gymnasium building until Sam and Phil ascertained that the coast was clear.

Left to himself, Dave tied the ram to a post and crawled into the gymnasium by one of the windows. He procured several broad straps, and also a small blanket. Just as he came out with the things, Sam and Phil came hurrying back, each with a look of deep concern on his face. [43]

"The jig is up!" groaned Sam. "Plum and Poole are on to our racket, and they won't let us in!"

"Plum and Poole!" exclaimed Dave. "Are they at that back door?"

"Yes, and when we came up, they jeered us," said Phil. "Oh, but wasn't I mad! They said if we tried to force our way in, they'd ring up the doctor, or Mr. Dale."

"Does our crowd know about this?"

"I don't think they do."

"Plum and Poole intend to keep us out all night, eh?"

"It looks that way. They said we could ask Haskers to let us in when he came."

"I am not going to Haskers," said Dave, firmly. "Sam, you look after this ram for a few minutes. I'll make them let us in, and not give us away, either. Phil, you come along."

"But I don't see how you are going to do it," expostulated the big boy.

"Never mind; just come on, that's all. Plum isn't going to have a walk-over to-night."

Somewhat mystified, Phil accompanied Dave across the campus and to the rear door of the Hall. Here the barrier was open only a few inches, with Plum peering out, and Poole behind him. The face of the bully wore a look of triumph. [44]

"How do you like staying out?" he whispered, hoarsely. "Fine night for a ramble, eh? You can tell old Haskers what a fine walk you have had! He'll be sure to reward you handsomely!"

"See here, Plum, I am not going to waste words with you to-night," said Dave, in a low, but intense, tone. "You let us in, and at once, or you'll regret it."

"Will I?"

"You will. And what is more: don't you dare to say a word to anybody about what is happening now."

"Oh, dear, but you can talk big! Maybe you want me to get down on my knees as you pass in," added the bully, mockingly.

"If you don't let us in, do you know what I shall do?" continued Dave, in a whisper. "I shall go to Doctor Clay and tell him that you are in the habit of going out after midnight to row on the river."

If Dave had expected this statement to have an effect upon the bully, his anticipations were more than realized. Gus Plum uttered a cry of dismay and fell back on Nat Poole's shoulder. His face lost its color, and he shook from head to foot.

"Yo-you——" he began. "Wha-what do you know about my—my rowing on the river?"

"I know a good deal." [45]

"Yo-you've been—following—me?" For once the bully could scarcely speak.

"I shan't say any more," said Dave, giving his chum a pinch in the arm to keep quiet. "Only, are you going to let us in or not?"

"N-no—I mean, yes," stammered Gus Plum. He could scarcely collect himself, he seemed so upset. "You can come in. Poole, we'll have to let them in this time."

"And you will keep still about this?" demanded Dave.

"Yes, yes! I won't say a word, Porter, not a word! And—and I'll see you to-morrow after school. I—that is—I want to talk to you. Until then, mum's the word on both sides." And then, to the astonishment of both Dave and Phil, Gus Plum hurried away, dragging Nat Poole with him. [46]

CHAPTER VI

THE FUN OF A NIGHT

"My gracious, Plum acts as if he was scared to death," observed Phil, after the bully and his companion had departed, leaving the others a clear field.

"He certainly was worked up," returned Dave. "I wonder what he'll have to say to-morrow?"

There was no answering that question, and the two boys hurried to where they had left Sam without attempting to reach a conclusion. They found their chum watching out anxiously.

"Well?" came from his lips as soon as he saw them.

"It's all right," answered Dave, and told as much as he deemed necessary. "Come, we must hurry, or Job Haskers will get back before we can fix things."

"This ram is going to be something to handle," observed Phil. "No 'meek as a lamb' about him."

"I'll show you how to do the trick," answered the boy from the country, and with a dexterous turn of the horns, threw the ram over on one side. "Now sit on him, until I tie his legs with the straps." [47]

In a few minutes Dave had the animal secured, and the blanket was placed over the ram's head, that he might not make too much noise. Then they hoisted their burden up between them and started toward the Hall.

It was no easy matter to get the ram upstairs and into Job Haskers' room. On the upper landing they were met by Roger and Buster Beggs, who declared the coast clear. Once in the room of the assistant teacher, they cleared out the bottom of the closet and then, releasing the animal from his bonds, thrust him inside and shut and locked the door, leaving the key in the lock.

"Now, skip!" cried Dave, in a low voice. "He may cut up high-jinks in another minute."

"Here is an apple he can have—that will keep him quiet for awhile," said Roger, and put it in the closet, locking the door as before. The ram was hungry, and began to munch the fruit with satisfaction.

A few minutes more found the boys safe in their dormitory, where they waited impatiently for the second assistant teacher to get back to Oak Hall. At last they heard him unlock the front door and come up the broad stairs. Then they heard his room door open and shut.

"Now for the main act in the drama," whispered Roger. "Come on, but don't dare to make any noise." [48]

All of the boys, including little Macklin and Polly Vane, were soon outside of dormitories Nos. 11 and 12—the two rooms the "crowd" occupied. They went forth on tiptoe, scarcely daring to breathe.

Arriving at Job Haskers' door, they listened and heard the teacher preparing to go to bed. One shoe after another dropped to the floor, and then came a creaking of the bed, which told that he had lain down.

"That ram isn't going to do anything," began Sam, in disgust, when there came a bang on the closet door that caused everybody to jump.

"Wha-what's that?" cried Job Haskers, sitting up in bed. He fancied somebody had knocked on the door to the hall.

Another bang resounded on the closet door. The ram had finished the apple, and wanted his freedom. The teacher leaped to the middle of the bedroom floor.

"Who is in there?" he demanded, walking toward the closet. "Who is there, I say?"

Getting no answer, he paused in perplexity. Then a grin overspread his crafty face, and he slipped on some of his clothing.

"So I've caught you, eh?" he observed. "Going to play some trick on me, were you? I am half of a mind to make you stay there all night, no matter who you are. I suppose you thought I wouldn't get back quite so early. In the morning, I'll——" [49]

Another bang on the door cut his speculations short. He struck a match and lit the light, and then unlocking the closet door, threw it wide open.

What happened next came with such suddenness that Job Haskers was taken completely by

surprise. As soon as the door was opened, the ram leaped out. He caught one glimpse of the teacher, and, lowering his head, he made a plunge and caught Job Haskers fairly and squarely in the stomach, doubling up the man like a jack-knife. Haskers went down in a heap, and, turning, the ram gave him a second prod in the side.

"Hi! stop! murder! help!" came in terror. "Stop it, you beast! Hi! call him off, somebody! Oh, my!" And then Job Haskers tried to arise and place a table between himself and the ram. But the animal was now thoroughly aroused, and went at the table with vigor, upsetting it on the teacher and hurling both over into a corner.

By this time the noise had aroused nearly the entire school, and pupils and teachers came hurrying from all directions.

"What is the trouble here?" demanded Andrew Dale, as he came up to where Dave was standing.

"Sounds like a bombardment in Mr. Haskers' room, sir," was the answer.

[50]

"Mr. Haskers is trying some new gymnastic exercises," came from a student in the rear of the crowd.

"Maybe he has got a fit," suggested another. "He didn't look well at supper time."

The racket in the room continued, and now Doctor Clay, arrayed in a dressing-gown and slippers, came upon the scene, followed by Pop Swingly, the janitor.

"Has Mr. Haskers caught a burglar?" asked the janitor.

"That's it!" shouted Phil, with a wink at his friends. "Look out, Swingly, that you don't get shot!"

"Shot?" gasped the janitor, who was far from being a brave man. "I don't want to get shot, not me!" and he edged behind some of the boys.

Doctor Clay hurried to the door of the room, only to find it locked from the inside.

"Mr. Haskers, what is the trouble?" he demanded.

Another bang and a thump was the only reply, accompanied by several yells. Then, of a sudden, came a crash of glass and an exclamation of wonder.

"Something has gone through the window, as sure as you are born!" whispered Dave to Roger.

"Oh, Dave, you don't suppose it was Haskers? If he fell to the ground, he'd be killed!"

[51]

"Open the door, or I shall break in!" thundered Doctor Clay, and then the door was thrown open and Job Haskers stood there, a look of misery on his face and trembling from head to foot.

"What is the trouble?" asked the doctor.

"The ram—he butted me—knocked me down—nearly killed me!" spluttered the assistant teacher.

"The ram—what ram?"

"He's gone now—hit the window and jumped out."

"Mr. Haskers, have you lost your senses?"

"No, sir. There was a ram in this room—in the closet. I heard him, and opened the door—I—oh! I can feel the blow yet. He was a—a terror!"

"Do you mean a real, live ram?" questioned Andrew Dale, with a slight smile on his face—that smile which made all the boys his friends.

"I should say he was alive! Oh, it's no laughing matter!" growled Job Haskers. "He nearly killed me!"

"An' did he go through the winder?" asked Pop Swingly, as he stepped to the broken sash.

"He did—went out like a rocket. Look at the wreck of the table! I am thankful I wasn't killed!"

"How did the ram get here?" asked Doctor Clay.

[52]

"How should I know? He was in the closet when I came in. Some of those villainous boys—"

"Gently, Mr. Haskers. The boys are not villains."

"Well, they put the ram there, I am sure of it."

The doctor turned to the janitor.

"Swingly, go below and see if you can see anything of the ram. He may be lying on the ground with a broken leg, or something like that. If so, we'll have to kill him, to put him out of his misery."

The janitor armed himself with a stout cane and went downstairs, and after him trooped Andrew Dale and fully a score of boys. But not a sign of the ram was to be seen, only some sharp footprints where he had landed.

"Must have struck fair an' square, an' run off," observed the janitor. "Rams is powerful tough critters. I knowed one as fell over a stone cliff, an' never minded it at all."

"Let us take a look around," said the first assistant. "Boys, get to bed, you'll take cold in this night air." And then the students trooped back into the Hall.

Upstairs they found that Job Haskers and Doctor Clay had gotten into a wrangle. The assistant wanted an examination of the boys at once, regardless of the hour of the night, but Doctor Clay demurred. [53]

"We'll investigate in the morning," said he. "And, as the window is broken out, Mr. Haskers, you may take the room next to mine, which is just now vacant."

"Somebody ought to be punished——"

"We'll investigate, do not fear."

"It's getting worse and worse. By and by there won't be any managing these rascals at all," grumbled the assistant teacher. "Some of them ought to have their necks wrung!"

"There, that is enough," returned the doctor, sternly. "I think we can manage them, even at such a time as this. Now, boys," he continued, "go to bed, and do not let me hear any more disturbances." And he waved the students to their various dormitories.

"Say, but isn't old Haskers mad!" exclaimed Roger, when he and his chums were in their dormitory. "He'd give a good bit to find out who played the joke on him."

"I hope that ram got away all right," came from Dave. "I didn't want to see the animal injured."

"I think Pop Swingly is right, animals like that are tough," was Buster Beggs' comment. "More than likely he is on his way back to Farmer Cadmore's farm."

"We'll find out later on," put in Sam Day. [54]

"There is another thing to consider," continued Dave. "It wouldn't be right to let Doctor Clay stand for the expense of that broken window. I think I'll send him the price of the glass out of my pocket money."

"Not a bit of it!" exclaimed Phil. "Let us pass around the hat. We are all in this as deep as you." And so it was decided that all of the students of dormitories Nos. 11 and 12 should contribute to the fund for mending the broken sash. Then, as Andrew Dale came around on a tour of inspection, all hopped into bed and were soon sound asleep. [55]

CHAPTER VII

GUS PLUM'S MYSTERIOUS OFFER

When Doctor Clay came to his desk on the following morning, he found an envelope lying there, on which was inscribed the following:

"To pay for the broken window. If it costs more, please let the school know, and we'll settle the bill." Three dollars was inclosed.

This caused the worthy doctor to smile quietly to himself. It took him back to his college days, when he had aided in several such scrapes.

"Boys will be boys," he murmured. "They are not villains, only real flesh-and-blood youngsters."

"You are going to punish those boys?" demanded Job Haskers, coming up.

"If we can locate them."

"Humph! I'd catch them, if it took all day."

"You may do as you think best, Mr. Haskers; only remember you have young gentlemen to deal with. I presume they thought it only a harmless prank."

"I'll prank them, if I catch them," growled the assistant to himself, as he walked away.

Word had been passed around among the boys, and when the roll was called all were ready to "face the music." [56]

"Who knows anything about the proceedings of last night?" began Job Haskers, gazing around fiercely.

There was a pause, and then a rather dull boy named Carson arose.

"Great Cæsar! Is he going to blab on us?" murmured Phil.

"What have you got to say, Carson?" asked the teacher.

"I—I—I kn-know wh-what happened," stuttered Carson.

"Very well, tell me what you know?"

"A ra-ra-ra-ram got into your ro-ro-ro-room, and he kno-kno-kno-knocked you d-d-d-down!" went on the boy, who was the worst stutterer at Oak Hall.

"Ahem! I know that. Who put the ram in my room?"

"I d-d-d-d——"

"You did!" thundered the teacher. "How dare you do such a thing!"

"I d-d-d-d——"

"Carson, I am—er—amazed. What made you do it?"

"I d-d-d-didn't say I d-d-d-did it," spluttered poor Carson. "I said I d-d-d-didn't know."

"Oh!" Job Haskers' face fell, and he looked as sour as he could. "Sit down. Now, then, whoever [57] knows who put that ram in my room last night, stand up."

Not a boy arose.

"Will anybody answer?" stormed the teacher.

There was utter silence, broken only by the ticking of the clock on the wall. Dave looked at Gus Plum and Nat Poole, but neither budged.

"I shall call the roll, and each boy must answer for himself," went on Job Haskers. "Ansberry!"

"I can tell you nothing, Mr. Haskers," was the reply, and the pupil dropped back into his seat.

"Humph! Aspinwell!"

"I can tell you nothing, Mr. Haskers."

"Babcock!"

"I can tell you nothing, Mr. Haskers."

"This is—er—outrageous! Beggs!"

"Sorry, but I can tell you nothing, Mr. Haskers," drawled the fat youth.

After that, one name after another was called, and every pupil said practically the same thing, even Plum and Poole stating that they could tell nothing. When the roll-call was finished, the teacher was fairly purple with suppressed rage.

"I shall inquire into this at some future time!" he snapped out. "You are dismissed to your classes." And he turned away to hide his chagrin.

"Do you think we are safe?" whispered Phil to Dave, as they hurried to their room. [58]

"I think so," was the country boy's reply. And Dave was right—the truth concerning the night's escapade did not come out until long after, when it was too late to do anything in the matter.

Dave was anxious to make a record for himself in his studies, and, with the end of the term so close at hand, he did his best over his books and in the classroom. He was close to the top of his class, and he was already certain of winning a special prize given for mathematics. Roger was just behind him in the general average, and Phil was but five points below, with a special prize for language to his credit. The best scholar of all was Polly Vane, who, so far, had a percentage of ninety-seven, out of a possible hundred.

Dave had not forgotten what Gus Plum had said, and just before the session for the day was ended received a note from the bully, asking him to come down to a point on the lake known as the Three Rocks, and located at the extreme limit of the academy grounds. Plum asked him particularly to come alone.

"Aren't you afraid Plum will play some trick on you?" asked Phil, who saw the note delivered, and read it.

"I'll be on my guard," answered Dave. "I am not afraid of him, if it should come to an encounter between us."

Having put away his books, Dave sauntered down to the spot mentioned, which was behind a thick fringe of bushes. Plum was not yet there, but soon came up at a quick walk. [59]

"I couldn't get away from Poole," explained the bully. "Are you alone?" and he gazed around anxiously.

"Yes, I am alone," answered Dave, coolly.

There was a silence, and each boy looked at the other. Dave's eyes were clear, but the bully's had something of the haunted in them.

"You said something about me last night," began Plum, lamely, "something about my being on the

river."

"I did."

"Did you see me on the river?"

"I am not going to answer that question just yet, Plum."

"Huh! Maybe you are only joking?"

"Very well, you can think as you please. If you want to talk to me, very well; if not, I'll go back to the school," and Dave started to walk away.

"Hold on!" The bully caught the country boy by the arm. "If you saw me on the river, what else did you see?"

"You were following Shadow Hamilton in a boat."

"I wasn't—I didn't have anything to do with Hamilton. I—I didn't know he was out till afterwards," went on the bully, fiercely. "Don't you say such a thing—don't you dare!" His face was very white. [60]
"You are not going to get me into trouble!"

"Is that all you have to say, Plum?"

"N-no. I want to talk this over, Porter. I—that is—let us come to terms—that's the best way. It won't do you any good to try to get me into trouble. I—I haven't done anything wrong. I was out on the river by—by accident, that's all—got it into my head to have a lark that night, just as you went out for a lark last night."

"Well, what do you want to see me about, then?" questioned Dave. He could readily see that the bully had something on his mind which troubled him greatly.

"I think we might as well come to terms—you keep still and I'll keep still."

"I haven't said anything, Plum."

"Yes, but you might, later on, you know. I—that is, let us make a sure thing of this," stammered the bully.

"What are you driving at, Plum? Talk out straight."

"I will." The bully looked around, to make certain that nobody was within hearing distance. "You're a poor boy, Porter, aren't you?"

"I admit it."

"Just so. And, being poor, some pocket money comes in mighty handy at times, doesn't it?" [61]

"I have some spending money."

"But not as much as you'd like; ain't that so?"

"Oh, I could spend more—if I had it," answered Dave, trying to find out what the other was driving at.

"Well, supposing I promised to give you some money to spend, Porter, how would that strike you?"

Dave was astonished, the suggestion was so entirely unexpected. But he tried not to show his feelings.

"Would you give me money, Gus?" he asked, calmly.

"Yes, I would—if you'd only promise to keep quiet."

"How much?"

"Well—I—er—I'd do the right thing. Did Phil Lawrence see me on the river?"

"No."

"Any of the other boys?"

"Not that I know of."

"Then you were alone." Gus Plum drew a sigh of relief. "Now, let us come to terms, by all means. I'll do the square thing, and you'll have all the pocket money you want."

"But how much are you willing to give me?" queried Dave, his curiosity aroused to its highest pitch.

"I'll give you"—the bully paused, to add impressiveness to his words—"I'll give you fifty dollars." [62]

"Fifty dollars!" ejaculated Dave. He was bewildered by the answer. He had expected Plum to name a dollar or two at the most.

"Ain't that enough?"

"Do you think it is enough?" asked the country boy. He scarcely knew what to say. He was trying to study the bully's face.

"Well—er—if you'll give me your solemn word not to whisper a word—not a word, remember—I'll make it a—a hundred dollars."

"You'll give me a hundred dollars? When?"

"Before the end of the week. I haven't the money now, but, if you want it, I can give you ten dollars on account—just to bind the bargain," and the bully drew two five-dollar bills from his vest pocket. "But, remember, mum's the word—no matter what comes."

He thrust the bills at Dave, who merely looked at them. Then the country boy drew himself up.

"I don't want a cent of your money, Gus Plum," he said, in a low, but firm, voice. "You can't bribe me, no matter what you offer."

The bully dropped back and his face fell. He put his money back into his pocket. Then he glared savagely at Dave.

"Then you won't come to terms!" he fairly hissed between his teeth.

[63]

"No."

"You had better. If you dare to tell on me—breathe a word of what you saw that night—I'll—I'll make it so hot for you that you'll wish you had never been born! I am not going to let a country jay like you ruin me! Not much! You think twice before you make a move! I can hurt you in a way you least expect, and if I have to leave this school, you'll have to go, too!" And shaking his fist at Dave, Gus Plum strode off, leaving Dave more mystified than ever before.

[64]

CHAPTER VIII

SHADOW HAMILTON'S CONFESSION

"I simply can't understand it, Phil. Gus Plum was frightened very much, or he would never have offered me a hundred dollars to keep quiet."

Dave and his chum were strolling along the edge of the campus, an hour after the conversation recorded in the last chapter. The boy from the poorhouse had told Phil all that had occurred.

"It is certainly the most mysterious thing I ever heard of, outside of this mystery about Billy Dill," answered Phil. "Plum has been up to something wrong, but just what, remains to be found out."

"And what about Shadow Hamilton?"

"I can't say anything about Shadow. I never thought he would do anything that wasn't right."

"Nor I. What would you advise?"

"Keep quiet and await developments. Something is bound to come to the surface, sooner or later."

"Hello, you fellows, where are you bound?" came in a cry, and looking up they saw a well-known form approaching.

"Ben!" cried Dave, rushing up to the newcomer and shaking hands warmly. "When did you come in? And how are all the folks at Crumville? Did you happen to see Professor Potts and the Wadsworths?"

[65]

"One question at a time, please," answered Ben Basswood, as he shook hands with Phil. "Yes, I saw them all, and everybody wants to be remembered to you. Jessie sends her very sweetest regards—"

"Oh, come now, no fooling," interrupted Dave, blushing furiously. "Tell us the plain truth."

"Well, she sent her best regard, anyway. And all the others did the same. The professor is getting along finely. You'd hardly know him now, he looks so hale and hearty. It did him a world of good to go to live with the Wadsworths."

"You must have had a pretty nice vacation," observed Phil.

"Yes, although it was rather short. But, say, have you fellows heard about Plum's father?" went on Ben Basswood, earnestly.

"We've heard that he lost some money."

"Yes, and he has tied himself up in some sort of underhanded get-rich-quick concern, and I understand some folks are going to sue him for all he is worth. That will be rather rough on Gus—if his father loses all his money."

"True enough," said Dave. "But tell us all the news," he continued, and then Ben related the

particulars of affairs at Crumville, and of a legal fight between his father and Mr. Aaron Poole, in which Mr. Basswood had won. [66]

"That will make Nat more sour on you than ever," observed Phil.

"Maybe; but I can't help it. If he leaves me alone I'll leave him alone."

The following day passed quietly at Oak Hall. Gus Plum and Nat Poole kept by themselves. Shadow Hamilton appeared to brighten a little, but Dave observed that the youth was by no means himself. He did not care to play baseball or "do a turn" at the gym., and kept for the most part by himself.

Saturday passed, and on Sunday a large number of the students marched off to three of the town churches. Dave, Roger, and Phil attended the same church and Ben went with them, and all listened to a strong sermon on Christian brotherhood, which was destined to do each of them good.

"It makes a fellow feel as if he's got to help somebody else," said Roger.

"Well, it is our duty to help others," answered Dave. "The fellow who isn't willing to do that is selfish."

"You've certainly helped Macklin, Dave," said Ben. "I never saw such a change in a fellow. I'll wager he is more than happy to be out of Gus Plum's influence." [67]

"I'd help Plum, too, if he'd let me," said Dave, and then gave a long sigh.

Two days later there was a sensation at the school. Doctor Clay came into the main classroom in the middle of the forenoon, looking much worried.

"Young gentlemen, I wish to talk to you for a few minutes," he said. "As some of you may know, I am the proud possessor of a stamp collection which I value at not less than three thousand dollars. The stamps are arranged in three books, and I have spent eight years in collecting them. These books of stamps are missing, and I wish to know if anybody here knows anything about them. If they were taken away in a spirit of fun, let me say that such a joke is a poor one, and I trust the books will be speedily returned, and without damage to a single stamp."

All of the boys listened with interest, for many of them had inspected the collection, and they knew that stamp-gathering was one of the kind doctor's hobbies.

"Doctor, I am sorry to hear of this," said one boy, named Bert Dalgart, a youth who had a small collection of his own. "I looked at the collection about ten days ago, as you know. I haven't seen it since."

"Nor have I seen it," said Roger, who also collected stamps. [68]

"Is there any boy here who knows anything at all about my collection?" demanded the doctor, sharply. "If so, let him stand up."

There was a pause, but nobody arose. The master of Oak Hall drew a long breath.

"If this is a joke, I want the collection returned by to-morrow morning," he went on. "If this is not done, and I learn who is guilty, I shall expel that student from this school."

He then passed on to the next classroom, and so on through the whole academy. But nothing was learned concerning the missing stamp collection, and the end of the inquiry left the worthy doctor much perplexed and worried.

"That is too bad," was Dave's comment, after school was dismissed. "That was a nice collection. I'd hate to have it mussed up, if it was mine."

"The fellow who played that joke went too far," said the senator's son. "He ought to put the collection back at once."

The matter was talked over by all the students for several days. In the meantime Doctor Clay went on a vigorous hunt for the stamp collection, but without success.

"Do you think it possible that somebody stole that collection?" questioned Dave of Phil one afternoon, as he and his chum strolled in the direction of Farmer Cadmore's place, to see if they could learn anything about the ram. [69]

"Oh, it's possible; but who would be so mean?"

"Maybe some outsider got the stamps."

"I don't think so. An outside thief would have taken some silverware, or something like that. No, I think those stamps were taken by somebody in the school."

"Then maybe the chap is afraid to return them—for fear of being found out."

So the talk ran on until the edge of the Cadmore farm was gained. Looking into a field, they saw the ram grazing peacefully on the fresh, green grass.

"He's as right as a button!" cried Phil. "I guess he wasn't hurt at all, and after jumping from the window he came straight home," and in this surmise the youth was correct.

As the boys walked back to the school they separated, Phil going to the gymnasium to practice on the bars and Dave to stroll along the river. The boy from Crumville wanted to be by himself, to think over the past and try to reason out what the sailor had told him. Many a time had Dave tried to reason this out, but always failed, yet he could not bear to think of giving up.

"Some time or another I've got to find out who I am and where I came from," he murmured. "I am not going to remain a nobody all my life!"

He came to a halt in a particularly picturesque spot, and was about to sit down, when he heard a noise close at hand. Looking through the bushes, he saw Shadow Hamilton on his knees and with his clasped hands raised to heaven. The boy was praying, and remained on his knees for several minutes. When he arose, he turned around and discovered Dave, who had just started to leave the spot. [70]

"Dave Porter!" came in a low cry, and Hamilton's face grew red.

"Hello, Shadow! Taking a walk along the river? If you are, I'll go along."

"I—I was walking," stammered the other boy. His eyes searched Dave's face. "You—were you watching me?" he asked, lamely.

"Not exactly."

"But you saw me—er——"

"I saw you, Shadow, I couldn't help it. It was nothing for you to be ashamed of, though."

"I—I—oh, I can't tell you!" and Hamilton's face took on a look of keen misery.

"Shadow, you are in some deep trouble, I know it," came bluntly from Dave. "Don't you want to tell me about it? I'll do what I can for you. We've been chums ever since I came here and I hate to see you so downcast."

"It wouldn't do any good—you couldn't help me."

"Are you sure of that? Sometimes an outsider looks at a thing in a different light than that person himself. Of course, I don't want to pry into your secrets, if you don't want me to." [71]

Shadow Hamilton bit his lip and hesitated.

"If I tell you something, will you promise to keep it to yourself?"

"If it is best, yes."

"I don't know if it is best or not, but I don't want you to say anything."

"Well, what is it?"

"You know all about the doctor losing that collection of stamps?"

"Certainly."

"And you know about the loss of some of the class stick-pins about three weeks ago?"

"Yes, I know Mr. Dale lost just a dozen of them."

"The stick-pins are worth two dollars each."

"Yes."

"And that stamp collection was worth over three thousand dollars."

"I know that, too."

"Well, I stole the stick-pins, and I stole the stamp collection, too!" [72]

CHAPTER IX

ABOUT ATHLETIC CONTESTS

"You stole those things, you!" gasped Dave. He could scarcely utter the words. He shrank back a step or two, and his face was filled with horror.

"Yes, I did it," came from Shadow Hamilton.

"But—but—oh, Shadow, you must be fooling! Surely, you didn't really go to work and—and——" Try his best, Dave could not finish.

"I stole the things; or, rather, I think I had better say I took them, although it amounts to the same thing. But I don't think I am quite as bad as you suppose."

"But, if you took them, why didn't you return them? You have had plenty of time."

"I would return them, only I don't know where the things are."

"You don't know? What do you mean?"

"I'll have to tell you my whole story, Dave. Will you listen until I have finished?"

"Certainly."

"Well, to start on, I am a great dreamer and, what is more, I occasionally walk in my sleep." [73]

"Yes, you told me that before."

"One morning I got up, and I found my clothes all covered with dirt and cobwebs and my shoes very muddy. I couldn't explain this, and I thought some of the fellows had been putting up a job on me. But I didn't want to play the calf, so I said nothing.

"Some days after that I found my clothing in the same condition, and I likewise found that my hands were blistered, as if from some hard work. I couldn't understand it, but suddenly it flashed on me that I must have been sleep-walking. I was ashamed of myself, so I told nobody."

"Well, but this robbery——" began Dave.

"I am coming to that. When Doctor Clay spoke about his stamp collection, I remembered that I had dreamed of that collection one night. It seemed to me that I must run away with the collection and put it in a safe place. Then I remembered that I had dreamed of the stick-pins at another time, and had dreamed of going to the boathouse to put them in my locker there. That made me curious, and I went down to the locker, and there I found—what do you think? One of the stick-pins stuck in the wood."

"A new one?"

"Exactly. That made me hunt around thoroughly, and after a while I discovered this, under my rowing sweater." [74]

As Shadow finished, he drew from his pocket a doubled-up sheet of paper. Dave unfolded it, and saw it was a large sheet of rare American postage stamps.

"Did you find any more than this?"

The other youth shook his head.

"Did you hunt all around the boathouse?"

"Yes, I hunted high and low, in the building and out. I have spent all my spare time hunting; that is why I have had such poor lessons lately."

"Don't you remember going out to row during the night, Shadow?"

At this question, Shadow Hamilton started.

"What do you know about that?" he demanded.

"Not much—only I know you were out."

"Do you know where I went to?"

"I do not."

"Well, neither do I. I dreamed about rowing, but I can't, for the life of me, remember where I went. I must have gone a good way, for I blistered my hands with the oars."

"And yet you can't remember?"

"Oh, I know it sounds like a fairy tale, and I know nobody will believe it, yet it is true, Dave, I'll give you my word on it."

"I believe you, Shadow. Your being out is what has made you so tired lately. Now you have told me a secret, I am going to tell you one. Ike Rasmer saw you out on the river at night, passing Robbin's Point. And there is something stranger to tell." [75]

"What is that?"

"Are you dead certain you were asleep on the river?"

"I must have been. I remember nothing more than my dream."

"Do you know that you were followed?"

"By Rasmer?"

"No, by Gus Plum."

"Plum!" gasped Shadow Hamilton, and his face turned pale. "Are—are you certain of this?"

"That is what Ike Rasmer told me," and then Dave related all that the old boatman had said.

"That makes the mystery deeper," muttered Shadow. "It puts me in mind of a story I once—but I

can't tell stories now!" He gave a sigh. "Oh, Dave, I am so wretched over this! I don't know what to do."

"I know what I'd do."

"What?"

"Go and tell Doctor Clay everything."

"I—I can't do it. He thought so much of that stamp collection—he'll surely send me home—and make my father pay for the collection, too."

"I don't think he'll send you home. About pay, that's another question. In one sense, you didn't really steal the stamps. A fellow isn't responsible for what he does in his sleep. I'd certainly go to him. If you wish, I'll go with you." [76]

The two talked the matter over for half an hour, and, on Dave's continual urging, Shadow Hamilton at last consented to go to Doctor Clay and make a clean breast of the matter.

They found the master of Oak Hall in his private office, writing a letter. He greeted them pleasantly and told them to sit down until he had finished. Then he turned around to them inquiringly.

It was no easy matter for Shadow Hamilton to break the ice, and Dave had to help him do it. But, once the plunge was taken, the youth given to sleep-walking told him his story in all of its details, and turned over to the doctor the stick-pin and the sheet of stamps he had found.

During the recital, Doctor Clay's eyes scarcely once left the face of the boy who was making the confession. As he proceeded, Shadow Hamilton grew paler and paler, and his voice grew husky until he could scarcely speak.

"I know I am to blame, sir," he said, at last. "But I—I—oh, Doctor Clay, please forgive me!" he burst out.

"My boy, there is nothing to forgive," was the kindly answer, that took even Dave by surprise. "It would seem that you have been as much of a victim as I have been. I cannot blame you for doing these things in your sleep. I take it for granted that you have told me the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" [77]

"I have, sir, I have!"

"Then there is nothing to do but to investigate this as far as we can. Of course, I realize that it would cut you to have everybody in the school know of your sleep-walking habit."

"Yes, sir. But I shouldn't care, if only you could get back the stamps and the pins."

"Is Rasmer sure he saw Plum following Hamilton on the river?" asked the doctor, turning to Dave.

"That is what he told Morr, Lawrence, and myself the day we stopped at his boathouse for a new oarlock."

"Then I must see him and have a talk with him," said the master of Oak Hall; and after a few words more the boys were dismissed.

On the following morning, Doctor Clay drove down to Ike Rasmer's place. The boatman was pleasant enough, but he remembered that Gus Plum was one of his customers, and when questioned closely, said he could not testify absolutely to the fact that it had been Plum who had followed Hamilton on the river.

"You see, my eyesight ain't of the best, doctor," said Rasmer, lamely. "I saw Hamilton full in the face, but the other feller had his face turned away from me. I ain't gittin' nobody into trouble, 'less I am sure of what I am doin'—that's nateral, ain't it?" [78]

"Very," answered Doctor Clay, coldly, and returned to the academy in deep thought. He realized that Ike Rasmer was now on his guard, and would tell no more than was absolutely required of him.

The next movement of the worthy doctor was to call Gus Plum into his office. The bully was anxious, but had evidently nerved himself for the ordeal.

"No, sir, I have not been out on the river at night this season," said he, blandly, in reply to the doctor's question. "I have not dared to go out so late, for I take cold too easily." And he coughed slightly.

This was all Doctor Clay could get from Plum, and he dismissed the bully without mentioning Hamilton or the missing pins and stamps. Then the doctor called in Andrew Dale, and the two consulted together for the best part of an hour; but what the outcome of that discussion was the boys were not told. A day later, however, Shadow Hamilton was told to change his sleeping quarters to a small room next to that occupied by Andrew Dale.

"Hello! Shadow is going to get high-toned and have a sleeping-room all to himself!" cried Roger, and would have asked some questions, only Dave cut him short. [79]

"There is a good reason, Roger," whispered the country boy. "But don't ask me to explain now. If

you question Shadow, you'll only hurt his feelings." This "tip" spread, and none of the boys after that said a word before Hamilton about the change. But later all came to Dave and asked what it meant.

"I wish I could tell you, but I can't, fellows. Some day, perhaps, you'll know; until then, you'll have to forget it." And that is all Dave would say.

The boys were too busy to give the mystery much attention. A series of athletic contests had been arranged, and all of the students who were to take part had gone into training in the gymnasium, and on the cinder-track which was laid out in the field beyond the last-named building. The contests were to come off on the following Saturday, and, to make matters more interesting, Doctor Clay had put up several prizes of books and silver medals, to be presented to the winners.

Dave had entered for a hurdle race, and Roger, Phil, and Ben were in various other contests. Dave felt that he would stand a good chance at the hurdles, for on Caspar Potts' farm he had frequently practiced at leaping over the rail fences while on the run. He did not know surely who would be pitted against him until Ben Basswood brought him the news. [80]

"Gus Plum, Fanning, and Saultz are in the hurdle race," said Ben. "Plum says he feels certain he will win."

"Plum," repeated the country boy. "I knew the others were in it, but I didn't think Gus would take part."

"He went in right after he heard that you had entered. He says he is going to beat you out of your boots. He wanted to bet with me, but I told him I didn't bet."

"Is Nat Poole in the race?"

"No, he is in the quarter-mile dash, against me and six others. He thinks he will win, too."

"I don't think he will, Ben. You can outrun him."

"Anyway, I am going to try," answered Ben Basswood. [81]

CHAPTER X

HOW A RACE WAS WON

It was a bright, clear day in early summer when the athletic contests of Oak Hall came off. All the academy boys assembled for the affair, and with them were a number of folks from the town, and also some students from the Rockville Military Academy, a rival institution of learning, as my old readers already know.

The contests began with pole vaulting and putting the shot, and, much to the surprise of all, Chip Macklin won out over half a dozen boys slightly larger than himself. Luke Watson also won one of the contests, and the banjo player and Macklin were roundly applauded by their friends.

"Dave Porter coached Macklin," said one small boy to another. "I saw him doing it. I can tell you, Chip is picking up."

"Yes," was the answer. "And he doesn't seem to be afraid of that bully of a Plum any more, either."

After the shot-putting and vaulting came the quarter-mile dash, for which Ben had entered.

"Go in and win, Ben!" cried Dave, to his old chum. "I know you can do it if you'll only try." [82]

"Nat Poole will win that race!" came roughly from Gus Plum, who stood near.

"Hi, catch the ball, Gus!" sang out Nat Poole, from across the field, and threw a ball in Ben's direction. Plum leaped for the sphere, bumped up against Ben, and both went down, with the bully on top.

"Plum, you did that on purpose!" cried Roger, who was close by. "Shame on you!"

"Shut up! I didn't do it on purpose!" howled the bully, arising. "Say that again and I'll knock you down!"

"You certainly did do it on purpose," said Phil, stepping up quickly. "You ought to be reported for it."

"Aw, dry up!" muttered Plum, and walked away.

When Ben arose he could scarcely get his breath. He was not hurt, but the wind had been knocked completely out of him.

"I—I don't know if I can ru-run or not!" he gasped. "He came—came down on me like a ton of bricks!"

"Wait, I'll speak to Mr. Dale about this," said Dave, and ran off. As a result of the interview the contest was delayed ten minutes—another taking its place—much to the disgust of Gus Plum and Nat Poole, both of whom had reckoned on putting Ben out of the contest. [83]

At the start of the quarter-mile dash Nat Poole and two others forged ahead, but Ben was on his mettle, and, setting his teeth, soon began to close up the gap.

"Go it, Ben!" yelled Dave. "You can win, I know it!"

"Sail right past 'em!" came from the senator's son. "Hump yourself, old man!"

"Make 'em take the dust!" added Phil.

Ben hardly heard the words, for he was now running with all his strength. He passed first one boy and then another, and then came abreast of Nat Poole. So they moved on to within a dozen paces of the finish. Then Ben made a leap ahead, and so did one of the other contestants, and Ben came in the winner, with the other boy second, and Nat Poole third. A roar went right across the field.

"Ben Basswood wins!"

"Jake Tatmon is second!"

"Nat Poole came in only third, and he boasted he was going to win, sure!"

As soon as the race was over, Nat Poole sneaked out of sight, behind some friends. He was bitterly disappointed, and could scarcely keep from running away altogether.

"You didn't fix him at all," he whispered to Gus Plum, when he got the chance. "He was in prime condition." [84]

"I did the best I could—you saw him go down, with me on top of him," retorted the bully. "Now, don't you forget what you promised," he added, sharply.

"Oh, I'll keep my word, don't fear," growled Nat Poole. "I hate Dave Porter too much to let him win!"

There were some standing and running jumps, in which Roger and Phil won second and third places, and then came the hurdle race, in which Dave was to participate. In the meantime Nat Poole had shed his track outfit and donned his regular clothes and a rather heavy pair of walking shoes.

"Please let me pass," said he to the crowd in which Dave was standing, and, without warning, brought one of his heavy shoes down smartly on Dave's light, canvas foot-covering.

"Ouch!" cried the country boy, and gave Poole a quick shove. "What do you mean by stepping on my foot in that fashion, Nat Poole?"

"Oh, excuse me," said the Crumville aristocrat, coolly. "Didn't know it was your foot, Porter, or I shouldn't have stepped on it for anything."

"You've just about lamed me!" gasped Dave. The pain was still intense.

"Dave, I believe this is a put-up job!" said Ben, quickly. "Plum agreed to lame me so that Poole could win, and now Poole is trying the same trick on you for Plum's benefit." [85]

"No such thing!" roared Nat Poole, but his face grew fiery red. "It was a pure accident. I don't have to lame Porter. Plum will win, anyhow."

"It certainly looks suspicious," said Shadow Hamilton. "He hadn't any business to force his way through our crowd."

"Oh, don't you put in your oar, you old sleep-walker!" growled Nat Poole, and then hurried off and out of sight behind the gymnasium. At the parting shot Shadow became pale, but nobody seemed to notice the remark.

"Can you go ahead?" asked Phil, of Dave.

"I think so," was the answer. "But that was a mean thing to do. He came near crushing my little toe."

Fortunately, several of the hurdles had not been properly placed, and it took some little time to arrange them properly. During that interval Roger dressed the injured foot for his chum, which made it feel much better.

"Are you all ready?" was the question put to the contestants, as they lined up. Then came a pause, followed by the crack of a revolver, and they were off.

The encounter with Nat Poole had nerved Dave as he had seldom been nerved before. Ben had won, and he made up his mind to do the same, regardless of the fact that Gus Plum and one of the other boys in the race were bigger than himself. He took the first and second hurdles with ease, and then found himself in a bunch, with Plum on one side and a lad named Cashod on the other. [86]

"Whoop her up, Cashod!" he yelled out. "Come on, and show the others what we can do!"

"Right you are, Porter!" was the answering cry.

"Not much!" puffed out Gus Plum. "I'm the winner here!"

"Rats!" answered Dave. "You'll come in fifth, Plum. You're winded already!" And then, with a mighty effort, he leaped to the front, with Cashod on his heels. "Poole didn't do your dirty work well enough," he flung back over his shoulder as he took his fourth hurdle.

The taunts angered Gus Plum, and this made him lose ground, until, almost before he knew it, the third pupil in the race dashed past him. Then he found himself neck-and-neck with the fifth contestant.

"Here they come!"

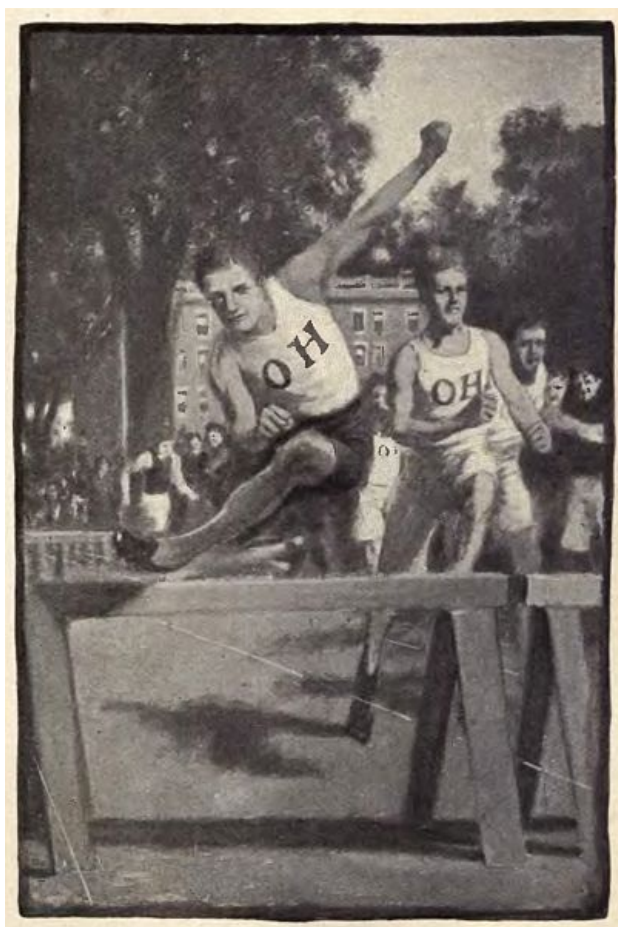
"Dave Porter is ahead, with Cashod second!"

"Collins has taken third place!"

"Plum and Higgins are tied for fourth place!"

"Not much! Higgins is ahead!"

"And there goes Sanderson ahead of Plum, too! Phew! Wonder if that is what Plum calls winning? [87] He had better study his dictionary!"



Dave cleared the last hurdle and came in a winner.— [Page 87](#).

With a mighty leap Dave cleared the last hurdle, and came in a winner. Then the others finished in the order named, excepting that Gus Plum was so disgusted that he refused to take the last hurdle, for which some of the boys hissed him, considering it unsportsmanlike, which it was.

"My shoe got loose," said the bully, lamely. "If it hadn't been for that, I should have won." But nobody believed him.

"Dave, the way you went ahead was simply great," cried Phil. "It was as fine a hurdle race as I ever saw."

"Yes, and he helped me, too," said Cashod. "I was thinking Plum would go ahead, until Porter laughed at him. It was all right," and Cashod bobbed his head to show how satisfied he was.

If Nat Poole had been disgusted Gus Plum was more so, and he lost no time in disappearing from public gaze. The two cronies met back of the gymnasium.

"You hurt Porter about as much as I hurt Basswood," Plum grumbled. "If you can't do better than that next time, you had better give up trying."

"Oh, 'the pot needn't call the kettle black,'" retorted Poole. "You made just as much of a mess of it

as I did. We'll be the laughing stock of the Porter crowd now."

[88]

"If they laugh at me, I'll punch somebody's nose. As it is, I've got an account to settle with Porter, and I am going to settle it pretty quick, too."

"What do you mean?"

"He jeered me while we were in the race. He has got to take it back, or there is going to be trouble," muttered the bully, clenching his fists.

In his usual bragging way Gus Plum let several students know that he "had it in" for Dave, and this reached the country boy's ears the next day directly after school.

"I am not afraid of him," said Dave, coolly. "If he wants to find me, he knows where to look for me."

Shortly after this Dave and some of his chums took a walk down to the boathouse dock. There they ran into Plum, Poole, and several of their admirers.

"Here is Porter now!" said one boy, in a low voice. "Now is your chance, Gus."

"Yes, let us see you do what you said," came from another.

Plum had not expected an encounter so soon, but there seemed to be no way of backing out, so he advanced quickly upon Dave, and clenched his fists.

"You can fight, or apologize," he said, loudly.

"Apologize, to *you*?" queried Dave, coolly.

"Yes, to me, and at once," blustered the bully.

"I am not apologizing to you, Plum."

[89]

"Then you'll fight."

"If you hit me, I shall defend myself."

"Hit you? If I sail into you, you'll think a cyclone struck you. If you know where you are wise, you'll apologize."

"On the contrary, Plum, I want to let you and all here know what I think of you. You are a bully, a braggart—and a coward!"

Dave's eyes were flashing dangerously, and as he gazed steadily at Plum, the latter backed away a step.

"You—you dare to talk to me like that?"

"Why not? Nobody ought to be afraid to tell the truth."

"Oh, don't stand gassing!" burst out Nat Poole. "Give it to him, Gus—give it to him good and hard."

"I will!" cried the bully, and making a quick leap, he delivered a blow straight for Dave's face.

Had the blow landed as intended, the country boy would undoubtedly have sustained a black eye. But Dave ducked slightly, and the bully's fist shot past his ear. Then Dave drew off and hit Plum a stinging blow on the chin.

"A fight! A fight!" was the rallying cry from all sides, and in a twinkling a crowd assembled to see the impromptu contest.

[90]

CHAPTER XI

A FIGHT AND ITS RESULT

"Dave, if you fight, and Doctor Clay hears of it, you'll get into trouble," whispered Roger. "You know what his rules are."

"I am not going to fight, but I'll defend myself," was the calm answer.

"Maybe you're afraid to fight," sneered Nat Poole, who stood close by.

Before the country youth could answer, Gus Plum sprang forward and aimed another blow at Dave's face. Dave ducked, but was not quite quick enough, and the fist of his enemy landed on his ear.

This aroused the boy from Crumville as never before. The look on the bully's face was such as to nerve him to do his best, and, casting prudence to the winds, he "sailed in" with a vigor that astonished all who beheld it. One fist landed on Plum's nose and the other on the bully's chin, and down he went in a heap against the boathouse.

"Have you had enough?" demanded Dave, his eyes fairly flashing.

"No!" roared the bully, and scrambling up, he rushed at Dave, and the pair clenched. Around and around the little dock they wrestled, first one getting a slight advantage and then the other. [91]

"Break away!" cried some of the students. "Break away!"

"I'll break, if he'll break!" panted Dave. Plum said nothing, for he was doing his best to get the country boy's head in chancery, as it is termed; that is, under his arm, where he might pummel it to his satisfaction.

But Dave was on his guard, and was not to be easily caught. He knew a trick or two, and, watching his opportunity, led Plum to believe that he was getting the better of the contest. Then, with remarkable swiftness, he made a half-turn, ducked and came up, and sent the bully flying clean and clear over his shoulder. When this happened both were close to the edge of the dock, and, with a cry and a splash, Gus Plum went over into the river.

"Gracious! did you see that fling!"

"Threw him right over his head into the river!"

"The fellow who tackles Dave Porter has his hands full every time!"

So the comments ran on. In the meantime Dave stood quietly on the edge of the dock, watching for the bully, and trying to regain his breath.

Plum had disappeared close to the edge of the dock, and all the bystanders expected him to reappear almost immediately. But, to their surprise, he did not show himself. [92]

"Where is he? Why doesn't he come up?"

"He must be playing a trick on Porter. Maybe he is under the dock."

"No, he can't get under the dock. It is all boarded up."

"He must have struck his head on something, or got a cramp, being so heated up."

Dave continued to wait, and as his enemy did not come to light, a cold chill ran over him. What if Plum was really hurt, or in trouble under water? He knew that the bully was not the best of swimmers.

"There he is!" came in a shout from one of the boys, and he pointed out into the stream, to where Gus Plum's body was floating along, face downward.

Dave gave one look and his heart seemed to leap into his throat. By the side of the dock was a rowboat, with the oars across the seats. He made a bound for it.

"Come," he said, motioning to Roger, and the senator's son followed him into the craft. They shoved off with vigor, and Dave took up the oars. Then another boat put off, containing Poole and two other students.

A few strokes sufficed to bring the first rowboat up alongside of the form of the bully. Plum had turned partly over and was on the point of sinking again, when Roger reached out and caught him by the foot. Then Dave swung the rowboat around, and after a little trouble the two got the soaked one aboard. [93]

Gus Plum was partly unconscious, and a bruise on his left temple showed where his head had struck some portion of the dock in falling. As they placed him across the seats of the rowboat, he gasped, spluttered, and attempted to sit up.

"Better keep still," said Dave, kindly. "We don't want the boat to go over."

"Where am I? Oh, I know now! You knocked me over."

"Don't talk, Plum; wait till we get back to shore," warned Roger.

A few strokes took the boat back to the dock, and Dave and Roger assisted the dripping youth to land. Gus Plum was so weak he had to sit down on a bench to recover.

"You played me a mean trick," he spluttered, at last. "A mean trick!"

"That's what he did," put in Nat Poole, who had also returned to the dock. "I guess he was afraid to fight fair."

"I suppose you wanted to drown me," went on the bully of Oak Hall.

"I didn't want to drown you, Plum—I didn't even want to push you overboard. I didn't think we were so close to the dock's edge."

"Humph! It's easy enough to talk!" Gus Plum gazed ruefully at his somewhat loud summer suit. "Look at my clothes. They are just about ruined!" [94]

"Nonsense," came from Roger. "They need drying, cleaning, and pressing, that's all. You can get the job done down in Oakdale for a dollar and a half."

"And who is going to pay the bill?"

"Well, if you are too poor to do it, I'll do so," answered Roger.

This reply made the bully grow very red, and he shook his fist at the senator's son.

"None of your insinuations!" he roared. "I am not poor, and I want you to know it. My father may have lost some money, but he can still buy and sell your father. And as for such a poorhouse nobody as your intimate friend there, Porter——"

"For shame, Plum!" cried several.

"Oh, go ahead and toady to him, if you want to. I shan't stop you. But I'd rather pick my company."

"And so would I," added Nat Poole. "I once heard of a poorhouse boy who was the son of a thief. I'd not want to train with a fellow of that sort."

Dave listened to the words, and they seemed to burn into his very heart. He came forward with a face as white as death itself.

[95]

"Nat Poole, do you mean to insinuate that I am the son of a thief?" he demanded.

"Oh, a fellow don't know what to think," replied the Crumville aristocrat, with a sneer.

"Then take that for your opinion."

It was a telling blow, delivered with a passion that Dave could not control. It took Nat Poole squarely in the mouth, and the aristocrat went down with a thud, flat on his back. His lip was cut and two of his teeth were loosened, while the country's boy's fist showed a skinned knuckle.

"Whoop! did you see that!"

"My! what a sledge-hammer blow!"

"Poole is knocked out clean!"

Such were some of the comments, in the midst of which Nat Poole sat up, dazed and bewildered. Then he gasped, and ejected some blood from his mouth.

"You—you——" he began.

"Stay where you are, Nat Poole," said Dave, in a voice that was as cold as ice. "Don't you dare to budge!"

"Wha-what?"

"Don't you dare to budge until you have begged my pardon."

"Me? Beg your pardon! I'd like to see myself!"

"Well, that is just what you are going to do! If you don't, do you know what I'll do? I'll throw you into the river and keep you there until you do as I say."

[96]

"Here, you let him alone!" blustered Plum, starting to rise.

"Keep out of this, Plum, or, as sure as I'm standing here, I'll throw you in again, too!" said Dave.

"Dave——" whispered Roger. He could see that his friend was almost beside himself with passion.

"No, Roger, don't try to interfere. This is my battle. They have been talking behind my back long enough. Poole has got to apologize, or take the consequences, and so has Plum. I'll make them do it, if I have to fight them both!" And the eyes of the country boy blazed with a fire that the senator's son had never before seen in them. "I don't deny that I came from the poorhouse, and I don't deny that I know nothing of my past," went on Dave, speaking to the crowd. "But I am trying to do the fair thing, every boy here knows it, and—and——"

"We are with you, Dave!" came from the rear of the crowd, and Luke Watson pushed his way to the front, followed by Phil, Shadow, and Buster Beggs.

"Dave Porter is one of the best fellows in this school," cried Phil.

"And Plum and Poole are a couple of codfish," added Buster.

[97]

"I—I—am a codfish, am I?" roared Plum.

"You are, Gus Plum. You say things behind folks' backs and try to bully the little boys, and in reality you are no better than anybody else, if as good. You make me sick."

"I'll—I'll hammer you good for that!"

"All right, send me word when you are ready," retorted Buster.

In the meantime Dave was still standing over Nat Poole. Suddenly he caught the aristocratic youth by the ear and gave that member a twist.

"Ouch! Let go!" yelled Nat Poole. "Let go! Don't wring my ear off!"

"Will you apologize?" demanded Dave, and gave the ear a jerk that brought tears to Poole's eyes.

"I—I—oh, you'll have my ear off next! Oh, you wait—oh! oh! If I ever get—*ouch!*"

"Say you are sorry you said what you did to me," went on Dave, "or into the river you go!" And despite Poole's efforts, he dragged the aristocrat toward the edge of the dock.

"No! no! Oh, I say, Porter! Oh, my ear! I don't want to go into the river! I—I—I take it back—I guess I made a mistake. Oh, let me go!"

"You apologize, then?"

"Yes."

"Then get out, and after this behave yourself," said Dave, and gave Nat Poole a fling that sent him up against the boathouse with a bang. In another instant he was by Gus Plum's side. "Now it's your turn, you overgrown bully," he continued. [98]

"Wha-what do you mean?" stammered Plum, who had looked on the scene just enacted with a sinking heart.

"I mean you must apologize, just as Poole has done."

"And if I won't?"

"I'll thrash you till you do—no matter what the consequences are," and Dave hauled off his jacket and threw off his cap.

"Would you hit a fellow when he is—er—half drowned?" whined the bully.

"You're not half drowned—you're only scared, Plum. Now, then, will you apologize or not?" And Dave doubled up his fists.

"I—I don't have to. I—I—*oh!*"

The words on Plum's lips came to a sudden end, for at that instant the country boy caught him by the throat and banged his head up against the boathouse side.

"Now apologize, and be quick about it," said Dave, determinedly.

"Oh, my head! You have cracked my skull! I'll—I'll have the law on you!"

"Very well, I'm willing. But you must apologize first!" And Plum's head came into contact with the boathouse side again, and he saw stars. [99]

"Oh! Let up—stop, Porter! Don't kill me! I—I—take it back! I—I apologize! I—I didn't mean anything! Let up, please do!" shrieked Gus Plum, and then Dave let go his hold and stepped back.

"Now, Gus Plum, listen to me," said the country boy. "Let this end it between us. If you don't, let me tell you right now that you will get the worst of it. After this, keep your distance and don't open your mouth about me. I shan't say anything to Doctor Clay about this, but if you say anything, I'll tell him all, and I know, from what he has already said, that he will stand by me."

"Maybe he doesn't know—"

"He knows everything about my past, and he has asked me to stay here, regardless of what some mean fellows like you might say about it. But I am not going to take anything from you and Poole in the future; remember that!" added Dave, and then he picked up his cap and jacket, put them on, and, followed by Phil, Roger, and a number of his other friends, walked slowly away. [100]

CHAPTER XII

SHADOW AS A SOMNAMBULIST

The manner in which Dave had brought Gus Plum and Nat Poole to terms was the talk of Oak Hall for some time, and many of the pupils looked upon the country boy as a veritable leader and conqueror.

"I wish I had been there," said Chip Macklin to Roger. "It must have been great to see Plum and Poole eat humble pie. What do you think they'll do about it?"

"They won't do anything, just at present," answered the senator's son. "They are too scared." And in this surmise, Roger was correct.

But, though the majority of the students sided with Dave, there was a small class, made up of those who were wealthy, who passed him by and snubbed him, not wishing to associate with anybody who had come from a poorhouse. They said nothing, but their manners were enough to hurt Dave greatly, and more than once the country boy felt like packing his trunk and bidding good-by to Oak Hall forever. But then he would think of his many friends and of what kind-hearted Doctor Clay had said, and grit his teeth and declare to himself that he would fight the battle to the end, no matter what the cost. [101]

If the story of the encounter came to the ears of the master of the school or the teachers, nothing was said about it, and, in the multitude of other events coming up, the incident was forgotten by the majority. But Dave did not forget, and neither did Plum and Poole.

"Oh, how I detest that chap!" grumbled Poole to Plum, one night when they were alone. "Gus, we must get square."

"That's right," returned the bully. "But not now. Wait till he is off his guard, then we can fix him, and do it for keeps, too!"

On the following Saturday evening Chip Macklin called Dave to one side. The young student was evidently excited over something.

"What is it, Chip?" asked Dave. "Hurry up, I can't wait long, for I want to join the fellows in the gym."

"I want to tell you something about Gus Plum," was the answer. "I think I've discovered something, but I am not sure."

"Well, out with it."

"This afternoon I got permission to ride over to Rockville on my bicycle, to get some shirts at the furnishing store there. Well, when I came out of the store, I saw Gus Plum coming out of the post-office on the opposite side of the street. He had some letters in his hand, and he turned into the little public park near by, sat down on a bench, and began to read them." [102]

"Well, what is remarkable about that, outside of the fact that he is supposed to get all his letters in the Hall mail?" remarked Dave.

"That's just it. I made up my mind something was wrong, or else he'd have his mail come here. I saw him tear three of the envelopes to pieces and scatter the bits in the grass. When he went away, I walked over to the spot and picked up such bits of paper as I could find. Of course, you may say I was a sneak for doing it, but just look at what I found."

"I have no desire, Chip, to pry into Plum's private affairs."

"Yes, but this is not his private affair—to my way of thinking. It concerns the whole school," returned Chip Macklin, eagerly.

Dave glanced at the bits of paper, and at once became interested. One piece contained the words, "Stamp Dealer"; another, "Rare Sta— w York," and another, "Stamps Bought and Sold by Isaac Dem— —nett Street, Sa—"

"These must have come from dealers in stamps," said Dave, slowly.

"That is what I thought." [103]

"Did you ever know Gus Plum to be interested in stamps?"

"No."

"Were the letters addressed to him?"

"I don't know. Strange as it may seem, I couldn't find any of the written-on portions of the envelopes."

"Did Plum see you?"

"Not until later—when I was on my way back to the Hall."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing. He acted as if he wanted to avoid me."

After this the pair talked the matter over for several minutes, but could reach no satisfactory conclusion regarding the bits of paper.

"Do as you think best, Chip," said Dave, at last. "If you want to go to Doctor Clay, I fancy he will be glad to hear what you have to say."

"Well, if Plum has those lost stamps, don't you think he should be made to return them?"

"By all means. But you've got to prove he has them first, and the doctor won't dare to say anything to Plum until he is sure of what he is doing. Otherwise, Plum's father could raise a big row, and he might even sue the doctor for defamation of character, or something like that."

A little later found Chip Macklin in the doctor's office. The small boy was rather scared, but told a fairly straight story, and turned over the bits of paper to the master of the Hall. Doctor Clay was all attention. [104]

"I will look into this," he said. "In the meantime, Macklin, I wish you would keep it to yourself."

"I have already told Dave Porter about it. I wanted his advice."

"Then request Porter to remain quiet, also," and Chip said that he would do as asked, and later on did so.

The end of the school term was now close at hand, and Dave turned to his studies with renewed vigor, resolved to come out as near to the head of the class as possible. He received several letters from Professor Potts, Mr. Wadsworth, and a delicately scented note from Jessie, and answered them all without delay. The letter from Jessie he prized highly, and read it half a dozen times before he stowed it carefully away among his few valued possessions.

On Wednesday evening Dave partook rather freely of some hash that was served up. On the sly, Sam Day salted his portion, and, as a consequence, the country boy went to bed feeling remarkably thirsty. He drank one glass of water, and an hour later got up to drink another, only to find the water pitcher empty.

"It's no use, I've got to have a drink," he told himself. "And if I catch the fellow who salted my hash——" [105]

He slipped into part of his clothing, and, taking the water pitcher, made his way through the hallway to the nearest of the bathrooms. Here he obtained the coldest drink possible, and then, filling the pitcher, started to return to dormitory No. 12.

As he neared the dormitory, he saw somebody pass along the other end of the hallway. It was a boy, fully dressed, and with a cap set back on his head.

"Shadow Hamilton!" he murmured, as the boy passed close to a dimly burning hall light. "Now, what is he up to?"

He put down his pitcher and stole forward, until he was directly behind Shadow. Then, of a sudden, he beheld the boy swing around and put out his hands, feeling for the rail of a rear stairs. Shadow Hamilton was fast asleep.

"He is doing some more of his sleep-walking!" thought Dave. "Now, what had I best do?"

There was no time to think long, for the sleep-walker was already descending the back stairs slowly and noiselessly. Dave hurried into the dormitory, set down the pitcher, and aroused Roger, who was nearest to him.

"Come, quick!" he whispered. "Slip on your clothes, and don't make any noise."

"Oh, I'm too sleepy for fun!" murmured Roger. [106]

"This isn't fun, it's important. Come, I say!"

Thus aroused, the senator's son rolled from his couch and hurried into his clothing. In a few minutes both boys had their shoes and caps on, and along the hallway they sped, and down the back stairs. The door below was unlocked, but closed. Soon they were out in the rear yard of the Hall, and there they beheld Shadow Hamilton walking slowly in the direction of the boathouse.

"Who is it?" whispered Roger.

"It is Shadow. He is walking in his sleep. I want to find out where he is going and what he'll do."

"Humph! This certainly is interesting," answered the senator's son.

"Whatever you do, Roger, don't arouse him, or there may be an accident," cautioned Dave. "Let him go his own way."

"But he may hurt himself, anyway."

"No, he won't. A sleep-walker can walk a slack wire, if he tries it, and never tumble. Haven't you heard of them walking on the ridge pole of a house? I have."

"I've read about such things. And I know they say you mustn't arouse them. He is going into the boathouse!"

The chums ran forward and reached the doorway of the boathouse just as Shadow Hamilton was coming out. The somnambulist had a pair of oars, and he stepped to the edge of the dock and untied one of the boats and leaped in. [107]

"I must find them!" they heard the youth mutter to himself. "I must find them and bring them back!"

"Did you hear that?" asked Roger. "What is he talking about?"

"That remains to be found out. Come, let us follow him," returned Dave.

They procured two pairs of oars, and were soon in another boat and pulling behind Shadow Hamilton. The boy who was asleep seemed to possess supernatural strength, and they had no easy time of it keeping up with him. His course was up the Leming River, past Robbin's Point, and then into a side stream that was rather narrow, but almost straight for a distance of two miles.

"Do you know where this stream leads to?" questioned Roger.

"I do not."

"Almost to the old castle that we visited last winter on our skates, the day we caught that robber and saved Billy Dill. The river makes half a dozen twists and turns before the castle is reached,

but this is a direct route and much shorter."

"Can it be possible that Shadow is going to the old castle?" queried the country boy.

"I'm sure I don't know. We'll learn pretty soon."

[108]

As my old readers know, the place referred to was a dilapidated structure of brick and stone which had been erected about the time of the Revolutionary War. It set back in a wilderness of trees, and was given over largely to the owls and to tramps. It belonged to an unsettled estate that had gone into litigation, and there was no telling if it would ever be rebuilt and occupied in a regular way.

It was dark under the trees, but by pulling close to the boat ahead, Dave and Roger managed to keep Shadow Hamilton in sight. As soon as the somnambulist came near to the castle he ran his boat up the bank, leaped ashore, and stalked toward the building.

"He has disappeared!" cried Roger, softly.

"I see him," answered Dave. "Come!" and he led the way into the old structure and to the very rooms where the encounter with the robber and with Billy Dill had occurred.

Scarcely daring to breathe, they watched Shadow move around in an uncertain way, touching this object and that, and opening and shutting several closet doors, and even poking into the chimney-place.

"Gone! gone! gone!" they heard him mutter. "What shall I do? What shall I do?" And he gave a groan.

Five minutes passed and the sleep-walker left the castle and hurried to his boat. His course was now down the stream toward the Hall, and Dave and Roger followed, as before. At the dock the boats were tied up, the oars put away, and Shadow Hamilton went back to the room from which he had come. Peering in, Dave and Roger saw him undress and go to bed, just as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred.

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CHAPTER XIII

A PHOTOGRAPH OF IMPORTANCE

"I should not believe it, had I not seen it with my own eyes."

It was in this fashion that Roger expressed himself on the following day, when discussing the affair of the night previous with Dave. Shadow was around, as usual. He looked sleepy, but otherwise acted as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

"It certainly is remarkable," was Dave's comment. "The question is, what made him go to the castle? I think I know, but I cannot speak about it. But I'll tell you what I should like to do, Roger: go up to the castle while it is daylight and take a thorough look around."

Roger was willing to do this, and the upshot of the talk was that Dave and the senator's son paid the old brick-and-stone structure a visit on the following Saturday half-holiday, taking Phil and Ben with them. They went up in a boat by the short route, arriving there about half-past three o'clock.

There was not a soul about the deserted mansion, and the few birds flew away at their approach. It was a clear, sunny day, and they lost no time in throwing every door and window wide open, so that they might have the full benefit of the light and fresh air.

[111]

"Here is the room in which he moved around the most," remarked Roger, gazing around earnestly. "But I can't say that I see anything unusual, do you?"

They were all searching around, and after a few minutes had passed Ben uttered a low cry and held up a small object, almost covered with dust and dirt.

"A class pin!" cried Dave. "We must see if we can find any more of them."

It was not long before Phil came upon two pins sticking on a board of a closet. Then Roger ran into the next room and, after a short hunt, uncovered a flat pasteboard box with several more of the class pins, each a bit tarnished by the dampness, but otherwise uninjured.

"He must have come for the pins," said Ben. "That solves the mystery of how they disappeared from Mr. Dale's possession."

"Here is a postage stamp!" ejaculated Phil, and held it up. "It's an old German issue," he added. "And here are half a dozen others, all evidently torn from a sheet. Boys, Shadow must have taken the doctor's collection!"

Dave said nothing to this, for he had discovered a cupboard in a corner, tightly closed and with the wooden button of the door missing. He now opened the door of the cupboard with a knife.

[112]

"Hello, what's in there?" asked Roger, who was behind him.

"Seems to be some clothing," answered Dave, and hauled forth some loose garments and also an old satchel. The garments formed part of a sailor's garb, and the satchel was marked on the bottom with the name, "William Dill."

"It's Billy Dill's missing outfit!" cried Dave, eagerly. "Oh, Roger, how glad I am that I have found this! It's the best yet!"

All the boys were interested, for they knew Dave's story and the tale of the strange sailor. As Dave ran to the light with the satchel, they crowded around him.

"I think I am fully justified in opening this grip," said the country boy. He was so agitated he could scarcely speak.

"Why, certainly," cried Phil. "Open it, by all means. It may throw light on some things which Billy Dill has been unable to explain."

The satchel was not locked and came open with ease. Inside was a bag containing some loose silver and a roll of forty-six dollars in bankbills. There was also a locket, containing the picture of a motherly old lady, probably the sailor's parent. Under the locket were a small Bible and a work on ocean navigation, and at the bottom a thick, brown envelope containing a photograph. [113]

"Let us see whose picture that is," said Phil, and Dave opened the envelope and drew the photograph forth. As he held it up there was a general cry, in which he was forced to join.

"That's the man who looks like you, Dave!" cried Roger.

"What a striking resemblance!" exclaimed Phil.

"And he has the mustache, just as the sailor said," added Ben. "Dave, that man looks enough like you to be your older brother, or your father!"

Dave said nothing, for he was too much overcome to speak. As he gazed at the picture, he began to tremble from head to foot. Taking away the mustache, the face was exactly like his own, only older and more careworn. He did not wonder that Billy Dill had become confused because of the resemblance. He turned the picture over. There was not a scrap of printing or writing on it anywhere.

What was the meaning of this mystery? What was this man to him? Was he the man who had once lost a child through a crazy nurse? In his perplexed state of mind, the questions were maddening ones to the boy.

"What do you think of it, Dave?" asked Phil, after a pause, and the eyes of all the others were turned on the poorhouse boy. [114]

"What do I think of it?" he repeated, slowly. "I think this: I am going to find this man, if he is alive, even if I have to go around the world to do it. He must know something of my past—most likely he is a relative of mine. I am going to be a poorhouse nobody no longer. I am going to establish my identity—and I am going to do that before I do anything else."

Dave spoke deliberately, weighing every word. It was almost as if he was registering a vow. The others saw a look of determination settle on his face, and knew that he would do as he said.

The boy from the country had suddenly lost interest in clearing up the mystery surrounding Shadow Hamilton, and allowed the others to finish the search for class pins and postage stamps. One more pin was found and three rare stamps from Brazil, and then the search was abandoned, and they returned to Oak Hall, Dave carrying the sailor's possessions.

That evening there was an interesting interview in Doctor Clay's office, in which Dave and his friends took an active part. The worthy master of Oak Hall listened to all the boys had to tell with keen attention, and smiled quietly when told how Dave and Roger had first followed Shadow in his somnambulistic feat. He took possession of the class pins and the stamps, and said the latter were undoubtedly from his collection. [115]

"We now have nearly all of the class pins," he said. "But fully nine-tenths of the postage stamps are still missing and they represent a value of at least twenty-five hundred dollars. I am tolerably sure that Maurice Hamilton took them in his sleep, but the question is, did he destroy the others, or did somebody else come along and take them?"

"I believe Chip Macklin came to see you, sir," said Dave, significantly.

"He did, Porter, and I am going to follow that clew up—if it is a clew," answered Doctor Clay, gravely.

After the others had departed, Dave showed the things he had found belonging to Billy Dill. The master of the Hall was as much astonished as anybody over the resemblance between his pupil and the photograph, and examined the picture with care.

"I do not wonder that you wish to investigate this," said he. "I should wish to do so, were I in your position."

"I have simply got to do it, Doctor!" cried Dave. "I shall not be able to settle my mind on a thing

until it's done. Would you go home and see Mr. Wadsworth and Professor Potts first, or go direct to that sailor?"

"Why not send a long letter to your friends, telling them what you have told me? You can add that I agree that the photograph resembles you closely, and that you wish to talk the matter over once again with this William Dill." [116]

As impatient as he was, Dave concluded to follow this advice, and a letter of ten pages was sent to Mr. Wadsworth and to Caspar Potts the next morning. In the meantime, it may be added here, Doctor Clay had a closer watch than ever set on Shadow Hamilton's movements, and he also began a quiet investigation of Gus Plum's doings.

The letter that Dave sent to Crumville created a sensation in the Wadsworth household, and was read and re-read several times by the members of the manufacturer's family and by Professor Potts.

"There is undoubtedly something in this," said the professor. "It certainly is entitled to a strict investigation. If you will permit me, I will run up to Oak Hall to see Dave, and then take him to see this Billy Dill."

"I will go with you," answered the rich manufacturer. "The outing will do us both good, and I am greatly interested in Dave's welfare. I only trust that there is a happy future in store for him."

"And I say the same, sir, for no boy deserves it more," answered Professor Potts.

A telegram was sent to Dave, and on the following day Oliver Wadsworth and Caspar Potts journeyed to Oakdale. Dave met them at the depot with the Hall carriage.

"There he is!" exclaimed old Caspar Potts, rushing up and shaking hands. "My boy! my boy! I am glad to see you again!" And he fairly quivered with emotion. [117]

"And I am glad to see you," cried Dave, in return. He shook hands with both men. "Mr. Wadsworth, it was kind of you to answer my letter so quickly," he added.

"I knew you would be anxious, Dave. My, how well and strong you look! The air up here must do you good."

"It is a very healthful spot," answered the youth, "and I like it better than I can tell."

"A fine school—a fine school!" murmured Professor Potts. "You could not go to a better."

On the way to the Hall, Dave told his story in detail, and exhibited the photograph, which he had brought with him, scarcely daring to leave it out of his sight.

"It is just as you have said," remarked Oliver Wadsworth. "A most remarkable resemblance, truly!"

"That man must be some relative to Dave," added Caspar Potts. "There could not be such a resemblance otherwise. It is undoubtedly the same strain of blood. He may be a father, uncle, cousin, elder brother—there is no telling what; but he is a relative, I will stake my reputation on it."

The visitors were cordially greeted at Oak Hall by Doctor Clay and made to feel perfectly at home. They were given rooms for the night, and in the morning the doctor and his visitors and Dave had breakfast together. [118]

It had been decided that a visit should be paid to Billy Dill that very afternoon, and by nine o'clock Mr. Wadsworth, Professor Potts, and Dave were on the way to the town where was located the sanitarium to which the sailor had been taken. Dave had the tar's satchel and clothing with him, and the precious photograph was stowed away in his pocket. Just then he would not have parted with that picture for all the money in the world. [119]

CHAPTER XIV

A GLEAM OF LIGHT

"I would advise that you keep that satchel and the picture out of sight at first," said Professor Potts, as he rang the bell of the sanitarium. "Talk to the old sailor and try to draw him out. Then show him his belongings when you think the time ripe."

Mr. Wadsworth and Dave thought this good advice, and when they were ushered into the old sailor's presence, the boy kept the satchel behind him.

"Well, douse my toplights, but I'm glad to see ye all!" cried Billy Dill, as he shook hands. "It's kind o' you to pay a visit to such an old wreck as I am."

"Oh, you're no wreck, Mr. Dill," answered Oliver Wadsworth. "We'll soon have you as right and tight as any craft afloat," he added, falling into the tar's manner of speaking.

"Bless the day when I can float once more, sir. Do you know, I've been thinkin' that a whiff o' salt air would do me a sight o' good. Might fix my steerin' apparatus," and the tar tapped his forehead. [120]

"Then you must have a trip to the ocean, by all means," said Caspar Potts. He turned to the rich manufacturer. "It might be easily arranged."

"Dill, I want to talk to you about the time you were out in the South Seas," said Dave, who could bear the suspense no longer. "Now, please follow me closely, will you?"

"Will if I can, my hearty." The sailor's forehead began to wrinkle. "You know my memory box has got its cargo badly shifted."

"Don't you remember when you were down there—at Cavasa Island, and elsewhere—how hard times were, and how somebody helped you."

"Seems to me I do."

"Don't you remember traveling around with your bundle and your satchel? You had some money in bankbills and some loose silver, and a work on navigation, and a Bible——"

"Yes! yes! I remember the Bible—it was the one my aunt gave me—God bless her! She, Aunt Lizzie—took care o' me when my mother died, an' she told me to read it every day—an' I did, most o' the time."

"Well, you had the Bible and your satchel and your bundle of clothes," went on Dave, impressively. "And at that time you fell in with a man who afterwards gave you his photograph."

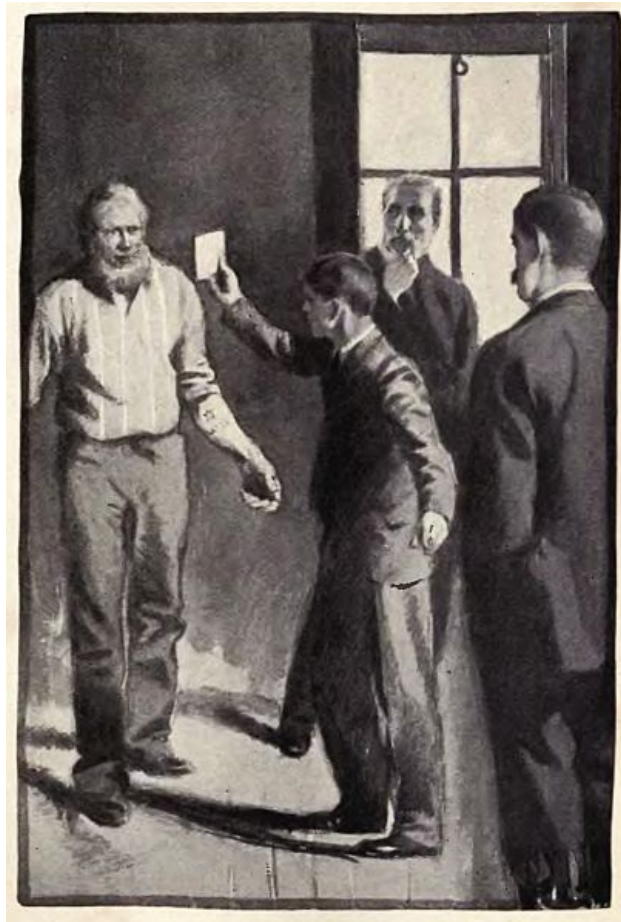
"So I did—the man who looks like you. But I——" [121]

"Wait a minute. Don't you remember his telling you a story about a crazy nurse and a lost child?"

"I certainly do, but——"

Dave drew the photograph from his pocket and thrust it forward, directly before the tar's eyes.

"There is the man!" he cried. "Now, what is his name? Tell me his name, at once!"



"Tell me his name, at once!"—[Page 121](#).

"Dunston Porter!" fairly shouted the sailor. "Dunston Porter! That's it! I knew I would remember it sometime! Dunston Porter, of course it was! Funny how I forgot it. Better write it down, afore it slips my cable again."

"Dunston Porter!" murmured Dave, and the others likewise repeated the name.

"Ha! this is remarkable!" ejaculated Caspar Potts. "Dave, do you remember what you called yourself when you were first found and taken to the poorhouse."

"I do, sir. I called myself Davy, and Porter, and Dun-Dun."

"Exactly, and Dun-Dun meant Dunston. You were trying to repeat the name, 'Dunston Porter!'"

"That would seem to be the fact," came from Oliver Wadsworth. "And if so—" He paused significantly.

"You think my real name is Dunston Porter?"

[122]

"Either that, or else that is the name of some relative of yours."

Dave's heart beat fast. He felt that he was getting at least a faint glimpse of his past. He turned again to Billy Dill.

"Then this Dunston Porter was your friend?" he observed.

"He was, and he helped me when I was stranded," was the answer. "I can't give ye all the particulars, cos some o' 'em is more like a dream than anything to me. When I try to think, my head begins to swim," and the sailor wrinkled his forehead as before and twitched his eyes.

"Tell me one thing," said the rich manufacturer, "Do you think this Dunston Porter is still at Cavasa Island, or in that locality?"

"I suppose so—I don't know."

"When did you come away from there?" asked Professor Potts.

"It must be nigh on to a year ago. I came straight to 'Frisco, went up the coast on a lumber boat to Puget Sound, and then took passage to New York. Next, I drifted up here to look up some friends, and you know what happened after that."

"Was Dunston Porter alone out there?" questioned Oliver Wadsworth.

"Why—er—I can't say as to that. He didn't say much about himself, that I can remember. Once he told me about that child, but—but it's hazy—I can't think! Oh, it drives me crazy when I try to think! The roar of the sea gets in my ears, and the light from the lighthouse fires my brain!" And the old tar began to pace the floor in a rolling gait.

[123]

"He is growing excited!" whispered Caspar Potts. "It is too bad! Were he in his right mind, he might be able to tell us a great deal."

"Supposing we go out and have lunch together," suggested Oliver Wadsworth. "And then we can go for a ride on the lake."

He spoke to the sanitarium manager, and the upshot of the matter was that the whole party went out to a hotel for dinner. Previous to going, Dave gave Billy Dill the satchel and money and the bundle, which seemed to tickle the tar immensely.

"Douse my toplight, but I feel like old times again!" he cried, when they had had a good dinner and were seated on the forward deck of one of the lake boats, used to take out pleasure parties. "Oh, but I love the water!"

"I suppose this doesn't look anything like around Cavasa Island," remarked Dave, trying to draw the sailor out.

"Not much, my boy. Cavasa Island has a volcano in the middle of it, and once in a while that volcano gets busy, and folks run for their lives. An' they have earthquakes, too. Once I was out with Dunston Porter, and along came an earthquake, and the other fellow, Mr. Lemington, almost had his leg broken."

[124]

"Who was Mr. Lemington?" asked Caspar Potts, quickly.

"Why, he was Dunston Porter's partner in the treasure-hunting scheme. Oh, I didn't tell you about that, did I? Funny, how it slipped my mind, eh? They went to the volcano for the treasure. I guess that was when the baby disappeared—and that other man—I don't remember much of him, he was wild. It was misty, misty. But they didn't get any treasure, I know that. And then Mr. Lemington got disgusted and sailed for Australia."

"Did you ever see the baby?" asked Dave.

"Did I? Why—I think so. I don't remember."

This was all they could get out of the sailor, try their best, and, upon Oliver Wadsworth's advice, they did not bother him any further. Before returning to the sanitarium, the rich manufacturer called Dave to one side.

"Dave, do you want to go to Cavasa Island?" he asked, with a quiet smile.

"I do," was the prompt answer. "I was going to speak to you about it. You know I told you that Phil Lawrence is going—on one of his father's ships this summer. I'd like very much to go with Phil."

"Then you shall go, if we can make the necessary arrangements. Now, what I want to know is: Do you not think it would be an excellent thing to take this Billy Dill along? The trip might cure him entirely, and he might aid you greatly in clearing up this mystery."

[125]

"Why, Mr. Wadsworth, you must have been reading my thoughts!" exclaimed the country boy. "I was going to suggest that very thing."

"Then we will speak to Dill about it before we leave him. Do you know when your friend Lawrence is to join his father's ship?"

"No, sir; but I can soon find out. And here is Mr. Lawrence's address, if you want it," added Dave, and wrote it on a card.

When the idea of sailing on the Pacific once more was broached to Billy Dill, his eyes lit up with pleasure.

"I'd like nothing better!" he cried. "I've been a-thinkin' I might ship again. I can't stay an' be spongin' on you folks any longer, it wouldn't be proper. I want to pay up, now Dave has found my money for me."

"Keep your money, Dill," returned Oliver Wadsworth. "You may need it later." And then he explained what Dave wished to do, and how the tar might accompany the youth on his long trip.

"I'll go—an' glad o' the chance," said Billy Dill, readily. "Just draw up your articles, an' I'll sign 'em any time ye want." And so the matter was settled. [126]

Dave returned to Oak Hall late that night in a very thoughtful mood. So much had been done and said that he wanted time in which to think it over. It was not until the next day that he got a chance to talk matters over with Phil and Roger, both of whom listened attentively to his tale.

"It seems to me you are learning something, Dave," said Roger. "I hope the whole matter is cleared up before long. Then Plum and Poole will have to stop casting slurs on you."

"And now, Phil, I want to go out to the South Seas with you," continued Dave. "And, what is more, I am going to ask your father to find a place on the vessel for Billy Dill."

"I fancy he'll do that, if I ask him," answered Phil. "I'll write and tell the whole story, and I know he will be as much interested as I am."

"I wish I was going on that trip with you," said Roger. "Such an outing would suit me to a T."

"I guess there will be room enough for another passenger," answered Phil. "Why don't you ask your folks about it?"

"I will!" burst out the senator's son. "They are going to Europe, you know. I was to go along, but I'll see if I can't go with you two instead."

After that there was a good deal of letter-writing, and the boys waited anxiously for replies. In the meanwhile, the final examinations for the term began. Dave did his best to keep his mind on his lessons, and succeeded so well that he came out second from the top, studious Polly Vane heading the list. Roger came next to Dave, with Ben Basswood fourth, Phil sixth, and Sam Day seventh. Gus Plum was almost at the end of the list, and Nat Poole was but little better. In a lower class, Luke Watson stood second, Buster Beggs fourth, and Chip Macklin fifth. Shadow Hamilton, although generally a good student, dropped to tenth place in his class. [127]

"I am more than gratified at this showing," said Doctor Clay, when the examinations were over. "The general average is higher than usual. You have done well, and I shall award the prizes with much pleasure."

After that there was an entertainment lasting the best part of the afternoon, and in the evening the students celebrated by a bonfire on the campus and a general merrymaking. They sang the school song over and over again, and gave the Hall cry:

"Baseball!
Football!
Oak Hall
Has the call!
Biff! Boom! Bang! Whoop!"

"To-night's the night!" whispered Phil, as he entered the school with his chums. "Just wait and see!" [128]

CHAPTER XV

WINDING UP THE SCHOOL TERM

"I must say, I don't feel much like fun to-night," observed Dave, as he hurried up the stairs to dormitory No. 12. "I am anxious to get started on that trip to the Pacific."

"Oh, that will hold for one day longer," said Ben. "I wish I was going, too. Roger, have you got word yet?"

"No, but I expect a letter to-morrow. If it doesn't come, I'll have to wait till I get home."

Dave was in advance and was the first to throw open the dormitory door. As he did so, a powerful smell of onions greeted him.

"Great Cæsar!" he ejaculated. "Smells like an onion factory up here. Somebody must have been eating a dozen or two. Open the window, Phil, while I make a light."

"Hello, what's this!" spluttered Ben, and fell headlong over something. "A decayed cabbage! Who put that on the floor?"

"Look out, everybody!" shouted Roger. "I just stepped on something soft. Phew! Some decayed sweet potatoes!"

[129]

By this time Dave made a light, and all of the boys who had come up gazed around the dormitory. Then a cry of amazement and anger arose.

"This is a rough-house, and no mistake!"

"Somebody has been heaving decayed vegetables all over the room!"

"Yes, and ancient eggs, too! This is an outrage!"

"Here is a rotten cabbage in my trunk!" called out Roger. He held the object at arm's length. "I'd like to soak the fellow who did it!" he added, savagely.

With caution, all made an investigation. They found their clothing and other belongings disarranged, and decayed vegetables, stale eggs, and sour milk were everywhere in evidence. It was a mess bad enough to make them weep.

"We ought to report this," was Phil's comment. "I don't mind real fun, but this is going too far."

"This stuff must have come from the cellar," put in Buster Beggs. "I heard the head cook telling Pop Swingly that the place must be cleaned out, or he would report it to the doctor. Swingly said he didn't know the bad stuff was there."

"Well, Swingly didn't put the stuff here," put in Dave. "It's the work of some of the other fellows."

"I know where the janitor is!" cried Ben. "Shall I go down and question him? Maybe he can give us a pointer."

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"Yes, go ahead," said Dave.

"And I'll go along," added the senator's son, and a moment later the two boys were off.

While the pair were gone, the others surveyed the damage done. The most of the decayed vegetables were swept into a corner, and then the boys did what they could toward straightening out their things.

"Here's a stale egg in my hat-box!" groaned Sam. "I'd like to throw it at some fellow's head!"

Dave had found his trunk open, and was searching the box with care. Suddenly he gave a loud cry:

"It's gone! It's gone!"

"What's gone?" queried Phil.

"The photograph! I had it among my books and papers, and the whole bunch is missing!"

"You mean the photo of the man who looks like you?" asked Sam, quickly.

"Yes." Dave gave a groan that came straight from his heart. "Oh, boys, I must get that back! I can't afford to lose it! I must get it back! It is worth more to me than anything in the world!" He was so agitated that he could scarcely control himself.

"Let us hunt for the picture," came from Buster Beggs, who knew about the photograph, and all started a search, which lasted until Ben and Roger returned.

[131]

"We've discovered the chaps who are responsible," said Ben, in triumph.

"They are Gus Plum and Nat Poole," asserted the senator's son. "Pop Swingly was throwing this stuff away in a hole back of the campus, when Plum and Poole came up. He heard them talking about playing a trick, but he didn't think they'd lower themselves by touching the mess. I suppose they thought that they were doing something quite smart."

"Dave's photo is gone," said Phil. "We have been hunting for it everywhere."

"You don't say! Dave, that is too bad."

"We ought to make Plum and Poole clean up this mess," came from Buster. "Let us try to capture them."

The suggestion met with instant approval, and the boys started to locate the bully and his crony. Plum and Poole were still below, but Shadow Hamilton announced that they were preparing to come up by a side stairs.

"We must get them, sure!" cried Dave. "I want that picture back, if nothing else."

Soon one boy, who was acting as a spy, announced the coming of Plum and Poole. The pair were allowed to reach the door of their dormitory, when they were pounced on from behind and made prisoners. They tried to escape, but the crowd was too many for them, and towels pulled down over their mouths kept them from raising an outcry. [132]

"What's the meaning of this?" spluttered Nat Poole, when he found himself and his crony in dormitory No. 12, and with the door closed and locked.

"It means, in the first place, that I want my things back," said Dave, "and especially a photograph that was between my books."

"Humph! that photo is burned up," growled Gus Plum.

"Gus Plum!" gasped Dave. He could say no more.

"Plum, do you mean to say you burned that picture up?" demanded Roger. "If you did, you ought to be tarred and feathered for it!"

"He wouldn't dare to do it!" came boldly from Phil. "If he did, I know what Dave will do—have him sent to jail for it."

"Bah! You can't send me to jail for a little fun," blustered the bully.

"That is no fun, Plum," put in Ben. "That photo was of great importance. If you burned it up, you will surely suffer."

"Is it really burned or not?" muttered Dave, hoarsely. "Answer me, you—you cur!" and he caught the bully by the throat. [133]

"Le-let go—don't strangle me! N-no—it's all right. I was only fooling."

"Then, where is it?"

"In the—the closet—on the top shelf."

Dave dropped his hold and ran to the closet pointed out. True enough, on the top shelf, in a back corner, were the books, with the precious photograph between them. Dave lost no time in placing the picture in an inside pocket.

"You're a fine fellow, not to take a bit of fun without getting mad," grumbled Gus Plum. He did not dare to say too much in such a crowd.

"So you call this fun?" remarked Phil, sarcastically. "Fun! to play the scavenger and bring this stuff up here? Well, I must say, I don't like your preference for a calling."

"Look here, you needn't call us scavengers!" howled Nat Poole. "I am a gentleman, I am!"

"Well, you brought this up here, you and Plum."

"It was only a—re—a joke. Everybody has got to put up with jokes to-night."

"Well, you are going to put up with a little hard work," came from Roger.

"Work?"

"Yes. You and Plum are going to clean up the muss and put this room in apple-pie order."

"Huh! I see myself doing it!" stormed the aristocratic youth. [134]

"You will do it," observed Ben. "Isn't that so, fellows?"

There was a chorus of approvals.

"So take off your coats and get to work," said Dave, who felt easier, now that he had the picture back. "I guess you both need a little exercise."

"I'll be hanged if I do a stroke!" roared Gus Plum.

Hardly had he spoken, when Ben caught up a pitcher of ice-water and held it over the bully's head.

"Take your choice, Plum!" he cried, and allowed a little of the ice-water to trickle down the bully's backbone. There was a roar of fright and a shiver.

"Oh! Don't do that! Do you want to freeze me to death!"

"Now, Poole, maybe you want some," added Ben, advancing. Poole tried to retreat, stumbled, and sat down heavily on a decayed cabbage, which squashed beneath him. He set up a roar.

"Now see what you've done, Ben Basswood! My best gray suit, too! I'll fix you for this!"

"Both of you must get to work!" declared Dave. "We'll give you two minutes in which to get started. If you don't start—"

"We'll roll you in the decayed vegetables and kick you out," finished Buster Beggs. With the term

so nearly ended, he was growing reckless. "I'll play timekeeper," and he drew out his watch.

[135]

Plum and Poole begged and protested, but all to no purpose, and, badly scared, took off their coats and cuffs, rolled up their sleeves, and began to clean up the muss they had made. While this was under way, the other boys of the dormitory came up and viewed the scene with amazement and satisfaction.

At last the dirty job was at an end, at least so far as Plum and Poole could go. They had worked hard and were bathed in perspiration, and their hands were in anything but a clean condition. Both were "boiling mad," but neither dared to say a word, for fear the others would make them do more.

"Now you have learned your trade," said Phil, finally, "you can graduate as full-fledged scavengers. When you go out, don't fail to place that bag of nasty stuff in a corner of your own room. The smell will give you both pleasant dreams."

"Phil Lawrence——" began the bully.

"Just wait till I——" came from Nat Poole.

"Silence!" cried Dave. "Not a word, or you'll be sorry. Take up the bag. Now, march!"

The door was flung open, and with the bag of messy stuff between them, Plum and Poole marched forth into the corridor and to the stairs leading to the back yard. The boys of dormitory No. 12 watched them out of sight, then returned to their room.

"I'll wager they are the maddest boys in the Hall," said Dave, when the door had been locked once more.

[136]

"Will they come back, do you think?" questioned Roger.

"I don't think so. But we can be on our guard."

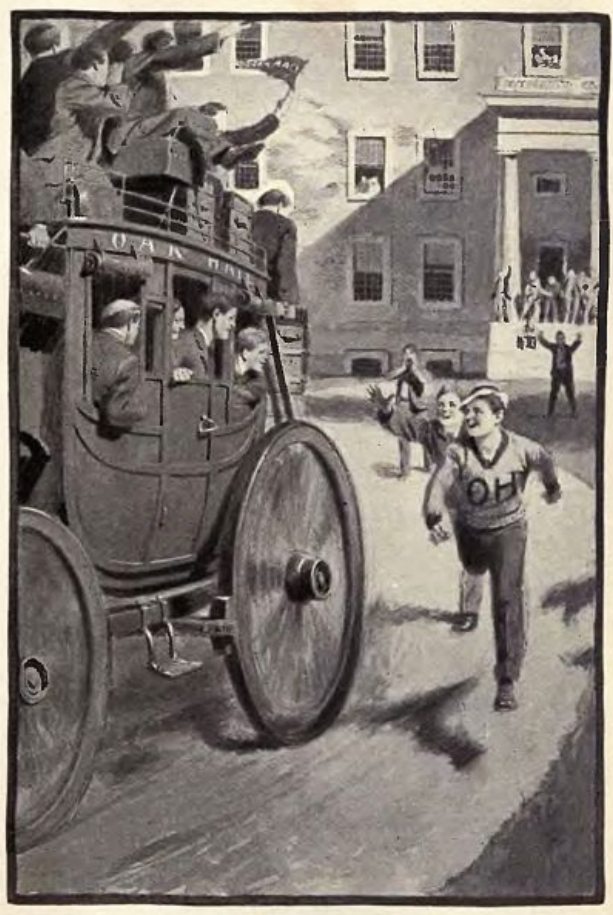
They remained on guard for half an hour, but Plum and Poole did not reappear. They had had enough of their so-called fun, and they sneaked out of sight at the first opportunity.

But, without this, there was fun galore that night in the various dormitories. Two crowds of boys held feasts, to which even the monitors were invited, and dormitories Nos. 3 and 4 got into a pillow fight, in the midst of which Job Haskers appeared. The teacher was knocked over by a pillow, and then some other pillows were piled on top of him. After that he was hustled out of the room, and, completely bewildered, he rolled down the broad stairs, bumping on every step. Then Pop Swingly came up, followed by "Horsehair," the carriage driver, to quell the disturbance, and each received a pitcher of ice-water over his head, which made both beat a hasty retreat. But by one o'clock the school quieted down, and all of the pupils went to sleep as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred.

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CHAPTER XVI

PREPARING FOR A LONG TRIP



"Good-by to Oak Hall!"—[Page 137](#).

"Whoop! hurrah! Off we go! Good-by to Oak Hall!"

The carryall belonging to the school was moving away from the campus. It was loaded with students and behind it came two wagons, full of trunks and dress-suit cases. Back on the campus a crowd was assembled to bid the departing ones good-by.

"Write to me often!"

"Don't forget, Tom! Atlantic City, middle of August!"

"Be sure and ask him to join the team!"

"Yes, we are going to Casco Bay. Come up, if you can."

"Tell Jack—Say, get off my toes, will you? Tell Jack to come up to Lake Titus, back of Malone. We'll give him a dandy—"

"*Toot! toot! toot!* Now then, Horsehair, start 'em up, and be lively, or I'll miss that connection for Albany!"

"I'll start 'em up, all right, if you young gents will give me a show," responded the driver. "Say, [138] Buster, don't use the whip. Give me the reins, Master Porter."

"Don't you want me to drive, Horsehair?"

"No, I want—Say, you in the back, give me my hat, will you?" shouted the driver, turning around. "I ain't a-going a step till I git that hat!"

"All right, Horsehair, darling!" replied Sam Day. "I thought I'd keep it to remember you by, but if you want—"

"Which puts me in mind of a story," said Shadow Hamilton. He had caught the humor of the occasion. "A lady once—"

"No stories allowed," broke in Phil.

"I can't tell a story unless I speak it aloud," answered Shadow, tartly.

"Phew, what a pun!" came from Roger. "Somebody please dump him off for that."

"Hold tight, all of you!" called out the anxious driver, and with a lurch the carryall made a turn and started out of the academy grounds and along the broad highway leading to Oakdale. All of the boys shouted themselves hoarse, and horns and rattles added to the din. Such a thing as holding the students in was out of the question, and Doctor Clay and his assistants did not attempt it. The doctor and Andrew Dale smiled broadly and waved their hands, and only Job Haskers looked bored. The other teachers were busy in the building and did not show themselves.

This was the first load to leave, and another was ready to depart directly after dinner. Nearly all of the boys were in high spirits, and sang and "cut up" all the way to the town, much to the terror of Jackson Lemond, known only to the lads as Horsehair, because he carried the signs of his calling continually.

If there was one boy in the crowd particularly sober at times, it was Shadow Hamilton. Doctor Clay had communicated with his parents, and Mr. Hamilton and the master of the school had had a long conference regarding the pins and stamps that had been taken. Shadow's father had agreed to pay for the missing articles, if they could not be recovered inside of the next few months. In the meantime, a private detective was to be called in to watch the movements of Gus Plum.

At Oakdale the party split into three parts, one to go up the railroad line, another to go down, and the third to take the connection for Albany. Phil, Roger, Ben, and Dave took the same train, and managed to get seats together.

"I wish I had heard from my folks," remarked Roger. "But I think it is all right," he added, hopefully.

"Don't be too sure, Roger," said Dave. "I don't want you to be disappointed."

"I shall write to you as soon as I get home and can talk to my father," said Phil to Dave. "We'll be able to arrange everything without much trouble, I am sure." [140]

Near the end of their journey Dave and Ben found themselves alone, Roger and Phil having said good-by at places further up the road. As they neared Crumville, the heart of the country boy beat quicker. How many things had happened since he had left that town to go to Oak Hall!

"I see the old white church steeple!" cried Ben, as they came out of a patch of timber. "Looks natural, doesn't it?"

"I feel as if I had been away a year, instead of a few months," answered Dave. He was peering anxiously out of the window. "Here we come to the station, and, yes, there is Mr. Wadsworth's automobile, and Mr. Wadsworth himself and Jessie!"

Soon the train came to a halt, and they piled out, dress-suit cases in hand, and walked over to the automobile.

"How do you do?" cried Jessie Wadsworth, a beautiful miss of thirteen, with soft eyes and golden curls. "I told papa you would be on this train."

"How do you do?" returned Dave, dropping his suit case to lift his cap and shake hands. "I hope you are well."

"Oh, I am," replied the miss, shaking back her curls. "How do you do, Ben?" And then there was more handshaking. [141]

Both of the boys were invited to enter the automobile, and did so, and in a few minutes Ben found himself at his own door. Then the machine was turned toward the Wadsworth mansion.

"I like to go riding with papa," explained Jessie. "I never go out with our man, though. Not since—you know!" and she turned a pair of grateful eyes upon Dave that made the boy color up.

"The machine appears to be perfectly safe, since we have had it repaired," put in Mr. Wadsworth. "But our man is better with the horses."

At the mansion Mrs. Wadsworth, an aristocratic but motherly lady, came out to greet Dave, followed by Caspar Potts, whose face was wreathed in smiles. All told, it was a homecoming that would have warmed the heart of any lad, and it made Dave forget completely that he was a "poorhouse nobody."

"You must tell me all about everything," said Jessie, after a somewhat elaborate supper had been served. "I don't want to miss a single thing!"

"Seems to me you are cutting out a big job for Dave," laughed her father.

"Well, I guess I can tell all she'll wish to hear," answered the youth, and seated at one end of a couch, with Jessie at the other, he told much of his life at Oak Hall, with its studies, its pranks, and its athletic sports. Dave could see the humorous side of a thing as well as anybody, and some stories he told made Mr. and Mrs. Wadsworth laugh as well as Jessie. On his trials he touched but lightly, for he could not dream of giving his little lady friend pain. [142]

On the following day Nat Poole came home, and Dave met the aristocratic youth in one of the stores of Crumville. Poole gave him a glassy stare and did not speak. A few minutes later Dave met Ben.

"Just ran into Poole," said the latter, "and what do you think, he made out that he didn't see me."

"He was in Parsons' store, but he wouldn't speak to me, either," answered Dave. "He must feel awfully sore. But I shan't mind."

"Nor I, Dave. I never did like that fellow, and I don't like his father, either. By the way, have you heard anything more about the farm that belongs to Professor Potts?"

"Yes, and I am glad, and so is he, that we didn't let Nat's father get hold of it. The new trolley company is going to put a line past it, and Mr. Wadsworth says it will be quite valuable in time."

Two days passed, and then Dave got long letters from Phil and Roger. Senator Morr had been to see Mr. Lawrence and had arranged to have his son go on the long trip to the South Seas. Roger was almost wild with joy, and said he was going to prepare for the trip immediately.

The letter from Phil told Dave that the start for San Francisco was to be made on the following Monday morning. All the boys were to meet at the Grand Central Depot, in New York City, and take the limited express which left for Chicago at noon. [143]

"I will go with you as far as New York," announced Mr. Wadsworth. "I wish to see that your journey is safely begun."

The last days of the week were busy ones for Dave. A steamer trunk was procured for him, and into this was packed his outfit, including a semi-nautical suit that fitted him to perfection and gave him quite a sailor look.

"I suppose you'll be a regular sailor by the time you come back," said Jessie.

"I don't know about that," answered Dave. "I am not going for that purpose," and his tone grew serious.

"Oh, I know that, Dave. I hope you find what you are going for. But—but——"

"But what, Jessie?"

"Oh, I—I don't want you to leave us, Dave. If you find a father, or an uncle, or brother, or somebody like that, I suppose you won't stay with us any more." And the young miss pouted engagingly.

"I'll certainly not care to leave you, Jessie," he answered, gently. "But you cannot blame me for wanting to find out who I am, I am sure." [144]

"Oh, no, Dave!"

"I don't want to remain a nobody and have folks shun me on that account."

"Who would do such a thing?" she asked, her eyes opening widely.

"Oh, a good many folks."

"It is very mean of them," came from the little miss, firmly. "But, never mind, Dave, I'll not shun you," she went on, catching his hand and squeezing it as hard as she could. "We're going to be just like a brother and sister always, aren't we?"

"If you say so."

"Don't you say so, Dave?"

"Yes, Jessie."

"Then that is settled, and we won't talk about it any more. Shun you! I just want to see them do it! I won't speak to anybody that does such a thing!" And Jessie looked as tragic as a miss of thirteen can look.

Among the things provided by thoughtful Mr. Wadsworth for Dave was a money belt, and in this was placed a fair amount of bankbills, and also a letter of credit.

"Mr. Wadsworth, you are more than kind!" cried the country boy, and something like tears stood in his honest eyes. "How can I ever repay you?"

"In one way only, Dave. By making a real man of yourself." [145]

"I shall do my best, sir."

"Then that is all I ask."

Billy Dill had been communicated with, and Caspar Potts went after the tar and brought him to Crumville, where Oliver Wadsworth procured the sailor a new outfit. Billy Dill's health was now restored completely, and the only thing he suffered from was a slight loss of memory, and even that defect seemed to be gradually wearing away.

"I'll be the happiest tar afloat when I have the rolling ocean under me once more," said he to Dave. "Cables an' capstans! but I do love the salt breeze!"

"Well, you'll soon get enough of it," answered the boy. "We have a long trip before us." [146]

CHAPTER XVII

THE TRIP TO THE FAR WEST

"My stars! what a very busy place!"

This was Dave's exclamation as he and Oliver Wadsworth hurried along one of the streets of New York City, on the way to buy some small thing which had been forgotten. They had arrived in the metropolis an hour ahead of time, and the country boy had stared at the many sights in wonder.

"It is one of the busiest cities in the world," answered the manufacturer, with a smile. "A fortune can be made or lost here in no time."

"I believe you. And the people! Why, there is a regular crowd, no matter where you turn."

"Don't you think you'd like the city, Dave?"

"I don't know—perhaps I should, after I got used to it."

Roger and Phil had not yet come in, and they had left Billy Dill at the depot to watch out for them. On returning to the station, Dave and Mr. Wadsworth met the three at the doors.

"Here we are again!" cried Roger, shaking hands. "And not very much time to spare, either." [147]

"Is the train in?" asked the manufacturer.

"Will be in a few minutes, so the gateman said," answered Phil.

They saw to it that their trunks were properly cared for, and a short while after the cars came in and they climbed aboard. Seats had been engaged beforehand, so there was no trouble on that score.

"Now remember to write whenever you get the chance," said Oliver Wadsworth to Dave. "And if you run short of funds, don't hesitate to let me know."

"I'll remember, and thank you very much," replied Dave, and then the long train moved off, slowly at first, and then at a good rate of speed. Dave's long journey to solve the mystery of his identity had begun.

"Say, what mountain is this we're goin' under, anyway?" came presently from the sailor. "I noticed it when I came to New York."

"This isn't a mountain," laughed Roger. "It is New York City itself. We are under the streets."

"Great whales! Wonder they don't knock down the wall o' somebuddy's cellar!"

It was not long before they came out into the open, and then both Dave and the sailor looked out of the windows with interest. Phil and Roger were more used to traveling, and spent the time in pointing out objects of interest and in answering questions. [148]

The fine coach was a revelation to Billy Dill, who, in the past, had traveled exclusively in the ordinary day cars.

"These here seats are better nor them in a barber shop," he observed. "An' thet little smoking-room is the handiest I ever see. But, boys, we made one big mistake," he added, suddenly.

"What's that?" asked Phil.

"Unless we tie up to an eatin' house on the way, we'll be starved. Nobody brung any grub along."

"Don't worry about that," said Roger, with a wink at the others. "I think I can scrape up some crackers and cheese somewhere."

"Well, that's better—although I allow as how we could have brought some ham sandwiches as well as not."

They had all had dinner, so nobody was hungry until about six o'clock, when a waiter from the dining-car came through in his white apron.

"First call to supper!"

"Wot's thet?" queried Billy Dill.

"Come and see," answered Dave, and led the way to the dining-car. When the old sailor saw the tables, and saw some folks eating as if at home, he stared in amazement.

"Well, keelhaul me, if this don't beat the Dutch!" he ejaculated, dropping into a chair pointed out to him. "Reg'lar hotel dinin'-room on wheels, ain't it? Never heard o' such a thing in my life, never! Say, Roger, better keep that crackers an' cheese out o' sight, or they'll laugh at ye!" he added, with a chuckle. [149]

"You never saw anything like this, then?" asked Dave.

"Never. I allers traveled in one o' them, plain, every-day kind o' trains, an' took my grub along in a pasteboard box."

Though amazed, Billy Dill was not slow about eating what was set before him, and he declared the repast the finest he had ever tasted. After the meal he went into the smoking compartment for a smoke, and then came back to the boys.

"Feelin' a bit sleepy," he announced. "I suppose there ain't no objections to my going to sleep."

"Not at all," said Phil. "Do you want your berth made up right away?"

"Humph! that's a good one!" laughed the tar. "They may have an eatin' room, but they ain't got no bedrooms, an' I know it. I'll do my best in the seat, though I allow a reg'lar long sofy would be better."

"Just you wait until I call the porter," said Roger, and touched the push-button. "This gentleman will have his berth made up," he went on, as the porter appeared.

"Yes, sah."

"Make it up with real sheets, messmate," put in Billy Dill, thinking it was a joke. "An' you might add a real feather piller, while ye are at it." [150]

"Yes, sah," answered the porter, with a grin. "Please step to another seat, sah."

"Come," said Dave, and arose and took Billy Dill to the opposite side of the sleeping-coach.

The old tar dropped into a vacant seat and watched the porter as he began to make up the berths. From a smile his face changed to a look of wonder, and when he saw the clean sheets, blankets, and pillows brought forth he could scarcely control himself.

"Cables, capstans, an' codfish!" he murmured. "Thet beats the dinin'-room, don't it? Say, maybe they hev got a ballroom on board, an' a church, an' a—a—farm, an' a few more things."

"Not quite," answered Roger, with a laugh. "But there is a library, if you want any books to read."

"Beats all! Why, this here train is equipped like a regular ship, ain't she?"

"Almost," said Dave. "Here are two berths; you can take one and I'll take the other."

"Good enough, Dave. Which will ye have?"

The boy said he preferred the lower berth, and Billy Dill swung himself up in true sailor fashion to that above.

"Makes me think o' a ship!" he declared. "I know I'll sleep like a rock!" And half an hour later he was in the land of dreams, and then the boys also retired. [151]

Morning found them well on their way to Chicago, and just before noon they rolled into the great city by the lakes. Here they had two hours to wait, and spent the time in getting dinner and taking a short ride around to see the sights.

"This is as far west as I have been," said Roger. "The rest of the journey will be new to me."

"I once took a journey to Los Angeles," said Phil. "But I went and returned by the southern route, so this is new to me also."

"I have never traveled anywhere—that is, since I can remember," put in Dave. "But I am sure I am going to like it—that is, if I don't get seasick when I am on the ocean."

"Oh, I suppose we'll all get our dose of that," responded the senator's son.

"Maybe not," said Billy Dill. "Some gits it, an' some don't."

Nightfall found them well on the second portion of their journey to San Francisco. There was an observation car on the train, and the whole party spent hours seated on camp-chairs, viewing scenery as it rushed past them. Now and then, for a change, they would read, and Billy Dill would smoke, and the boys often talked over what was before them.

"My father said I might tell you the object of my trip," said Phil to his chums. "But he does not want anybody else to know of it, unless it becomes necessary for me to say something to the captain. The supercargo of the ship is a man named Jasper Van Blott. He has worked for my father for some years, and my father always thought him honest. But lately things have happened which have caused my father to suspect this supercargo. He sometimes disposes of certain portions of a cargo, and his returns are not what they should be." [152]

"Then you are to act as a sort of spy," said Roger.

"I am to watch everything he does without letting him know exactly what I am doing. And when he makes a deal of any kind, I am to do my best to ascertain if his returns are correct. If I find he is honest, my father is going to retain him and increase his salary; if he is dishonest, my father will discharge him, and possibly prosecute him."

"Have you ever met this Van Blott?" asked Dave.

"Once, when he called on my father two years ago. He is a smooth talker, but I did not fancy his general style. He is supposed to be a first-class business man, and that is why my father has retained him. I do not believe Captain Marshall likes him much, by the way he writes to father."

"Have you ever met Captain Marshall?"

"Oh, yes, twice. You'll like him, I know, he is so bluff and hearty. My father has known him for [153]

many years, and he thinks the captain one of the best skippers afloat. He has sailed the Pacific for ten years and never suffered a serious accident."

"In that case, we'll be pretty safe in sailing under him," observed Roger. "It will certainly be a long trip—four thousand miles, or more!"

"Do you know anybody else on the ship?" asked Dave.

"I do not, and I don't know much about the ship herself, excepting that she is named the *Stormy Petrel*. Father bought her about a year ago. She is said to be a very swift bark, and yet she has great carrying capacity."

"Will you please explain to me just what a bark is?" said Roger. "I must confess I am rather dumb on nautical matters."

"A bark is a vessel with three masts. The front mast, or foremast, as sailors call it, and the main, or middle, mast are rigged as a ship, that is, with regular yardarms and sails. The back mast, called the mizzen mast, is rigged schooner fashion, that is, with a swinging boom."

"That's plain enough. Hurrah for the *Stormy Petrel*! Dave, we'll be full-fledged sailors before we know it."

"We must get Billy Dill to teach us a thing or two before we go aboard," said the country boy. "Then we won't appear so green." [154]

This all thought good advice, and for the remainder of the journey they frequently talked nautical matters over with the old tar. Billy Dill had his book on navigation with him, and also a general work on seamanship, and he explained to them how a ship, and especially a bark, was constructed, and taught them the names of the ropes and sails, and many other things.

"You'll soon get the swing on it," he declared. "It ain't so much to learn fer a feller as is bright an' willin' to learn. It's only the blockheads as can't master it. But I allow as how none o' you expect to work afore the mast, do ye?"

"Not exactly," answered Phil. "But there is no harm in learning to do a sailor's work, in case we are ever called on to take hold. Somebody might get sick, you know."

"Thet's true, lad—an' I can tell ye one thing: A ship in a storm on the Pacific, an' short-handed, ain't no plaything to deal with," concluded the old tar. [155]

CHAPTER XVIII

SAILING OF THE "STORMY PETREL"

As soon as the party arrived at San Francisco, Phil set out to learn if the *Stormy Petrel* was in port. This was easy, for the firm of which Mr. Lawrence was the head had a regular shipping office near the docks.

"Yes, she is in and almost loaded," said the clerk at the office, as soon as he learned Phil's identity. "I'll take you down to her, if you wish."

"Very well," answered the youth, and soon he and his chums and Billy Dill were on board of the bark. A gang of stevedores were on hand, bringing aboard boxes, crates, and barrels, and in the midst of the crowd were Captain Frank Marshall and Van Blott, the supercargo, both directing operations.

"Well! well!" ejaculated the captain, on catching sight of Phil. "Got here at last, eh? Glad to see you. So these are the young gentlemen to go along? Well, I reckon you'll find the trip long enough. Glad to know you, Porter, and the same to you, Morr. Yes, we are mighty busy just now. Got a little of the cargo in the wrong way—tell you about it later"—the last words to Phil. "I shall be glad of your company. Go down into the cabin and make yourselves at home, and I'll be with you presently." [156]

"Thank you," answered Phil. "But is that Mr. Van Blott over yonder?"

"It is. Want to see him? Trot along, if you do." And the captain turned to his work once more.

By his general manner Captain Marshall showed that he did not wish to come into contact with the supercargo just then, and Phil walked over to that personage alone. The supercargo was a tall, thin individual with a sallow face and a thin, yellowish mustache.

"This is Mr. Van Blott, I believe," said Phil.

"Yes," was the short and crusty answer, and the supercargo gave the boy a sharp look.

"I am Phil Lawrence. I guess you do not remember me?"

"Oh!" cried the supercargo, and his manner changed instantly. "How do you do? I didn't think you'd be here quite so soon. I hope your father is well?"

"Yes, sir. Then you got his letter, Mr. Van Blott?"

"Yes, this morning. I haven't read it very carefully yet. He said something about you helping me, if I needed help. Well, I won't bother you much. I have done the work alone in the past, and I can do it now." [157]

"I am willing to do all I can to assist you," said Phil, politely.

"I don't doubt it. But I won't trouble you—so you and your friends can just lie back and enjoy yourselves," returned Jasper Van Blott, smoothly. "No use in working, when you are on a vacation."

"Oh, I shan't call it work. I want to learn a little about the business. Some day, you know, I am to go into my father's office."

At this a slight frown crossed the supercargo's face, but he quickly smiled it off. "As you please," he said. "But excuse me now, I'm very busy. We are trying to get ready to sail to-morrow by noon, and there is still a great deal to do."

In some way Phil felt himself dismissed, and he rejoined Dave and Roger, who were standing by the companionway. All went below, to find the cabin of the *Stormy Petrel* deserted.

"This is a fine cabin," remarked Dave, gazing around. "It's as cozy as can be."

"Where is Billy Dill?" asked Phil.

"He said he'd go forward and await orders."

"Did he say anything about the vessel?"

"Said she looked to be a first-class sailer and in prime condition," answered the senator's son. "He was delighted with her."

"What do you think of the captain?" [158]

"I think I shall like him," returned Dave. "Roger thinks the same."

"I don't like that supercargo," went on Phil, lowering his voice. "I am afraid I shall have trouble with him before the trip is over. He doesn't want me to know a thing about what he is doing."

A little later Captain Marshall came in and showed them the staterooms they were to occupy—one fair-sized one for Dave and Roger and a smaller one adjoining for Phil. Then he introduced the boys to his first mate, Paul Shepley, and to several others. When he got Phil by himself he asked the youth if the supercargo had said anything about the loading of the bark.

"Not a word," answered Phil. "Why do you ask that question?"

"We had some trouble just before you came on board. Mr. Van Blott wanted some things done one way and I wanted them another. He thinks he can run things, but I am going to let him understand that I am master here. I tell you this, because I want you to understand how matters are going."

"From what you say, I don't think you like Mr. Van Blott," said Phil. "If so, let me say, I don't think I shall like him myself."

"Oh, I can get along with him, if he will mind his own business and do what is right," answered the captain of the *Stormy Petrel*. "But he must not attempt to dictate to me, even if he is the supercargo." [159]

"Well, I trust we have no trouble," answered Phil, with a sigh. But the trouble, he felt, was already in the air.

Late that afternoon their baggage came on board, and the boys set to work to establish themselves on the ship which was to be their home for so many weeks to come. In the meantime Billy Dill reported to the captain, and was assigned to his place in the forecabin as an extra hand at full pay. The old tar was pleased mightily, and the smell of oakum and bilge water appeared to act on him like a tonic. He was one to make friends readily, and soon established himself as a favorite among the foremast hands.

In the morning the boys took a final run ashore, purchasing a few things they thought they needed and mailing some long letters home. Coming back to the bark, they caught sight of the supercargo coming, with another man, from a drinking place on a corner.

"Humph! that shows he drinks," muttered Phil.

"I think most seafaring men do," answered Roger.

"Captain Marshall does not."

They had to pass the supercargo, who stood on the corner with his back to them, talking to the other man. Just as they went by, they heard Van Blott remark: [160]

"Don't worry; this trip is going to pay me big, Bangor, and when I come back you shall have all that is coming to you." This was all the three boys heard, but it set Phil to thinking.

"I'd like to know how this trip is going to pay him big," said the shipowner's son. "Father says he gets his regular salary and a small commission."

"Perhaps he has some private deal he wishes to put through," suggested Dave.

"No; by his agreement he has no right to do any outside work. His time belongs exclusively to the *Stormy Petrel* and her cargo."

They returned to the bark, and quarter of an hour later the supercargo followed, with a flushed face that showed he had been imbibing more liquor than was good for him.

"Are you ready to sail?" demanded Captain Marshall, striding up.

"All ready," was the surly response, and the supercargo walked down to his stateroom and disappeared.

Orders were given to cast off, and in a very few minutes the bark was on her way from San Francisco Bay toward the Golden Gate. It was a perfect day, and by nightfall the harbor was left behind and land became a mere speck in the distance. [161]

The first night on the bark passed pleasantly enough for the three chums. At first the quarters on the vessel appeared small to them, but they soon grew accustomed to the change. All slept soundly and they were out on deck very shortly after sunrise.

"Well, how do you like life on *Mother Carey's Chicken*?" asked Phil, when they were gazing at the rolling ocean.

"*Mother Carey's Chicken*?" repeated Dave, with a puzzled look.

"Oh, I know what he means!" cried Roger, with a laugh. "A stormy petrel is a bird that the sailors call a Mother Carey's chicken."

"What a name! I think I like *Stormy Petrel* better," observed Dave. "But, I say, isn't this just grand! A fellow can open his lungs and drink in ozone by the barrel!"

"And hardly a cloud in the sky," added Roger. "If this is any criterion, we'll have the finest kind of a trip."

"Well, boys, I see you are up on time," came from a little behind them, and now Captain Marshall strode up. "Fine sea this, and a fine breeze, too."

"How long will this nice weather last?" asked Roger.

"Humph!" The captain humped his shoulders. "No man alive can tell that. A few days, at least, maybe a week or more. But, sooner or later, we'll pay up for it. The finer the weather, the bigger the storm to follow." [162]

"I shouldn't mind an ordinary storm," observed Dave. "But I don't want to be wrecked."

"No danger of that, lad. The *Stormy Petrel* can outride any storm likely to blow in these parts. She is one of the best vessels I ever sailed in—a man couldn't ask for a better."

"How much of a crew have you, Captain Marshall?" asked Phil.

"I have sixteen men, all told, besides the tar you brought along." The brow of the shipmaster wrinkled slightly. "They are all pretty fair men, too, excepting four, and those four Mr. Van Blott brought in."

"What's the trouble with the four?"

"They drink, and they don't mind as they should." Captain Marshall turned to Phil. "After breakfast, I'd like to talk to you on business in the cabin," he added.

This was a hint that Dave and Roger were not desired, and, accordingly, after the meal they left Phil and the captain alone.

"I've been studying your father's instructions to me," said Captain Marshall to Phil. "As I view it, you are to be a sort of assistant to Mr. Van Blott."

"If he will allow it." [163]

"And if he won't?" The captain gazed at Phil sharply.

"Then, perhaps, I'll do something on my own account."

"Are you going to keep your eye on him?"

"Yes, but you need not tell him so."

"Don't worry—I shan't open my mouth, Philip. I am glad to hear of this, for, I tell you privately, Van Blott needs watching. He is a sly dog, and I am satisfied in my own mind that he has something up his sleeve."

"Do you know a man named Bangor in San Francisco? He was with Mr. Van Blott just before we sailed."

"Ah! I thought so! Yes, I know him, and his reputation among shippers is none of the best. He used to be a supercargo for the Donaldson-Munroe Company, but they discharged him for some crooked work. What were he and Van Blott doing?"

Phil told of what he had overheard.

"That confirms my idea exactly!" cried the captain of the *Stormy Petrel*. "There is something in the wind. You must watch out, by all means, and I'll do the same. This man must not be allowed to do anything wrong, if we can possibly prevent it."

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CHAPTER XIX

DAYS ON THE OCEAN

The weather remained fine for a full week, and with favoring winds the *Stormy Petrel* bowled along merrily on her course. The ocean rolled lazily in the warm sunshine, a few birds circled about the ship, and once they passed a steamer coming from the Hawaiian Islands, and a schooner from Manila, and that was all.

"Shall we stop at Honolulu?" asked Roger, of the captain.

"No. I thought of doing so at first, but now I shall make no stops until we get to Christmas Island, and from there we will go direct to Cavasa and then to Sobago. What we do after that will depend largely on what is done about a cargo."

So far none of the boys had experienced any seasickness, and they congratulated themselves on their escape, but Billy Dill put a little damper on their ardor.

"This ain't no weather to judge by," was his comment. "Wait till we get some cross-winds and the ships starts to roll. Maybe then ye won't be so settled in the stomach."

[165]

The few days on the ocean had done the old tar a world of good. His eyes were brighter and he was physically in the best of health once more. His mind, too, was clearer, and one day he announced to Dave that he had something to tell.

"I ain't quite sure as I have the exact straight on 't," he began. "A little on 't is still like a dream. But I know enough to make a putty straight story," and then he told his tale.

A good portion of it was not unlike the story of many sailors. When very young, he had had a strong desire to go to sea, and at his first opportunity had shipped as a cabin boy. From cabin boy he had become a foremast hand, and had been in such service more years than he could count. He had visited nearly every portion of the globe, and had been wrecked twice, once off the coast of Africa and once while trying to round Cape Horn.

Three years before had found him at Sydney, Australia, looking for a chance to ship. While down among the wharves, he had discovered a tramp vessel, the *Mary Sacord*, bound for Cavasa and other islands in the South Seas, and had signed articles for a year's cruise. The captain proved to be a brute, and there was fighting on the vessel from the time she left Sydney until Cavasa was reached. There, at the main seaport, Billy Dill went ashore and refused to go aboard again.

The captain of the *Mary Sacord* was very angry over the refusal of the seaman to continue on the trip, and threatened Dill with imprisonment, and even had the old tar arrested. But, at this juncture, two men came forward and aided the sailor in his trouble, and, as a consequence, Billy Dill was set free and the vessel went on her way without him.

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One of the men who had helped Billy Dill was Dunston Porter and the other was Samuel Lemington. They were both Americans and fairly well-to-do. At first, they did not tell the old sailor much about their business, but they asked him if he wished to work for them, and he said he was willing, and they offered him thirty dollars a month and all his expenses.

The two Americans, so the tar discovered later, were after a treasure of precious stones, said upon good authority to have been hidden years before in the mountains by a former cannibal king of Cavasa and some other South Sea islands. The three journeyed into the interior of the island and spent months in looking for the treasure, but without success. Then came an earthquake and the volcano in the center of the island began to grow active, and all three had to flee to the coast in order to escape destruction.

It was on this treasure hunt that Billy Dill heard, through Dunston Porter, about the lost child that had been carried off by a nurse who was not mentally sound, although usually good-hearted. Dunston Porter had not said very much about the matter, for it seemed to hurt him a great deal—so much, in fact, that the old sailor did not think it best to ask for the particulars. But he knew one thing, that, try his best, Dunston Porter could not learn what had become of the woman and the little one, and he was half inclined to believe that both were dead.

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"Well, did he say that the child was his son?" asked Dave, with deep interest.

"No, it was some relative of his, I think. I don't believe Dunston Porter was married."

"When you came back to the coast, what did this Mr. Porter do?"

"He and Mr. Lemington stayed in the town, trying to make up their minds as to what they'd do next. I got a chance to ship, and, as they didn't seem to want me any more, I sailed away, and then I did as I've told you before."

This was practically all the information Billy Dill could give concerning Dunston Porter and the missing child, although he told much more concerning the treasure hunt, and of several fights with the natives of the interior. He said the natives were a bad lot, and he wanted no more to do with them than was absolutely necessary.

"How old should you judge this Dunston Porter to be?" asked Dave.

"Forty to forty-five years old, my lad."

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"Did he ever tell you where he came from?"

"Not exactly. But he was an American, and he knew a good bit about San Francisco, Chicago, and New York, and I remember he once told about hunting in the Maine woods and in the Adirondacks."

"He didn't say a word about coming back to the United States?"

"Not that I can remember."

With this information Dave had to be content. The story had been a strain on Billy Dill, and afterward he complained of a headache and of feeling dizzy. But a good night's rest restored him completely.

The sailor was at all times delighted to instruct the boys in the art of seamanship, and under his tutelage they learned rapidly, so that any of them could go aloft and make or take in sail whenever required. He also taught them how to make knots of various kinds, and many other things useful on board a ship. In the meantime Captain Marshall allowed them to read his works on navigation, and gave them a few lessons in steering, and in the use of the compass, sextant, and other nautical instruments.

"We'll be full-fledged sailors before this voyage is over," remarked Roger to his chums. "I declare, I almost feel as if I could handle a small ship already."

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"Maybe you could, on the Leming River," rejoined Phil. "But when it came to a big storm on the Pacific, I rather believe you'd find it a different story."

So far, Phil had had but little to do with the supercargo, but now he asked the man if he could look over the books. Jasper Van Blott agreed, but the scowl on his face showed plainly that the move was not to his liking. Phil went over the accounts at his leisure, but could find nothing wrong in them. There were a few entries that looked odd, but the supercargo was ready with explanations concerning them.

"Well, have you found anything wrong?" questioned Dave, after Phil had spent three days over the books.

"Nothing much, Dave," was the answer from the shipowner's son.

"The supercargo isn't very friendly, I notice."

"Oh, he hates it, that I am going on this trip," answered Phil.

There seemed to be but one man on the ship with whom the supercargo was thoroughly friendly, and that was Paul Shepley, the first mate. The pair were together a large part of the time, and their conversation was frequently an animated one.

"I can't get it out of my head that those two are working together over something," said Dave. "Why, they are as thick as bees in a sugar barrel."

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"I've noticed that, too," came from Roger. "Perhaps they are hatching up some mischief."

On the following day the weather became more unsettled, and occasionally the clouds showed themselves above the horizon. Captain Marshall gave orders to his mate that a strict watch should be kept for a blow.

"I guess we are in for it, now!" cried Dave, that afternoon. "It is much rougher than it has yet been."

"I know I am in for it," answered Roger. His face was white, and wore a troubled look.

"What's the matter, seasick?"

"I—I fancy so. My head spins like a top and my stomach is starting to do the same."

"Better go below, lad," said Captain Marshall, coming up. "It won't do you any good to remain on deck."

Roger shuffled off to the companionway, and Dave went after him. The senator's son was growing worse every minute, and it was not long before Phil announced that he also felt sick. Both went to their staterooms, and Dave did what he could to relieve their distress.

"If the old tub would only stop for a minute—just one minute!" groaned Roger.

"That's what I say," responded Phil. "Oh, dear! I'd give a hundred dollars to be on shore again!" [171]

"I think I'd make it a thousand," groaned the senator's son. "Why, Dave, don't you feel it at all?"

"Well, I feel a little strange," answered the country boy, but he did not add that it was because he had to stand by and assist his friends. He made them as comfortable as possible, and then rushed to the deck, to get some fresh air and to get the matter off his mind.

A storm was certainly brewing, and Dave wondered how soon it would strike the *Stormy Petrel* and how long it would last. The black clouds were piling up in the sky and the wind came in unsteady puffs. Below, the clear, blue water had turned to a dark green.

The first mate was in charge of the deck and, so far, he had given no orders to shorten sail. Ever and anon a sail would crack in the wind and the bark would give a plunge in the sea. Dave walked forward to where Billy Dill stood by the rail, watching the sky anxiously.

"This looks stormy, doesn't it?" questioned the youth.

"Stormy? Great dogfish! I should allow as how it did, lad. We're in for a blow, an' a big one, too."

"Then isn't it about time to take in sail?"

"I should say it was."

"Then why doesn't the mate do so?" [172]

At this question the old tar shrugged his shoulders.

"Reckon he wants to take the benefit o' all the breeze he can," he answered. "But it ain't the best thing to do—not to my way o' reasonin'. If he ain't keerful, we may lose a topmast, or more."

"I suppose you don't dare to say anything to him?"

"No. He's in charge, an' that's all there is to it."

The storm continued to approach, and now several of the sailors looked anxiously at the first mate. He was evidently in a savage mood, and paid no attention to them.

"Unless he does sumthin' soon, we'll lose a stick, sure," said Billy Dill to Dave, in a low tone. "I never saw sech a contrary mate in my life!"

"Perhaps I had better speak to Captain Marshall," suggested the country youth.

"I wish ye would—it would be safer. But don't let Shepley know it—or he'll be as mad as a hornet at ye," added the old tar.

Leaving the bow, Dave hurried to the stern and toward the companionway. Here he almost ran headlong into the first mate.

"Hi! look where you are going!" ejaculated the man, roughly. "Have you no manners?"

"Excuse me," returned Dave. "Don't you think we are having a pretty big blow, sir?" he added. [173]

"Oh, this won't amount to much," grumbled Paul Shepley. "Nothing to get scared about."

Dave said nothing to this. He hurried below, and a moment later stood in front of Captain Marshall's stateroom door. The master of the *Stormy Petrel* was taking a nap, but at the boy's knock roused up instantly. [174]

CHAPTER XX

CAUGHT IN A STORM

"Who is there?"

"Captain Marshall, can I speak to you a moment?"

"Oh, so it is you, Porter! What do you want?"

"There seems to be a big storm coming up, and I thought I had better tell you about it."

"Why—er—isn't Mr. Shepley on deck?"

"Yes, sir—but I thought I had better tell you, anyway," went on Dave.

"Mr. Shepley knows what to do," answered the captain, rather shortly. He did not fancy having his much-needed nap disturbed.

"I suppose that is true, sir—but some of the sailors are getting very anxious. I don't care to mention their names, but they think some sail ought to be taken in."

The master of the *Stormy Petrel* arose and stretched himself. Then he put on the shoes he had dropped on lying down, and came out into the cabin. He gave one look at the barometer and his sleepiness vanished.

"I should say there was a storm coming!" he exclaimed, and ran for the companionway. He was soon on deck, and cast an anxious eye around. [175]

"Mr. Shepley, why haven't you shortened sail?" he demanded, in a low but sharp voice.

"I didn't think it necessary, just yet," was the cool response.

"I don't agree with you," returned the master of the bark, shortly, and then, without delay, gave orders to take in fully half the sails, while the crew were ordered to remain in readiness to stow away still more of the canvas at a moment's notice. The sailors, for the most part, worked with a will, although there were several laggards, for laziness among certain classes of men is not confined to the land alone.

Captain Marshall was angry, and he did not hesitate to let the first mate know it.

"There is no sense in taking too many risks," he remarked, after his orders had been obeyed. "That storm is coming, as sure as fate."

"I wanted to make as much headway as possible before it struck us," grumbled Shepley. "We haven't suffered any."

"No, but we might have lost a topmast or a topsail. After this, you will please be a little more careful."

There was no time to argue the matter, for a little later the storm began in earnest. All of the sails were taken in but the fore sheet, and this was reefed down, allowing just enough canvas to fly to keep the bark before the wind. The breeze was turning to half a gale, and from a distance came the rumble of thunder. Then the sky grew still blacker and a flash of lightning illuminated the angry waters. [176]

Dave had followed Captain Marshall on deck, but now he went below once more, to learn how Phil and Roger were faring. He found them both out in the cabin, having come from their staterooms in alarm.

"Is it very bad outside?" questioned the senator's son.

"Not yet, but I am afraid it is going to be," was Dave's reply.

"Phew, that certainly means business!" burst out Roger, as another flash of lightning was followed by a heavy peal of thunder. "I hope the ship weathers it all right."

"Captain Marshall is on deck, and he knows what he is doing," answered Dave. "I am glad I called him up," he added.

"Oh, so you called him up, did you?" came in a voice from the cabin doorway, and, turning, Dave beheld Paul Shepley there. The mate had come below to get his raincoat.

"Yes, I did," answered the country boy, boldly. Now that the truth was out, he did not mean to mince matters. [177]

"Thought you knew more about running a ship than I did, eh?"

"I thought it was time to take in sail—and so did the captain."

"Humph! This blow isn't going to kill anybody, and we want to take all the advantage of the wind that we can. We are expected to make a quick trip, but we can't do it if we are going to haul down sail all the time."

"I am sure Captain Marshall will do what is right," said Phil.

"Really?" sneered the mate. "I didn't ask you to put in your oar."

"I know you didn't—but my father owns the vessel, and I shall stand by Captain Marshall and by my friend, Dave Porter."

"Oh, so it's something of a plot against me, eh?" snorted the mate, more angry than ever. "Well, don't let it go too far." And he turned into his own room, banging the door after him. A minute later he came out, wearing his raincoat, and hurried out on deck once more.

"He's a real nice man, I don't think," was Roger's comment. "My, how he would lord it over us, if he dared!"

"He is certainly sore," said Phil. "I must say, in a way, he and the supercargo are a team. When I get a chance, I am going to write to father and let him know exactly the sort of fellows they are." [178]

The boys felt little like discussing the subject further just then, for the storm had now burst over the vessel in all of its mad fury. The wind was whistling through the rigging, making the masts and yards creak and groan, and the rain came down in sheets, sweeping the decks by the bucketful. It was with difficulty that the *Stormy Petrel* could be kept before the wind. The waves were running like so many big hills, with the bark first on a crest and then down in a valley

between. The sky was almost black, lit up occasionally by flashes of lightning that were blinding.

"We'll go to the bottom, sure!" groaned Roger, for at least the tenth time. "I'd rather be at Oak Hall any day than in such a storm as this." He was still seasick, but the storm made him forget the ailment for the time being; and what was true of the senator's son in this regard was likewise true of Phil.

"I think I'll take another look on deck," said Dave, as the bark gave a pitch that sent them all against a partition.

"Take care that you don't fall overboard," returned Phil.

"I'll be on my guard, never fear."

Putting on his raincoat, the country boy made his way cautiously up the companionway. The moment he stuck his head into the open he realized that it was blowing "great guns," and more. The rain dashed violently into his face, drenching him completely. [179]

"This is no place for you, lad!" bellowed Captain Marshall, trying to make himself heard above the wind. "Better go below again."

"I'll be careful," pleaded Dave. "I love to watch a storm—I always did, when I was on the farm. I never thought of hiding, no matter how hard it thundered or lightened."

The master of the bark gazed for a second at him in admiration.

"Well, I was the same," he said. "But be careful, and don't go close to the rail."



Another flash lit up the scene.—Page 179.

Dave remained in the vicinity of the cabin. When another flash lit up the scene, he saw Billy Dill near the bow, stowing away some rope in the most unconcerned fashion possible. The old tar was in his element, and said afterward that the storm had done him more good than gallons of medicine would have accomplished. "Saterated me with salt brine, an' thet's wot I needed," were his words.

"How do you like it, now?" asked Captain Marshall, coming up a little later, while there was something of a lull.

"I don't mind it," answered Dave, smiling. "It's a little excitement, and that is what I like."

"I am thankful that you called me when you did." [180]

"I did what I thought was best, sir. But I reckon it has put me into a hole with your first mate."

"Why, did you tell him anything?"

"No, but he overheard me telling the other boys that I had called you. He didn't say much, but he showed that he was angry."

"Humph! Well, don't you mind, Porter. It was the right thing to do. Shepley is a good sailor, but once in a while he takes risks that I don't like. If he troubles you about this, let me know, do you hear?"

"Yes, sir; but I am willing to fight my own battles."

"I don't doubt it, for you are gritty, I can see that. Nevertheless, you let me know."

"How long do you suppose this storm will last?"

"There is no telling, perhaps twenty-four hours and maybe two or three days. We are paying up for that nice weather we had," concluded the captain.

Finding he could do nothing on deck, and that he was getting wet through, Dave went below and to his stateroom. He found Roger and Phil lying down as before, and as miserable as ever. A little later supper was announced, but Dave had to eat alone, for neither the captain nor the mate came to join in the repast. It was a meal under difficulties, and Dave did not remain at the table long. He asked Roger and Phil if they wanted anything, but both declined. [181]

"Why, the very idea of anything to eat makes me sicker than ever," declared the senator's son.

The storm did not abate during the evening, and the three boys spent rather a dismal time of it in the cabin and the staterooms. As night came on, none of them felt like going to bed, although advised to do so by Captain Marshall.

"We have seen the worst of the blow," said the master of the *Stormy Petrel*, coming down about ten o'clock.

It was not until morning that Dave fell into a troubled doze, from which he did not awaken until Roger shook him.

"Hello! I went to sleep, after all!" cried the country boy. "What time is it?"

"About seven o'clock, Dave. There is something unusual going on on deck," continued the senator's son.

"What is it?"

"I don't know, but I am going up to see, and so is Phil."

The three were soon ready, and crawled up the companionway and out on the rain-drenched and slippery deck.

"We must man the pumps," they heard Captain Marshall cry. "And, Scader, report as soon as you can." [182]

"Aye, aye, sir!" came from Scader, who was the ship's carpenter. "But I am afraid, sir, it's a bad leak to get at," he added.

"Have we sprung a leak?" cried Phil.

"We have," answered the captain. His face wore a serious look, and the boys saw that he was much troubled.

The sailors were at the pumps, and worked away with a will. Roger and Phil still felt too weak to take part, but Dave leaped to Billy Dill's side and worked as hard as any of the foremast hands. Leaving the ship in charge of the first mate, Captain Marshall went below, to learn what the ship's carpenter might have to say about the condition of affairs.

"We are bringing up a good deal of water, are we not?" asked Dave of Billy Dill.

"You have it right, lad; more water nor I care to see," answered the old tar.

"That means the leak is a bad one, eh?"

"Yes, some of the ship's seams must be wide open."

"Will it sink us?"

"I can't tell anything more about that than you, Dave. We must hope for the best," replied Billy Dill. [183]

CHAPTER XXI

CAVASA ISLAND AT LAST

Phil and Roger heard the conversation between Dave and the old sailor, and it worried them so much that they hurried below, to learn what might be going on.

"We must shift that part of the cargo first," came from the ship's carpenter. "Then, I think, I can do something, but I am not sure."

Captain Marshall at once ordered the cargo shifted as desired. This did not please the supercargo, but the master of the vessel paid no attention to Van Blott's objections.

"It is a question of keeping the ship afloat, Mr. Van Blott," said he, coldly. "If necessary, I'll have the whole cargo heaved overboard."

"But, sir——" commenced the supercargo.

"I can't talk about it now. My duty is to save the ship. Do you want to go to the bottom of the ocean?" And Captain Marshall spoke in such a decided way that Jasper Van Blott sneaked off and said no more for the time being.

A portion of the crew came below, and not without difficulty a number of heavy boxes and casks were shifted. Then the ship's carpenter and an assistant went to work to tighten up the seams, through which the water of the ocean was spurting furiously. It was a difficult and dangerous task, and it lasted the best part of three hours. But, at last, the workers got the better of the elements, and then the water went down steadily in the ship's well, as the men at the pumps continued their labors. [184]

"Will the ship pull through?" asked Phil, of the captain.

"Yes, my lad, I think we are safe now—unless the blow makes us open some more seams."

After the repairs below had been made and the alarm had passed, Captain Marshall called the first mate to his side.

"I thought you said those seams were all right when we were at the dock at San Francisco," he began.

"They looked all right," mumbled Paul Shepley.

"You couldn't have examined them very closely."

"I did."

"Humph! After this I had better look to things myself," was the captain's comment, and he moved away.

A little later the supercargo and the first mate met in the waist. The storm was now dying down rapidly, and it looked as if the sun would soon break through the clouds. [185]

"Well, I see you had another run-in with the old man," remarked Van Blott.

"So did you."

"You mean about the cargo?"

"Of course."

"Well, I didn't want him to nose around too much," and the supercargo grinned.

"Afraid he might run across some of that private stuff?"

"Hush! Somebody might hear you, Shepley. What was your row about?"

"He laid the opening of the seams on my shoulders—said I didn't inspect things properly at San Francisco."

"He seems to be getting harder than ever on us."

"That's it, and I am done, after this trip," growled the first mate.

"So am I—if I can make my little pile."

"That's what I mean. Van Blott, we must do it, too."

"I expect to, but it isn't going to be so easy as we thought. The owner of the ship has sent his son to watch me, and he and those other lads are rather clever."

"Pooh! you are not afraid of those boys, are you?"

"It isn't that. I'm afraid they'll discover something and take the news to the old man." [186]

Here the talk had to come to an end, and the two men separated, promising to meet in the evening. That they had some scheme they wished to work, there could not be the slightest doubt.

By nightfall the storm was at an end, and the sun set in a perfect blaze of glory. Of the gale only a stiff breeze remained, and Captain Marshall lost no time in setting his sails as before. All the loose seams had been mended and the *Stormy Petrel* now took in no more water than was usual with her, and is usual with ordinary sea-going craft.

"I am glad that is over," remarked Phil, the next day, after a fair night's sleep.

"So am I, and I never want to experience another such storm," came from Roger.

"How do you both feel?" asked Dave.

"My seasickness is gone, thank goodness," answered Phil.

"Ditto here," said the senator's son. "Dave, you are a lucky dog, to keep so well," he added, a bit enviously.

"Perhaps it will be my turn next time, Roger."

After that the *Stormy Petrel* continued on her course for many days with but little out of the ordinary happening. Once or twice the boys had some sharp words with the first mate, and Phil had a "tiff" with the supercargo, but nothing like an open quarrel ensued. Yet the flames were smoldering, ready to break out at the first opportunity.

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"Those two men hate us worse than poison," said Dave, one day. "I can see it plainly."

"That supercargo has it in for me," replied Phil. "I wish I could let my father know just how he is acting. He'd soon lose his situation."

They were now near the equator, and the weather was very warm, and would have been unendurably hot, had it not been for the constant breeze that was blowing. Nobody cared to do much in such an atmosphere, and the three boys were content to sit around or loll in hammocks suspended in shady portions of the deck. The broiling sun started the tar from the seams, and the odor therefrom was almost overpowering.

"I wish we had an ice-making machine on board," said Roger, as he fanned himself. They had taken ice along, but the supply was running low, and he could not get quite as much as he desired.

"Never mind, we'll have a run ashore soon," said Dave. "That will be something of a change."

He had in mind the stop at Christmas Island, a small body of land belonging to England and lying in the Pacific, close to the equator. The island was sighted the next day, and they made a landing and roamed around for three hours, while some fresh water and other things were taken on board. Then, by nightfall, the bow of the *Stormy Petrel* was once more headed for the southwestward.

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"Now we are in southern seas," cried Dave, one day, after the equator had been left behind. "I suppose we'll begin to sight some of the numerous islands before long."

"I shan't mind sighting the islands, but I don't want to run on some hidden reef," returned Roger. "The charts show a great number of reefs in this portion of the ocean."

Once more the days slipped by. It was fearfully hot, and the boys did not move, excepting when it was absolutely necessary. Occasionally they would sit at the bow and Billy Dill would tell them stories of the sea and of sights in foreign lands. He now said that he felt as of old.

"I was born for the sea," he observed. "It was a mistake for me to travel all the way across land to Oakdale, an' I reckon I got punished fer it."

"I am sorry you suffered, but I am glad I had the chance to meet you," answered Dave. "It may mean a great deal to me, you know."

"That's true, Dave. But take my advice an' don't depend upon it too much. I'd hate awfully to see ye disapp'inted."

"Yes—but I wish we were at Cavasa Island," said the country boy, wistfully.

The nearer the ship drew to the island mentioned, the more anxious did he become, although he did his best to conceal his feelings. But Phil and Roger understood.

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"I sincerely hope Dave isn't disappointed," said the senator's son, when he and Phil chanced to be alone. "Think of coming such a distance as this on a wild-goose chase!"

"Well, it was the only thing to do," answered the son of the bark owner. "You and I would have done the same."

"I don't doubt it. But, look at it from every point of view, it is an odd situation. I only hope this Dunston Porter is still at Cavasa Island, or in that vicinity."

At last came the day when Captain Marshall called the boys to him and said they might sight Cavasa Island inside of the next twenty-four hours.

"You'll know the island at a glance," said he. "Approaching it from this side, it looks exactly like a long loaf of bread with a hump in the middle. The hump is the old volcano. The town at which we are to stop is located at the western extremity of the island. There is where the real shipping is done. There is a town at the eastern end, but the harbor is poor, and most of the inhabitants are natives."

"And what of the people where we are to stop?" asked Dave.

"About one-half are natives and the others a mixture of Americans and Europeans. The harbor there is a very good one indeed, and that is why it is so popular."

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As they neared Cavasa Island, both the supercargo and the first mate appeared to grow more than ordinarily anxious, and talked together by the half-hour. Dave noticed this and so did the

others.

"They have something in mind," said the country boy to Phil. "You'll surely have to be on guard when the cargo for Tolao is taken ashore."

The next day the boys kept on the lookout, having borrowed Captain Marshall's best glass. About noon Roger uttered a loud cry:

"I see something! It must be the island!"

"Let me look!" exclaimed Dave, and took the glass. "Yes, it is Cavasa Island!" he went on, "for it looks exactly as the captain said."

Inside of an hour they could see Cavasa Island quite plainly, and by nightfall they were ready to enter the harbor. But this was not to be accomplished in the dark, and so they had to remain outside until daybreak, impatient as Dave was to get ashore.

"What an odd collection of ships!" said Phil, as the *Stormy Petrel* made her way into the harbor. "They must have come from all parts of the world!" And this remark was largely true.

It had been arranged that Dave and Billy Dill should go ashore at the first opportunity, and Roger was to go with them.

"I am sorry I can't go," said Phil, to Dave. "But, you understand how it is," and he jerked his thumb in the direction of the supercargo, who was writing in one of his books. [191]

"Yes, I understand, Phil," answered Dave. "I hope you don't have any trouble."

The shipping of Tolao was very much huddled together, and the boys had to depend upon Billy Dill to pilot them to the main thoroughfare of the town. The old sailor declared that the place had changed but little since his last visit, and said he would take them directly to the hotel at which Dunston Porter had been in the habit of stopping.

"All right," said Dave. "You can't get there any too quick for me," and they walked on, with the heart of the country boy beating as it had seldom beat before. To him, his whole future seemed to rest upon what he might learn in the next few hours. [192]

CHAPTER XXII

ABOUT SOME MISSING MEN

The hotel proved to be a one-story building of Spanish architecture, with numerous small windows and a rather low door. It was presided over by a round-faced Englishman, who stared at Billy Dill curiously when the old tar presented himself.

"Do you remember me, Mr. Chadsey?" asked the sailor.

"I do," was the answer. "You were here some years ago. But I cannot recall your name."

"Billy Dill."

"Oh, yes, yes; you were with Mr. Porter and Mr. Lemington," returned the hotel-keeper.

"That's it. I am looking for Mr. Porter now."

"Sorry, but he isn't here."

"Isn't here?" cried Dave, and his heart sank. "Isn't he in town at all?"

"No, he left the island a couple of months ago."

"And where did he go to?"

"I don't know. He said something about going to Sobago Island and something about going to Australia, but where he really did go to, I have not learned." [193]

"This young man is very much interested in meeting Mr. Porter," explained Billy Dill. "His name is Porter, too, and I reckon they are related. Have you any idea where we can find out where Dunston Porter went?"

"Might find out at the shipping offices."

"Why, of course!" exclaimed Dave. "Let us go to the different offices at once."

Billy Dill was willing, and without loss of time led the way to the street upon which the majority of the shipping of Cavasa Island was booked. The offices were mostly small and rather dirty, and around them hung sailors and other men, of various nationalities, and some of them far from prepossessing in their general appearance.

They visited two offices without success, and then came to a place located on a corner, with doors on both streets.

"Hello!" cried Roger. "There is Mr. Van Blott just ahead of us! Is this the shipping firm with which Mr. Lawrence does business?"

"I don't think it is," answered Billy Dill.

"Then what is he doing here?"

"Must have a little business of his own," said Dave. "But I don't care. Come along." Just then he was thinking only of his personal affairs.

They entered the office, which reeked of tobacco smoke and the smell of rum. In the rear was another office, and they were just in time to see the supercargo go into this, shutting a partition door behind him. [194]

Looking around, Dave saw a clerk at a corner desk looking over some papers with an elderly German.

"I will be at liberty in a few minutes," said the clerk, in broken English. "Please to take seats," and he pointed to a couple of low benches set against the wall and the partition.

Billy Dill sat down on the bench along the wall and Dave and Roger upon that next to the partition, which was not over seven feet in height. Save for the rattling of the papers at the corner desk the office was very quiet, and the boys readily heard the talk going on behind the partition.

"So you really have some goots on board?" came in a somewhat German voice. "I vos afraid you would not bring any."

"Didn't I say I'd bring them, Baumann?" returned Jasper Van Blott. "I've got them, and the only question is, how am I to get them here, and when are you going to pay me?"

"I pay so soon as de goots is here," said the German shipping agent. "I not pay a dollar before."

"But you will send your men down to the dock?"

"Oh, yes, I do dot. Vot dime you vonts dem, hey?"

"To-morrow morning at eight o'clock, sharp. Tell them to watch me, and when I wave my handkerchief they can come forward and get the goods." [195]

"How many poxes vos dere?"

"Sixteen, all told. You want to be careful and caution your men. I don't want Captain Marshall to learn what I am——"

The boys heard no more, for at this juncture the clerk came forward, having finished his work at the corner desk.

"What can I do for you?" he asked, blandly.

"I am looking for a man who is supposed to have left Cavasa Island by steamer, or sailboat, about two months ago," said Dave. "His name is Dunston Porter. Can you tell me if he shipped from here?"

The clerk looked over a book he drew from a desk.

"I see nothing of the name," he said, after a pause.

"You would have the name, if he had taken passage from here?" questioned Roger.

The clerk nodded. Then, when he found that he could do nothing more for them, he dropped into an easy chair, lit a black-looking cigar and took up a newspaper.

"There is one more shipping office," said Billy Dill, as he led the way to the street. "We'll go there." [196]

"Dave, did you hear that talk in the back room?" questioned the senator's son, as they were hurrying down the street.

"I did."

"What do you think of it?"

"I think the supercargo is up to some game, and we must tell Phil and Captain Marshall."

"That's just my idea, too, Dave. Let me see, the name of the firm was Baumann & Feltmuller, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

They were soon at the last of the shipping offices. Here the clerk could scarcely talk English, and they had to call in the services of a gentleman who chanced to be present and who could speak the native tongue. A booking list was consulted, and it was announced that Dunston Porter had taken passage for Nanpi, on Sobago Island, just six weeks before.

"Six weeks!" cried Dave. "I hope he is there still. Now, how can I communicate with him, Roger?"

"You can send him a letter," answered Roger. "But you must remember that the *Stormy Petrel* is going to Nanpi as soon as her cargo for this town is unloaded."

From the shipping clerk they learned that Dunston Porter had gone to Sobago alone—that is, without his partner, Mr. Lemington. A further searching into the shipping lists revealed the fact that the partner had sailed for Australia seven weeks past. [197]

"I reckon they dissolved partnership," observed Billy Dill, "an' one went his way, an' tudder the other way. An' I likewise guess they didn't git thet treasure."

There was now nothing to do but to return to the bark, and this they did without delay. The boys found that Captain Marshall had gone ashore on business, and so called Phil aside and related to him what had been heard in the office of Baumann & Feltmuller.

"You are right—there is something in the wind," said the shipowner's son. "I wish the captain was here, so I could consult with him."

"He'll be back soon, won't he?" questioned Roger.

"He said he might not be back until late this evening."

Phil was interested in what Dave had to tell about Dunston Porter, and said he would urge the captain of the *Stormy Petrel* to set sail for Nanpi at the earliest possible moment.

It was not until ten o'clock that Jasper Van Blott came back to the bark. He immediately walked up to the first mate and the pair engaged in conversation for some time. Then the supercargo went to bed, and Roger and Dave did the same. Phil sat up, reading and awaiting the captain's return. [198]

It was almost seven o'clock when the country boy sprang up and awakened the senator's son. Both hurried into their clothes and then into the cabin, where they met Phil, whose face was full of worry.

"What's the matter?" asked both.

"Captain Marshall hasn't come back yet."

"Hasn't come back?" ejaculated Dave. "Do you mean to say he stayed away all night?"

"Exactly; and I don't know what to make of it."

"Did he say he might remain away?" came from Roger.

"No."

"Where did he go?"

"I don't know, and neither does Mr. Shepley."

"What will you do about——" began Dave, and cut himself short, as Jasper Van Blott came into the cabin.

"Mr. Van Blott, do you know anything about the captain?" questioned Phil.

"I do not," was the short reply.

"It is queer that he should stay away all night."

"Oh, captains like to have good times occasionally," continued the supercargo, with a sickly grin.

"If you mean by that, that Captain Marshall went off to have a good time, as you put it, I do not think so," returned Phil, coldly. "He is not that sort." [199]

"Perhaps you know him better than I do," flared up the supercargo.

"I know that he is a man who sticks to his duty, Mr. Van Blott. Something has gone wrong, or he would be back."

"As you please." The supercargo paused. "Well, it doesn't matter much," he continued. "I know what to do, and I am going ahead without waiting for him."

"You mean about unloading?"

"Yes."

"Would it not be better to wait until Captain Marshall returns?"

"No, it would only be a waste of time."

No more was said just then, and a few minutes later breakfast was announced. As soon as it was over, Phil called his chums aside.

"I wish you'd do me a favor," he whispered. "Go ashore and try to hunt up the captain. He must be around somewhere. I will try to hold the supercargo back as much as I can."

Dave and the senator's son were willing, and in less than ten minutes were on the dock and moving for the streets beyond.

"Where are those boys going?" asked Jasper Van Blott, coming up to Phil.

"They are going to look for Captain Marshall."

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"Humph!" muttered the supercargo, and said no more.

"I think we had better wait until the captain returns," went on Phil.

"I am not going to wait," snapped Van Blott. "I am going to get that cargo ashore as quickly as it can be done."

And fifteen minutes later the hatches were opened and the work of getting out the boxes, barrels, and casks began.

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CHAPTER XXIII

IN WHICH THE SUPERCARGO IS CORNERED

From one street corner Dave and Roger hurried to another, looking in every direction for some sign of Captain Marshall. This hunt they kept up for the best part of half an hour, but without success.

"He is certainly nowhere in this vicinity," said the senator's son. "I wonder where he can be keeping himself."

They walked on more slowly, and at the entrance to a lane came to another halt. Then, chancing to look into the lane, Dave uttered a short cry:

"There he is!"

Coming along the lane was Captain Marshall. His step was an uncertain one, and he pitched from side to side. As the two boys ran forward, the master of the *Stormy Petrel* gave a lurch and landed on some old boxes with a crash.

"Oh, Dave, can this be possible!" murmured Roger. "I did not think the captain would do it."

"Let us help him to the ship," answered Dave. He was as much shocked as his companion, and he could not help but think of what the supercargo had said.

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"Oh, is it you, boys?" mumbled the captain, as he espied them. "I want to—to get back to the ship."

"We'll help you," said Dave.

"I've had an awful night—my mind is in a perfect whirl," went on the master of the *Stormy Petrel*.

"We'll soon have you safe on the bark," put in Roger.

The two assisted the captain to his feet. His eyes had a peculiar stare in them. Suddenly he clapped his hand to his pocket.

"Funny!" he muttered. "Very funny! I've got my watch! And I've got my money, too!"

"Did you think they were gone?" queried Dave.

"Well, I shouldn't be—be surprised. I thought they did it to rob me. What time is it? Oh, but I am weak in the legs, boys!"

"It is about eight o'clock."

"In the morning?"

"Yes."

"Then I must get back to the *Stormy Petrel* by all means. I—how did you come to find me?"

"We were out looking for you," answered Roger. "We were alarmed, and so was Phil, because you didn't come back last night."

"I—I meant to come back. Oh, how my head spins! I wish I had a drink of water! That coffee they dosed me with was vile."

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"Coffee they dosed you with?" queried Dave. "Were you drugged?"

"I must have been, lad. I met some men, and they wanted me to drink with them. I refused. Then they offered me some coffee and native cakes, and, to be sociable, I took the stuff. Directly afterward I began to grow sleepy, and then I didn't know a thing until I woke up at the end of that lane awhile ago."

"Did you know the men?" asked Roger.

"I did not, but they pretended to know me. It's queer they didn't rob me. I wonder why they

drugged me?"

"I don't know," answered Dave, "unless——"

"Unless what?"

"I shouldn't like to say, Captain Marshall. But I'll tell you one thing, you are wanted on board of the *Stormy Petrel* at once."

"Who wants me?"

"Phil Lawrence. We have learned something about Mr. Van Blott which we think you ought to know. But you must get your head cleared up, first of all."

They walked the captain back to the bark, and, by accident more than design, managed to get the skipper on board without the supercargo seeing the party. Then they called Phil into the cabin, and in the meantime got the captain some fresh water and some other things they fancied might do him good. They were glad to note that his dizziness was fast leaving him. [204]

"This looks suspicious to me," said Captain Marshall, after he had heard what the boys had to relate. "But I cannot accuse Van Blott of having me drugged, as I have no proof of it. I do not know who those men were, and, more than likely, they will keep themselves out of sight."

"That is true," returned Phil. "But you can help me regarding this stuff to be taken away by Baumann & Feltmuller, can't you?"

"Certainly, Phil. I want to know all about that stuff before it leaves this ship. Have you the records of the goods?"

"No, sir; Mr. Van Blott has locked the books in the safe."

"Then, if I were you, as your father's representative, I should demand to see the records. I will back you up."

"If you will back me up, I'll go to him at once. He is already getting the goods out of the hold."

"I'll put a stop to that," answered the captain.

He was still feeble in the legs, but managed to climb to the deck, and walked to where the supercargo and the first mate were directing the unloading of a portion of the cargo.

"Hello, so you are back!" exclaimed the supercargo, and his face paled a little.

"I am," returned the captain, coldly. "Mr. Shepley, did you give orders to unload?" he went on, turning to the mate. [205]

"I—I—er—did," stammered the mate. "You said yesterday we were to start first thing this morning."

"I did—but I expected to be here when we began. Mr. Van Blott, Philip Lawrence wishes to see you in your office."

"I haven't time to bother with him now," growled the supercargo. "Go ahead with those cases!" he shouted to some stevedores who were nearby, and pulling out his handkerchief he gave it a flourish toward the dock.

"Drop those cases!" roared Captain Marshall, his face growing red. "Drop them, I say!" And the natives who were carrying the cases stopped short.

"Captain Marshall——" began Jasper Van Blott. "I—what do you mean by this—er—by this——"

"I told you that Philip Lawrence wanted to see you in your office. You had better see him before we move any more of this cargo."

"Yes, but——"

"I won't argue the matter, Mr. Van Blott. I was drugged last night. Do you understand? Drugged! But my mind is clear now, and I want everything on this bark to run smoothly. You had better go to your office, and I'll go with you." [206]

The supercargo glared at the captain, and the latter glared in return. Then Van Blott shrugged his shoulders.

"As you please," he said. "But it is a strange proceeding." And he walked to that part of the ship where was located his little office. As he passed the first mate, he gave the man a wink and turned his eyes toward the cases on the deck. Paul Shepley nodded slightly.

In the office they found Phil awaiting them. Roger followed the pair, but Dave had seen the wink that was passed, and remained on deck, and a moment later seated himself on one of the very cases the stevedores had been in the act of removing from the ship.

"Ain't you going with them?" asked the first mate, coming up with a dark frown on his face.

"No, I think I'll stay here until they come back," answered Dave, lightly.

"Then please get off of that box."

"I am not hurting the box, Mr. Shepley."

"Get off, I say!"

The boy from the country did so.

"I believe Captain Marshall wanted nothing moved until he came back," said Dave, gazing boldly into the mate's angry face. "Perhaps I had better call him, if you are going to work again."

"Who said I was going to move anything?" growled Paul Shepley, his manner showing that that was just what he had had in mind to do. "Don't you get too fresh around me, or there will be trouble!" [207]

"Well, if there is trouble, I'll do my best to stand up against it."

"Aw! you make me tired!" grumbled the first mate, and strode away in deep disgust, leaving Dave master of the field.

In the meantime a stormy meeting was being held in the supercargo's office. At first Van Blott flatly refused to allow Phil to look at his books, but at last brought forth several, which the shipowner's son knew were of little importance.

"I want the books that relate to the goods to be landed here," said Phil. "I want to know all about each piece before it is put ashore."

"Humph! You are getting very particular, young man!" observed the supercargo.

"I do not deny it."

"Did your father send you on this trip to spy on me?"

"You may put it that way, if you wish, Mr. Van Blott. I am here simply to learn this business and to see that everything is O. K."

"If everything is all right, what have you to fear from an inspection like this?" came suggestively from Captain Marshall.

"I am not going to work here and be watched like a criminal!" stormed Jasper Van Blott. "If old man Lawrence can't trust me, it is time we parted company!" [208]

"I agree with you," returned the captain.

"Do you?" came with a sneer. "Very well. I'll close up my accounts and quit."

"You'll not do it just yet," put in Phil. He was pale, but determined.

"I won't?"

"No. Before you quit you must make an accounting to me of goods and money, and satisfy me, and also Captain Marshall, that everything is O. K. in every particular."

"Bah! Boy, who gave you authority to talk to me in this fashion?"

"My father."

"I don't believe it. Why, you are a mere boy—you don't know what you are saying. I'll close up this business to suit myself and leave my keys with Captain Marshall, and that will end it."

"Mr. Van Blott, you must remember that Philip Lawrence is the shipowner's son," said the captain, sternly.

"I don't care if he is. He has no legal authority, and I don't propose to let him drive me."

"Just wait a minute, until I come back," said Phil, starting for the door.

"Where are you going?" asked Roger.

"To my stateroom. I'll be back in a few minutes."

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"What is he going to do?" questioned the supercargo, uneasily.

"I don't know," answered Captain Marshall, shortly. "But, if I were you, Mr. Van Blott, I should listen to him. In a certain sense, he represents his father on this vessel."

"He doesn't represent him with me!" muttered the supercargo. His anger had made him lose a good portion of his common sense.

There was a minute of silence, during which Jasper Van Blott strode up and down the narrow office. Then a step was heard outside, and Phil reappeared, carrying a large envelope in his hand.

"My father said I was not to use this unless it was necessary," he said, drawing a paper from the envelope.

At the appearance of a legal-looking document the supercargo started back.

"What's that?" he demanded, hoarsely.

"This is a document authorizing Captain Marshall to take charge of your affairs, Mr. Van Blott. He is to investigate everything, under my supervision, and is to hold you strictly accountable for everything you have done since starting on this voyage."

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CHAPTER XXIV

THE CARGO MYSTERY EXPLAINED

There was a death-like silence for several seconds after Phil made his announcement. Even Captain Marshall was astonished, for he had not anticipated such a turn of affairs.

"Let me see that paper!" demanded Jasper Van Blott, wildly. "I will not believe a word of what you have said until I read that paper."

"Then read it," answered the shipowner's son, and passed it over.

With compressed lips, the supercargo perused the document. Then he gritted his teeth.

"So this is the game you have been playing on me, eh?" he snarled. "Well, it doesn't work."

"Doesn't work?" came from Roger, who was as much interested as any one.

"No, it doesn't work. That paper isn't worth the ink it's written with. It was drawn up in the United States, and we are not in the United States now."

"Perhaps not, but we are sailing under the United States flag, Mr. Van Blott," said Captain Marshall, quickly. "Besides that, I think the authorities here will respect a legal document drawn up in Uncle Sam's country."

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"It's not worth a pinch of snuff!" roared the supercargo, and would have torn the paper to bits, had not Phil and Roger leaped forward and prevented him.

"None of that!" cried Phil. "Let that alone, or I'll have Captain Marshall place you under arrest."

"Arrest? Me under arrest? I'd like to see you do it!" fumed the supercargo.

"I'll do it, unless you do what is right," said the master of the *Stormy Petrel*, quickly. "Mr. Van Blott, your actions do you no credit. Trying to destroy that document proves to me beyond a doubt that you have something to conceal. I shall begin an investigation at once, and the boys shall aid me."

"I don't care!" roared Jasper Van Blott. "But I am done with the ship and the whole crowd."

"Please hand over the keys to your safe boxes."

With bad grace, the supercargo did so.

"Now you will please sit down and let us go through the accounts," continued the captain.

The supercargo squirmed and argued, and did his best to get away, but it was all to no purpose, and, in the end, he had to remain in the office until the captain, Phil, and Roger had examined all the shipping accounts. Some of the entries were mixed up, and they could not obtain any satisfactory explanation regarding them.

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"Now we will go on deck and examine that stuff that was to go ashore," said Captain Marshall.

"Especially the goods for Baumann & Feltmuller," put in the senator's son.

"Ha! What do you know about that firm?" gasped Jasper Van Blott.

"Not much."

"You—you have been spying on me—you must have followed me on shore," gasped the supercargo. "But you are mistaken, you will find nothing wrong," he added, suddenly, and then appeared to calm down.

They went on deck, where they found Dave still on guard. The first mate was sulking near the rail. As soon as the captain appeared Dave walked up to him.

"I am glad you are here," he whispered. "Mr. Shepley wanted to send the goods ashore, but I told him that, if he did so, I would call you."

"Is that so? Thank you, Dave, I am glad you went on watch," replied the master of the *Stormy Petrel*.

The inspection of the goods began, and in the midst of the work Jasper Van Blott gave an exclamation.

"Did anybody bring that brown book up?" he queried.

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Nobody knew anything about a brown book, and all looked puzzled.

"That has this transaction in it in full," went on the supercargo. "I remember now, I put the book in my stateroom. I will go below and get it. That will prove everything is as straight as a string. Then I am going to sue somebody for heavy damages," he added.

He walked to the companionway and disappeared. Captain Marshall continued to inspect the goods to go ashore, and the boys aided him. That something was wrong they did not doubt, and they waited impatiently for the supercargo to reappear with his brown book.

"The first mate has gone below, too," announced Roger, presently. "Maybe the pair are talking it over between them. They are certainly hand-in-glove with each other, according to what Dave says."

"Go below and tell Mr. Van Blott I want him to come up at once," returned Captain Marshall.

The senator's son disappeared down the companionway and was gone for several minutes. He came up with a worried look on his face.

"I can't find Mr. Van Blott anywhere!" he cried.

"What!" roared the master of the *Stormy Petrel*. "He must be down there."

"Unless he has sneaked ashore!" came quickly from Dave. [214]

"Could he do that?" questioned Phil.

"He might."

"I will go below and look around," went on Captain Marshall. "You boys scatter on the deck and watch for him. He must not be allowed to get away!"

The boys did as requested, and the captain went below, to be gone quarter of an hour and more. When he came up, his face was much downcast.

"He has certainly gotten away," he declared. "His valise and some of his clothing are gone, and his money box is wide open and empty."

"Where is the mate?" asked Phil.

"There he is!" exclaimed Dave, pointing to the bow.

The captain ran forward.

"Mr. Shepley, have you seen Mr. Van Blott?"

"When?" inquired the mate, slowly.

"Within the last ten or twenty minutes."

"Why, yes."

"Where is he?"

"I think he walked ashore. I didn't notice, particularly."

"Humph! Did he have his valise?"

"I don't know but what he did. I wasn't paying any particular attention. Are we to unload, or not?" went on the first mate.

"We are to do nothing until Mr. Van Blott is found," answered the captain, shortly. [215]

"All right; in that case, you'll wait a long time," murmured the mate to himself.

After that a regular hunt was instituted, and the boys went ashore, along with Billy Dill. They even visited the offices of Baumann & Feltmuller, but not a trace of the missing supercargo could be found anywhere.

When the boys got back to the bark, they found that Captain Marshall had begun on an examination of the goods taken from the hold. He found a number of cases mismarked—those which were to have been sent to Baumann & Feltmuller.

"This stuff seems to have been meant for some firm in Australia—Featherstone & Harmsworth," said the captain. "How it came on my ship is a mystery to me."

"Wait!" shouted Dave. "I know something about that. Just before we left San Francisco I heard some dock officials speaking about some costly cases of goods which had disappeared from a neighboring dock. The goods were for the firm of Featherstone & Harmsworth, I remember the name well. The stuff was to go to Sydney. They said they had tried their best, but could get no trace of the stolen cases."

"That explains it!" exclaimed Phil. "Van Blott took the cases and had them stowed away in the hold of this ship. He was going to sell the stuff to Baumann & Feltmuller, in part or in whole." [216]

"I believe you have struck the truth," returned Captain Marshall. "And now, fearing exposure, he has fled."

"What can you do with the goods?" questioned Roger.

"I don't know, yet. Either return them to their owners, or sell them and forward the money. I'll have to think the matter over."

"What a rascal Van Blott has proved himself to be!" was Phil's comment.

"Yes, and I reckon that man in San Francisco, Bangor, was in with him," said Dave, and he was correct in his surmise. It may be added here, though, that Bangor never suffered for this crime, for he was caught, shortly after the sailing of the *Stormy Petrel*, and tried for something equally unlawful, and sentenced to prison for several years.

The stolen goods were placed in another part of the ship, and then the work of unloading a part of the regular cargo began. Paul Shepley had to superintend this work, and did so in a thoughtful mood.

"I wish I knew the truth about the mate," said Phil to Dave. "I am going to watch him pretty closely after this."

"He certainly had something in common with the supercargo," replied the country boy.

From Baumann & Feltmuller, Captain Marshall could learn but little. The merchants said that the supercargo had offered to sell them some goods which, he declared, had not been accepted by other parties because of delay in shipment. They had agreed to take the same and pay on delivery, and when convinced that all was fair and above board. [217]

"They are a tricky firm," said the captain to the boys. "But, as I have no proof against them, I'll have to let them go."

In spite of the excitement over the exposure of the supercargo, Dave was anxious to sail from Cavasa Island and be on the way to Sobago. It was with great satisfaction that he heard Captain Marshall say they would set sail on the following Monday morning.

"And how long will it take us to reach Nanpi?" he asked of the master of the *Stormy Petrel*.

"That will depend upon the wind, lad. If we have luck, we ought to get there in four or five days. But sometimes the wind is mighty contrary around these parts."

While at Cavasa the boys spent one whole day ashore, and went out riding in the direction of the volcano in company with Billy Dill. The old tar showed them where he and Dunston Porter and Mr. Lemington had camped out, and where they had hunted for the treasure.

"I'd like to feel an earthquake once, just for fun," remarked Roger. "It must be a queer sensation." [218]

"It is," answered Billy Dill. "An' one ye ain't apt to forgit in a hurry."

"If it was bad, I think I'd be scared out of my wits," said Phil. "What do you think about it, Dave?"

"I don't want any in mine."

"Oh, what's a little earthquake!" cried the senator's son. "It would be an experience worth talking about, that's all."

"Well, maybe you'll have your wish gratified before we leave this region of the globe," said Dave. "I understand that earthquakes are common for thousands of miles around. Sometimes the quakes make new islands, while other islands sink out of sight."

"Excuse me from being on an island when it sinks out of sight," cried Phil. "I'd rather be on solid ground any time." And in this statement the others agreed with him. [219]

CHAPTER XXV

SWEPT ONWARD BY A TIDAL WAVE

"Off at last, and I am glad of it!"

"I suppose you are anxious to get to Nanpi, Dave?"

"I am, Roger. Can you blame me?"

"Not at all. In fact, if I were in your place, I think I'd be even more anxious. Meeting this Dunston Porter means so much to you," went on the senator's son.

The two chums were on the forward deck of the *Stormy Petrel* and the bark was just leaving the harbor of Tolao. It was a clear day, with a bright sun high overhead, and the boys felt in excellent spirits.

Nothing had been seen or heard of Jasper Van Blott, and, with the sailing of the bark, he was practically forgotten by Dave and Roger. But Phil and the captain remembered him and were sorry that they had not been able to bring the wicked supercargo to justice.

Although he was in nominal authority, Captain Marshall turned over the cargo books to Phil, and the shipowner's son did very well when it came to straightening out the tangle left by Van Blott. Phil wished to make a clean report to his father and worked with a will, until he "knew where he was at," as he declared. [220]

"I rather think it will open my father's eyes," said Phil. "He has suspected Van Blott for some time, but he didn't think of anything like this."

On the second day out the wind died down utterly, and this state of affairs continued for several days. The sails flapped idly against the masts, and scarcely any progress was made.

"We are not going to make such a quick passage, after all," remarked Roger. "My! but this is slow work, I must declare!"

"And haven't you noticed the heat?" added Phil. "It seems to me to be unusually hot."

"It is," said Dave, who had been consulting a thermometer. "This is our warmest day, by four degrees. If it gets much warmer, we'll certainly melt."

That afternoon the sea appeared to be strangely agitated, and toward night the sailors noticed a large number of dead fish rising to the surface. Dave discovered a large shark, and this proved to be dead, also.

"There has been some disturbance under the ocean's surface," said Captain Marshall. "More than likely an earthquake."

"An earthquake! And we never knew it!" ejaculated Roger, and his tone showed his disappointment. [221]

In the morning the sea was more agitated than ever. One minute it would appear to flatten out, the next, two waves would come together with a clash that sent the spray flying upward for many feet. More dead fish were in evidence on every hand.

"I have never witnessed anything like this," commented Captain Marshall. "I trust it gets no worse."

When the breeze sprang up, it came from the wrong direction, and the *Stormy Petrel* had to tack as best she could. The breeze kept growing stiffer and stiffer, until it was little short of a gale. Then a thick mist settled down on the ocean, shutting out the view upon all sides.

"I must say I don't like this," observed the senator's son. "Supposing we should run into something?"

"There isn't much to run into," replied Dave. "I just asked the captain, and he told me we were a good many miles from land of any sort."

"We might run into some other ship."

"There seem to be very few ships in this locality."

Morning found the *Stormy Petrel* still surrounded by the mist, and there was now little or no wind. The barometer had gone down, and the captain ordered some sail taken in, in anticipation of a storm. [222]

At noon the mist appeared to lift a little, and once more the wind sprang up. This continued for several hours, when, of a sudden, a strange humming filled the air.

"What can that be?" cried Dave, who was on the forward deck.

"It's wind!" cried Billy Dill. "A reg'lar tornado, too."

Captain Marshall was on deck, no longer disposed to trust his first mate. He at once ordered all of the sails taken in and stowed away securely. This was just accomplished, when the hurricane—for it was nothing less—struck the *Stormy Petrel*, almost sending the bark on her beam ends.

"Better go below!" shrieked the captain to the three boys. "It's not safe for you on deck."

"I'll be careful," answered Phil, but the master of the bark shook his head, and then the three lads started for the companionway, holding on to first one thing and then another as they moved along.

Phil had just reached the bottom of the steps, Roger was half-way down, and Dave still at the top, when a wild cry from the bow reached their ears.

"Hold tight, all of ye!" came in the voice of Billy Dill. "Hold on, or ye'll be swept overboard, sure!" [223]

Everybody on board the *Stormy Petrel* realized that this could be no idle warning, and all held on like grim death to anything that was handy. The next moment there was a strange hissing and pounding of the ocean, and, in a twinkling, the *Stormy Petrel* was caught on what seemed to be the top of a giant wave and carried along as if in the grip of a demon of the deep!

The upward and forward movement came with such a force that nearly everybody was taken clean and clear off his feet, and had not each one clung fast, as directed by Billy Dill, somebody must surely have been flung overboard. The bark turned around and around on the top of the

wave, and then lurched forward and went on and on, the spray flying so thickly that scarcely a thing of what was beyond could be seen.

"My gracious!" gasped Roger, who had been flung down on top of Phil. "What is this?"

"Don't ask me!" returned Dave, who was sitting on the upper step with his arms entwined around the companionway rail. "I guess it's an earthquake and a hurricane rolled into one."

"Has anybody gone overboard?" asked Phil, as he tried to stand up.

"I don't know. Billy Dill gave the warning."

The door to the cabin was open, and the three lads fairly tumbled into the compartment. The bark was rocking to such an extent that to stand upright was out of the question. Everything that was loose was on the floor, shifting from one side to the other. [224]

The boys waited with bated breath, and a few minutes later heard a crash on the deck, which told that a topmast, or one of the yards, had come down. Then came a yell of alarm from one of the sailors.

"We are going to sink! We are going to sink!"

"Did you hear that?" ejaculated Roger. "He said the *Stormy Petrel* was going to sink!"

"What shall we do?" put in Phil. "I don't want to drown!"

Phil had scarcely spoken when a side door to one of the staterooms burst open and a man came forth, wild with terror, his face scratched and bleeding. Much to their amazement, they saw it was Jasper Van Blott.

"Is the ship really going down?" cried the former supercargo, in a trembling voice.

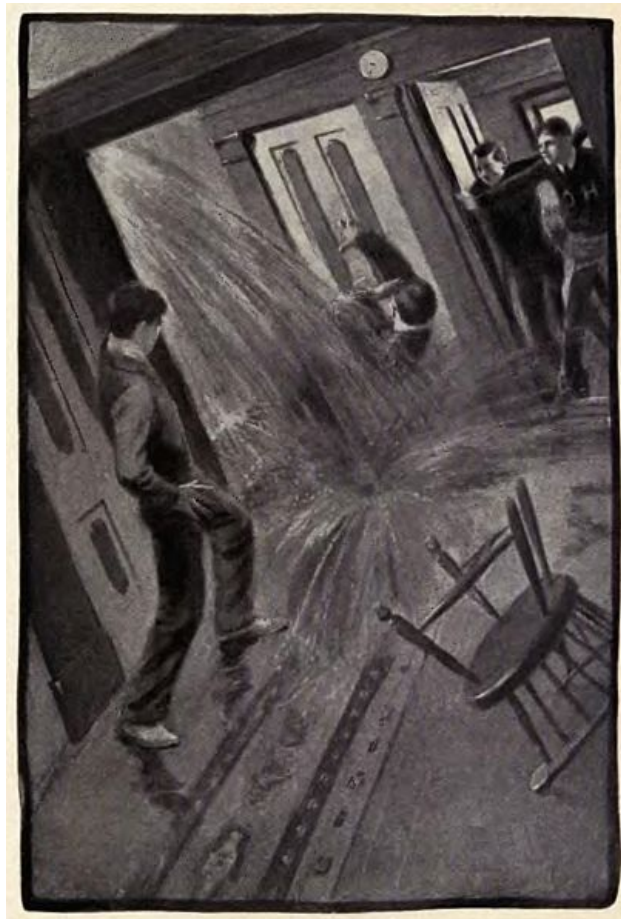
"Where did you come from?" cried Dave.

"I—er—I've been in hiding. But, tell me, are we going down?"

"I don't know."

"I—er—I must go on deck and see. It nearly killed me, the bark bounced around so," went on Van Blott.

He started for the companionway, but had not yet reached the top when a big wave hit the *Stormy Petrel* broadside, sweeping the deck from end to end and sending some of the water into the cabin. The former supercargo was washed off the steps and came down flat on his back, screaming with terror. [225]



The former supercargo was washed off the steps and came down flat on his back.

The boys were nearly as much alarmed, and, as soon as it was possible to do so, all three crawled up to where they could get a view of the deck and the sea beyond.

The outlook was truly startling. The ocean was whipped up into a milk-white foam and was dashing and churning in all directions. One tremendous wave was rolling straight to the southward, and on this the bark was riding, like a monkey on a runaway race horse. The wind was whistling through the rigging, and the sky was filled with dark clouds and a strange, whitish dust.

"What is this?" called Dave to the captain, as the latter passed.

"It's a tidal wave!" yelled back Captain Marshall. "There has been another earthquake, and, most likely, some of the volcanoes in this vicinity have become active."

"Are we going down, as that sailor said?"

"Not yet. I will warn you, if there is any danger of our sinking."

"You can't put out any small boats, can you?" asked Phil.

"No, a small boat would not live a minute in such a sea as is now running." [226]

"Has anybody been washed overboard?" asked Roger.

"I believe not—but I am not sure. It came on so sudden, we had no time to prepare for it," said Captain Marshall.

"Mr. Van Blott is below," said Dave.

"Van Blott! You must be dreaming!"

"No. He had been in hiding, and the alarm scared him."

"Humph! Well, we'll take care of him later—if we get out of this with a whole skin."

The boys could do nothing on deck, and so went below again, to find that the former supercargo had disappeared.

"It doesn't matter," observed Phil. "We know he is on board, and he can't get away until we land, and I guess we can root him out before that time."

The *Stormy Petrel* was still being carried forward, but now the motion was a bit more steady than before. It was true that she had encountered a tidal wave, due to a submarine earthquake, and also true that a volcano on the island of Cholomu had become active. The fine volcanic dust floated for miles over the ocean, covering the bark from stem to stern as with flour.

Half an hour later came another alarm. Somebody roared out: "Breakers ahead!" and in a moment more the *Stormy Petrel* was in the midst of a choppy sea, and staggered from side to side, as if ready to go over. Then came a scraping at the bottom. [227]

"We have struck a reef!" cried the first mate. "We are done for now!" But, even as he spoke, the bark went on, over the reef and into what seemed to be a large harbor. Far in the distance could be seen a palm-fringed shore, with the waves dashing high up on the sands.

It took Captain Marshall but an instant to consider the situation, and he immediately gave orders to cast an anchor. The *Stormy Petrel* continued to rush onward, but quarter of a mile from the shore the forward progress was checked. Then another anchor was dropped, and it was seen that this had secured a good hold. In the meantime the waters of the tidal wave began to recede, and by sunset the ocean was almost as calm as ever.

"Thank fortune, that peril is a thing of the past!" said Dave, fervently; and the other boys and Captain Marshall echoed his sentiments. [228]

CHAPTER XXVI

EXPLORING A TROPICAL ISLAND

The night to follow was an anxious one for all on board the *Stormy Petrel*. The sea was still too rough to think of venturing ashore, and so it was impossible to learn to what harbor they had floated and what was the prospect of continuing their voyage to Sobago Island.

"We must be at least two hundred miles out of our reckoning," said Captain Marshall, in reply to a question from Phil. "This may be Tapley Island, but I am not sure."

"Is Tapley Island inhabited?"

"I am not sure about that, either. There was once a colony there, but I think it died out. The natives on the other islands around here are very fierce."

"Then I hope we haven't landed on one of the other islands," remarked Dave.

"If we came over a reef, how are we to get out of this harbor?" questioned Roger.

"That remains to be learned, Roger," answered the master of the *Stormy Petrel*, gravely.

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During the night the sea went down a great deal, and in the morning the harbor could be plainly distinguished. A boat was lowered, and Captain Marshall went ashore, taking Dave and Phil with him.

It was an easy matter to beach the rowboat on the sands, and the boys leaped ashore quickly and ran up to the nearest of the palm trees. A look around showed all how the gigantic tidal wave had torn and twisted everything growing near the water's edge. In some spots the sand lay a foot thick on beds of grass and moss and small brushwood.

"We can be thankful that our ship was not cast up high and dry on the shore," remarked Captain Marshall, as he gazed around. "That wave must have done the shipping for hundreds of miles around great damage."

The party walked up and down the beach for almost a mile, but without seeing the first sign of inhabitants of any sort. The shore was full of dead fish and overturned turtles, and the sailors took some back to the ship with them for eating purposes.

It was nearly midday when they returned to the ship, and the boys were so hungry that a mess of fried fish was particularly appetizing to them. At noon the captain made some observations and got out his charts, and finally announced that they must be at a small island, one hundred and sixty miles to the southward of Sobago.

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"The island is not of great importance," said he. "It is shaped a good deal like the letter B, and this harbor is formed by the double curve on one side. The interior of each of the two portions is mostly marsh land—a good place for tropical fevers. The reef outside of the harbor is well defined on the chart, and extends in a semicircle for many miles."

"Isn't there any opening at all?" queried Dave.

"For small vessels, yes."

"But not for a bark the size of ours?"

"That remains to be found out. I shall go this afternoon and make some soundings."

"If there isn't any opening in the reef, what are we to do?" asked Phil, blankly. "Why, the *Stormy Petrel* will have to remain here forever!"

"Which puts me in mind of a story, as Shadow Hamilton would say," came from Dave. "I once heard of a fellow who built a rowboat in the garret of his house. After the boat was done, it was so large he couldn't get it out of the door or window, and he had to take the boat apart again."

"If the boys at Oak Hall could see us now!" cried Roger. "But about our ship. We didn't build it here—the tidal wave sent it in, over yonder reef. Now the question arises, how are we to get over the reef again?"

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"If there is no opening in the reef, maybe we can blow one out with dynamite," suggested Phil.

After dinner Captain Marshall went out in the largest of the rowboats, taking with him his pick of the sailors. They took a lead line along, and remained away until dark, taking as many soundings as they possibly could. It was dangerous work, and those on the bark were glad when the rowboat returned.

"Well, did you find a channel?" asked the first mate.

"No," was the short answer. "There are several openings, but none, that I discovered, wide enough for the *Stormy Petrel*."

"Of course, you didn't cover the whole reef?"

"By no means. I will go out again to-morrow—or you may do so."

The news the captain brought was very disheartening, and it was a gloomy party that assembled in the cabin of the bark that evening.

"We shall be perfectly safe in this harbor, so long as the weather remains fair," said Captain Marshall. "But a heavy blow might cause us to drag our anchors and either run ashore or on the reef. We must get away in the near future, if it can possibly be accomplished."

"You can't get away and to Sobago any too quick for me," replied Dave.

That evening Jasper Van Blott came out of hiding and attempted to take his place at the cabin table. But Captain Marshall would have none of this and sent the former supercargo forward, where the sailors made room for him in the forecabin. This angered Van Blott intensely, and he gritted his teeth with rage.

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"Wait until I get the chance," he said to himself. "I'll get square for this insult!"

"He can't run away for the present," the captain explained to the boys. "When we get to a regular stopping place, I'll put him in irons."

On the following morning it was so fair all the boys begged to be allowed to go ashore and do a little exploring. The captain was willing, but told them to be careful. Billy Dill was to go with them, and they took along a pistol, a shotgun, and some provisions.

"If you get into trouble, fire two shots in quick succession," said Captain Marshall. "If I want you to return, I'll fire two shots."

The boys got into the boat, and Billy Dill took one pair of oars and Dave the others. They were soon at the beach and landed in true nautical style. Then the rowboat was drawn up out of the water and into the shade of some palms, that the sun might not crack open the seams.

"We must be extremely careful," observed Phil. "Remember, we do not know what is on this island."

"Sure, there might be lions," suggested Roger, with a wink and a glance at Billy Dill.

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"You boys know better nor thet," rejoined the old tar. "None o' these South Sea islands have much in the way o' wild beasts. But you may strike a big snake."

"Excuse me, but I don't want to be introduced to his snakeship," cried the senator's son.

After a little look around, they determined to start up the shore, and did so, with their provisions on their backs and Dave carrying the shotgun and Phil the pistol. Roger and the old tar armed themselves with big sticks.

A half-mile was covered, when they came to a hollow, in which were basking a number of turtles, all of great size. Phil gave a shout, and on the instant the turtles all headed for the ocean with clumsy, but swift, strides. Billy Dill made after them and managed to catch the last one and turn him over.



Billy Dill managed to catch the last one and turn him over.—[Page 233](#).

"He will make fine turtle soup," said the tar.

"So he will!" cried Dave. "I suppose I might have shot at them."

"Not worth while, lad; one is enough."

They soon came to a portion of the shore where the undergrowth was exceedingly close, and they had to journey a short distance inland. The palms were thick, and they saw numerous cocoanuts and great varieties of beautiful ferns and gigantic creeping vines. Billy Dill also pointed out three varieties of bread-fruit trees.

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"Well, a fellow wouldn't starve here, in spite of the scarcity of meat," observed Dave.

"And meat isn't especially good in hot weather," added Roger.

"Natives down here eat very little meat," said the old tar. "They use lots of yams and such stuff,

besides bananas and plantains. Everything grows of itself, and they have a lazy man's life of it."

"Excepting when they fight each other," observed Phil.

An hour later they came out on the shore again. They were now away from the harbor and could look straight out on the ocean.

"Look! look!" cried Roger, pointing seaward. "Am I mistaken, or do I see a long canoe filled with men?"

"It certainly is a canoe," declared Dave, after a look.

"And it is filled with natives," added Phil. "What do you make of this?" he added, turning to Billy Dill. "Are they coming here?"

"I don't think they are, Phil. They seem to be headed away from this island."

The canoe was certainly a large one, and they counted at least twelve natives at the paddles, or sweeps. Other natives were in the bow and stern of the craft. In quarter of an hour the canoe was but a speck in the distance, and then it was lost to sight altogether. [235]

"We'll have to tell the captain about this," declared Dave. "If there are natives around, he will want to know it."

"Perhaps they can tell us of a way out of the harbor," suggested Roger.

"Like as not, if there is a way out," spoke up Billy Dill. "They generally know the coasts putty well—bein' out so much in their canoes."

The little party continued on its exploring tour, but soon came to a portion of the marsh land the captain had mentioned. Not wishing to get stuck, they began to retrace their steps, until they were in the midst of the thickets again. Then a strange rushing sound through the trees broke upon their ears.

"Wait!" whispered Billy Dill, "I know what that is. Don't make any noise."

"Is there any danger?" queried Roger.

The old tar shook his head. Then he pointed upward, and the boys saw a large flock of beautiful tropical birds settling down on all sides of them.

"What a sight!" murmured Dave. "How pretty they are!"

"They get birds for ladies' hats from places like this," whispered Billy Dill.

"I know it. What a shame to shoot them down, too!" [236]

"It is a shame, lad; and ladies ought to stop wearin' sech finery," said the old tar, soberly.

They watched the beautiful birds for some time. Then the creatures discovered the strangers, and off they went in a mad flight, and were lost to sight.

An hour later found the party passing down the shore once more. Here they walked on the sand until they came to something of a cove, surrounded by stately palms.

"Might as well rest a bit——" began Roger, when Dave uttered a cry:

"See, the remains of a campfire!"

"Yes, and the remains of a feast, too!" added Phil. "Those natives must have been here!" [237]

CHAPTER XXVII

A MAP AND A PLOT

The boys and Billy Dill viewed the surroundings with interest. Some bones lay on the ground, and they kicked them over.

"These can't be human bones, can they?" whispered the senator's son to Dave.

"No, Roger, they are nothing but the bones of some small animal."

"I was afraid the natives might be cannibals!"

To one side of the camp lay a fantastically carved stick, evidently cut by somebody during his leisure. Dave picked this up and saw that it contained a heart, an anchor, a cross, several links of a chain, and some stars. At the big end of the stick was an American flag.

"Hello, look here!" exclaimed the country boy. "This is strange, to say the least. I don't believe any native would cut a stick in this fashion."

"Neither do I," declared Phil. "That must have been carved by an American, and with his jack-

knife. Perhaps some sailors were camping out here."

"To me this campfire, or what's left o' it, looks to be about a week old," said Billy Dill. "The question is, where did the crowd go to from here?" [238]

"Maybe there were some Americans with those natives in that canoe," suggested Roger.

"In that case, the natives must be friendly," returned Phil.

They walked around the locality and down the shore half a mile further, but could find nothing more of interest. Then they sat down to enjoy the lunch they had brought, washing the meal down at a spring, close by where the campfire had been.

"It is wonderful that fresh water should be so close to the salt," observed the senator's son. "You'd think it would all get salt."

"Nature knew man wanted fresh water, and so it was placed there," replied Billy Dill. "Trust a kind Providence to take care on us every time."

After the meal the party set off for the opposite shore of the island, over a small hill which divided one end from the other. Here the jungle was so thick they had to literally force their way through, and each of the boys got his clothing torn more or less. Once the old tar became so completely fastened that the lads had to go to his assistance and cut him loose with their pocket-knives.

"I'm jest about anchored!" remarked Billy Dill. "This is worse nor the Sargasso Sea, ain't it?"

By the middle of the afternoon they gained the opposite shore of the island. Here the ground was very rough, but at one spot they found the remains of a village—two houses of logs and half a dozen thatched huts. The houses and huts were bare, and nothing of interest was to be found around the remains of half a dozen campfires. [239]

"This shows that somebody lived here once upon a time," observed Phil. "But it couldn't have been much of a population."

"Can't tell as to thet," came from the old sailor. "These natives live pretty thick sometimes, ten or a dozen in one hut—and a good many live right out under the trees."

Dave and Roger had passed into one of the deserted log houses, and the country youth struck a match, that they might see around a little better. Somewhat to their astonishment, they saw pinned up on a wall a sheet of water-stained brown wrapping paper, upon which was drawn something of a map, with a heavy cross where two lines met.

"Here's a discovery!" cried Dave. "Wonder what this map was for?"

The others came in, and a minute later a torch was lit, and all examined the map with care. Then Roger uttered a cry:

"Dave, look there!" and the senator's son pointed to one corner of the map. In faint letters was the written name:

Dunston A. Porter.

"The very man I am looking for!" ejaculated Dave, and his heart gave a bound. "Oh, boys, what can it mean?" [240]

"It means that Mr. Porter has been here," answered Roger.

"He must have been hunting for that treasure," said Phil. "This may be one of his maps."

"That's a fact," said Billy Dill. "He was always drawing jest such things when I was with him. He said he was bound to find that treasure some day."

"This map looks to be quite old," went on Dave, in disappointed tones. "I wish it was fresh and he was here."

"He must have come here after sailing to Sobago Island," said the senator's son, "and that can't be so very long ago."

After that they made a closer hunt than before in and around the camp, but found nothing, outside of two buttons, a bit of lead pencil, and the broken handle of a spade.

"That spade proves there was some digging done," said Phil. "Undoubtedly he came here looking for that treasure."

"Did you ever get any of the particulars of that treasure?" asked Dave, of the old sailor.

"Not much, exceptin' that it was a treasure of pearls and precious stones once hidden by some native king. Mr. Porter didn't want to tell much about it, and I didn't feel as I had the right to ask him." [241]

It was now growing late, and all felt that it was time to return to the ship. Before leaving the hut, Dave pinned a slip of paper over the map, writing upon it as follows:

"To DUNSTON A. PORTER:

"I am very anxious to meet you. I am on board the bark *Stormy Petrel*, in the harbor of this island, and bound for Sobago Island. Please see me, by all means.

DAVID PORTER."

To this the youth added the date, and also his home address, in case he should fail to meet Dunston Porter and the man should wish to write to him.

"That certainly ought to interest him—especially if he is interested in a lost boy," was Roger's comment.

Dave was in a sober mood when he returned to the ship and did not feel much like talking. He allowed the others to relate the day's experience, to which Captain Marshall listened closely.

"It is certainly a pity we didn't get a chance to talk to those natives," said the master of the *Stormy Petrel*. "They might have shown me some way out of this harbor."

"Then you haven't found any passage through the reef?"

[242]

"Not yet. The first mate was out with four of the crew, but they could find nothing wide enough," answered Captain Marshall.

The master of the bark thought he spoke the truth, but he was mistaken. Unknown to the captain, the first mate had found a passage, rather twisting in shape, but perfectly safe. It was near the northern end of the reef—a locality Captain Marshall had not visited. One of the sailors who had been out with the mate also knew of the passage, but Paul Shepley had pledged him to secrecy for the time being.

While the boys and Billy Dill were in the cabin of the *Stormy Petrel* relating their experiences, an interesting conversation was going on in another part of the ship, between the first mate and Jasper Van Blott.

"I have made an important discovery," said Shepley, in a low tone, so that no others might hear. "I have found a safe passageway out of this harbor."

"Did you tell the old man?" demanded the former supercargo, quickly.

"No; I told him that there wasn't any opening wide enough for the bark."

"Good! Now, if we can only arrange this other matter, Shepley, we'll make a fine thing of this," went on Jasper Van Blott.

"I don't know about this other thing, as you call it," grumbled the first mate. "I'll be running a tremendous risk."

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"Oh, it will be perfectly safe."

"Don't you know that mutiny on the high seas is punishable by death?"

"I do—if you get caught. But you won't get caught. Besides that, please to remember that I am not going to suffer for this cargo affair alone. If I have to stand trial, you'll have to do the same."

"Then you really mean to drag me into it, eh?" said the first mate, sourly.

"Unless you consent to my plan. Why, man, it's dead easy," continued the former supercargo, earnestly. "I know that at least four of the sailors will stand in with us from the start, and we can easily win over the others by the promise of a big reward. All we have got to do is to get Captain Marshall, Billy Dill, and those three boys ashore, and then sail away for some distant port. On the way we can change the name of the bark and I'll fix up the clearance papers, and there you are. You and I can become equal owners, and we can go into the regular Australian-New Zealand trade and make a barrel of money in a few years."

"But supposing some of the men raise a row?"

"We won't give them a chance, until we are out on the ocean. We can tell them—after the captain's crowd is gone—that you have orders to try to clear the reef. When we are on the ocean, I don't think it will be so hard to manage things. We can arm ourselves and lock up all the other weapons, and tell the men they shall have big money if they ask no questions and stick to their duty," added Jasper Van Blott.

[244]

"Well, how do you propose to get that crowd ashore? They may not happen to go of their own free will."

"I think I can manage that, sooner or later. The main thing is, we must watch our chances and strike as soon as the right moment arrives. Now then, what do you say, Shepley?"

The first mate hesitated, and an argument lasting a full hour ensued, during which the former supercargo's plot was discussed from every possible point of view. At last the first mate agreed to do as Jasper Van Blott wanted, and then the two separated, to await the time for making their first move.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

MAROONED

On the following morning Captain Marshall went out once more to look for a passageway through the reef. Dave accompanied him, and so did Billy Dill. In the meantime Roger and Phil rowed ashore, to see if they could find any more traces of the natives.

The captain and Dave had been out about an hour, when they noticed a small boat coming toward them, containing two sailors and the first mate.

"Captain Marshall, you are wanted on shore at once!" cried Paul Shepley, when within hearing distance. "Those two boys just sent word to the ship by a native. They said to bring young Porter and Dill along."

"They must have discovered something!" cried Dave, quickly. "Oh, let us go, by all means!"

"I will," answered the master of the *Stormy Petrel*. "Did they say where they were?"

"Near the interior of the island, I believe," answered the mate.

No more was said, and, winding up his lead line, the captain had the rowboat turned around and headed for the island. In the meantime the first mate returned to the bark. Once on the deck of the ship he was quickly joined by the former supercargo. [246]

"What did he say?" asked Jasper Van Blott, anxiously.

"Said he'd go."

"Then we must lose no time in getting up the anchors. Luckily the breeze is just right."

"Wait until they are ashore and have disappeared," answered the first mate, nervously. He was really a coward at heart, and now fairly under the thumb of Van Blott.

It took but a few minutes for the captain, Dave, and Billy Dill to gain the stretch of sand. Then those on the *Stormy Petrel* saw them draw the small craft up to a safe place and disappear in among the trees.

"Now then, act as quickly as you can," said Jasper Van Blott.

An order was issued for the sailors to come on deck, and all did so, and the second mate, a young man named Bob Sanders, also appeared. Then Paul Shepley issued orders to hoist the anchors and raise some of the sails.

"What does this mean, Mr. Shepley?" asked the second mate, in surprise.

"The captain has found a passageway and wants me to take the ship out and around to the other side of the island," replied the first mate. "He wants us to be lively, too." [247]

Bob Sanders was mystified, but, as he was not on particularly good terms with the first mate, he asked no more questions. Soon the sails were up, and Paul Shepley himself steered the bark toward the passageway he had discovered.

"You are sure of what you are doing?" asked Jasper Van Blott, coming to the wheel. "We don't want to strike and go to the bottom."

"I wish I was as sure of the future as I am of the passageway," answered the first mate, somewhat grimly.

"Oh, don't worry about the future," answered the former supercargo, lightly. "In a few days we'll have everything in apple-pie order."

There was a good breeze, and the bark cleared the reef with but little difficulty. Then Paul Shepley had all the sails set, and soon the *Stormy Petrel* was leaving the island far behind.

In the meantime Captain Marshall, Dave, and the old tar were looking everywhere for Phil and Roger. They dove straight into the jungle and called out as loudly as they could. But no answer came back.

"It is queer that we can't locate them," was Dave's comment. "If they wanted us, I should think they would be watching out, wouldn't you?" [248]

"Perhaps they are in trouble," answered the captain, gravely.

He fired his pistol as a signal, and at last came an answering shot from the lower end of the island. At once they hurried in that direction, only to find themselves cut off by a stretch of impassable marsh land.

"Reckon as how we'll have to go around," observed Billy Dill. "If we try to go through that we'll git stuck, fer sartin!"

Going around was not so easy, and it took them nearly half an hour to cover a mile. Then the captain discharged his pistol once more, and a minute later came an answering shot but a short

distance away.

"I see them—at the top of the hill!" cried Dave, and, looking ahead, the others discovered Phil and Roger at the top of the slight rise of ground, waving their handkerchiefs to attract attention. Soon the two parties were together.

"What's the news?" cried Captain Marshall, looking around to see if anybody else was present.

"No news," answered Phil. He gazed at them curiously. "What's up? You look rather excited!"

"Didn't you send for us?" gasped Dave.

"Send for you? What do you mean?" queried Roger.

"The first mate said you sent a native to the bark, asking us to come to you," said Captain Marshall. [249]

"We sent nobody—we have seen no natives to-day."

There was a pause, during which each looked blankly at the others.

"I can't understand this," said Dave, slowly. "Mr. Shepley certainly delivered that message."

"It is a trick of some sort!" burst out Captain Marshall. "The very best thing we can do is to get back to the vessel without delay."

The others thought so, too, and in a moment more all were on their way to the shore, hurrying through the undergrowth as rapidly as the bushes and vines would permit. Phil and Roger had managed to shoot two small animals that looked like hares, but that was all.

At last they came out on the sands, and a shout of dismay went up.

"The ship is gone!"

"The *Stormy Petrel* has sailed away and left us!"

The boys and the old sailor turned to Captain Marshall, whose face had turned white. Now it grew dark and stern.

"How could they get out of the harbor?" questioned Dave.

"Shepley must have found a passageway," answered the captain. [250]

"But where has the ship gone to?" queried Phil. "I can't see her anywhere."

Instead of replying, the captain of the *Stormy Petrel* clenched his hands and compressed his lips. He was doing some deep thinking.

"I must say, this looks to me as if somebody had run off with the ship!" declared the senator's son.

"And that is just what they have done!" cried the captain. "Oh, the rascals! the scoundrels! If I ever catch them——" He could not finish, so great was his rage.

"Run off with the ship!" burst out Dave. "How could they do that? Do you think there was a regular mutiny?"

"There may have been—anyway, the bark is gone—and we are left to shift for ourselves."

"I think I see through it," said Phil. "The first mate and Van Blott have hatched this up between them. I know they were as thick as peas—in fact, I suspect Shepley helped the supercargo to hide away on board. They must have bought over the crew and Mr. Sanders."

"I don't think they could buy over Bob Sanders," declared the captain. "I know him too well. He is very quiet, but I'd trust him with almost anything. But I can't say as much for all the crew. Shepley got some of the men to ship, and he most likely knew whom he was getting." [251]

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Roger.

"I don't exactly know what to do, yet, lad. We are marooned, that is all there is to it. And it doesn't look as if they had left us anything to live on, either," added the captain, casting his eyes along the shore.

"Do you mean to say they have deserted us?" cried Dave.

"Doesn't it look like it?"

"And stolen the bark?"

"Yes."

Dave drew a long breath. Here was another set-back, of which he had not dreamed. If the *Stormy Petrel* had really sailed away, not to return, what were they to do, and when would they get a chance to leave the lonely island?

"This is positively the worst yet!" groaned Roger. "The fellows who would do such a thing ought to be—be hanged! And they haven't left us a thing!"

"Let us separate and see if we can sight the bark," said the captain, and this was done, one party going to the upper end of the island and the other to the lower. But not a trace of the missing vessel was to be seen.

It was a decidedly sober party that gathered on the sands two hours later to discuss the situation and decide upon what was to be done. Here they were, marooned on a deserted island, with no food and but little shelter, and with only two pistols and a shotgun between them. It was certainly not a situation to be envied. [252]

"I used to think, when I was a small boy, that I'd like to play Robinson Crusoe," remarked Roger. "But I've changed my mind, and I'd much rather be back on the ship."

"Humph! If you are going to talk that way, what will you say if we have to stay here weeks, or months, or maybe years?" asked Phil.

"Gracious!" burst out Dave. "You don't think we'll have to stay here years, do you?"

"We'll have to stay until we can git away," was the sage remark of Billy Dill. "Captain, are we in the track o' any ships?"

Captain Marshall shook his head slowly.

"I don't think we are. That storm blew us far out of our course. I doubt if a ship comes this way once in three months."

"There, what did I tell you!" cried Phil. "But don't think I want to stay," he added, quickly. "I am just as anxious to get away as any one, and anxious to regain my father's ship, too. Why, to lose her would mean a serious loss to my father!"

They talked the matter over until nightfall, but without reaching any satisfactory conclusion. Not one of the party could bring himself to think that he would really have to stay on the island for any great length of time. [253]

"If we do have to stay, we'll have to rassel around fer somethin' to eat," remarked Billy Dill. "The mean sharks! They might at least have left us a barrel o' salt horse an' some canned goods—an' a little tobacco," he added, dolefully. His pipe was empty and so was his pouch, and this added the last drop to his misery.

As night came on they gathered some driftwood and lit a campfire, not because they were cold, but because it looked more cheerful, and because it also helped to keep away some obnoxious insects that had appeared. Over the fire they cooked the game Roger and Phil had shot, and made a supper of this and some crackers the boys had been carrying in their pockets. Then they sat down to talk the matter over once more. As the night advanced, the bright stars bespangled the heavens and all became perfectly calm and quiet. Tired out by what had passed, one after another sought a comfortable resting-place, and soon all were sound asleep. [254]

CHAPTER XXIX

THE COMING OF THE NATIVES

When Dave awoke, it was with a start. The wind was blowing half a gale and the rain was falling.

"What a change since last night," he murmured to himself, as he sat up. "Hello, are you up already?"

"I am," answered Billy Dill. "Thought as how I'd better keep the fire a-goin', if it's goin' to storm. This ain't so nice, is it?"

"I should say not, indeed. My, now the wind is rising!"

The others soon roused up, and all gathered under the shelter of some dense tropical trees and vines. Soon the rain was pouring down in torrents, shutting out the landscape on all sides.

"Well, in one way, it's a good thing the *Stormy Petrel* got out of the harbor," remarked Captain Marshall. "This wind might make her shift, and either throw her up on the island or on to the reef."

They could do nothing with the fire, and so allowed it to die out, and crawled still further into the jungle in an endeavor to keep dry. But the rain followed them, until each one of the party was about soaked. [255]

"This is another one of the comforts of a Robinson Crusoe life," remarked Phil. "Soaking wet, and nothing to eat. Oh, don't I wish I was on the bark again and had hold of those mutineers!"

The rain and wind kept up for the best part of that day. There was but little thunder and lightning, and at nightfall the storm died away, although the wind still kept up at a lively rate. During the afternoon they managed to find a turtle in a hollow, and, after turning the creature over, killed it and cooked it in its own shell. The meal was not particularly appetizing, but all

were exceedingly hungry and partook of it without a murmur.

"To-morrow we must gather some yams and some plantains, and also do some fishing," said the captain. "We might go hunting, too, but I would rather save our ammunition for emergencies."

To keep from taking cold in their wet clothing, all slept close to the campfire that night, and early in the morning they hung most of their garments out in the bright sunshine to dry. Fishing proved good, and the boys and Billy Dill caught over a score of good-sized fish, and also discovered a bed of oysters, which, as Roger declared, "were not half bad, even if they weren't particularly good." In the meantime the captain, who knew not a little about tropical life, tramped around and found some bread-fruit and some luscious berries, which he declared were perfectly good to eat. [256]

"This solves the question of food, at least for the present," said Dave. "Not a very extensive list of things to eat, but much better than nothing at all."

"What would the boys of Oak Hall say if they could see us?" asked Roger.

"We'll certainly have a tale to tell—if we ever get back to tell it," returned Phil.

Having nothing in particular to do, they took their time about preparing the next meal, and, when it was done, it proved to be a regular spread. Some of the fish made particularly good eating, and the berries topped the repast off in good style.

"I do not believe that the *Stormy Petrel* will come back to this harbor," said Captain Marshall. "And that being so, I think we had best take ourselves to the other side of the island, to those log huts and shacks you mentioned. That is, most likely, the spot where the natives land and where ships may stop. We can put up a flag of distress, and, after that, there will be nothing to do but to wait and make the best of it."

"Shall you leave the rowboats here?" asked Dave.

"We can leave one boat here and row around the island in the other. We can carry the craft to some point beyond the reef." [257]

This advice was followed, and beyond the reef line the ocean was found to be comparatively quiet, despite the storm of the day before. All entered the rowboat, and the captain and Billy Dill took the oars, and the voyage to the other side of the island was begun.

By the end of the day they had reached the log houses, and they cleaned out the larger of the two and gave to it as much of a homelike appearance as possible. Then they set to work to gather all the driftwood possible, for they had nothing with which to cut firewood. The boys fell to fishing once more, and Phil began to manufacture a snare, with which he hoped to trap some small animals that had been discovered at a distance.

Another whole day passed by slowly, and they began to feel a little more settled, when, in the middle of the afternoon, Billy Dill, who was out in the rowboat trying to catch some big fish, set up a loud shout.

"What is it?" demanded Captain Marshall, who was busily at work breaking up some of the driftwood.

"I see a big canoe comin', loaded with niggers!" announced the old sailor.

This news brought all to the shore immediately, and they watched the approach of the canoe with much interest. It was all of twenty-five feet in length and manned by twelve dark-colored men, six on each side. The natives in the craft numbered, all told, nineteen, and some of them had guns, while others had bows and arrows and long spears. Each man had also a long and sharp knife stuck in his girdle. [258]

"Do you think they will be friendly?" asked Dave, in a low tone.

"I hope so," answered the captain. "They have nothing to gain by being otherwise."

When the natives discovered the whites, they stopped rowing and set up an animated jabbering among themselves. They looked around, thinking a ship must be close by, and, finding none, were much astonished.

"Hello!" called out Captain Marshall, waving a welcome. "Glad to see you!"

To this the natives did not answer. But the canoe was sent closer and finally beached, and the majority of the black men leaped ashore, each carrying his weapons with him.

"How do you do?" went on the captain, extending his hand and smiling. "Glad to see you. Can anybody speak English?"

At the question, one of the natives, a short, thickset fellow with a peculiarly flat nose, came to the front and shook hands.

"Soko speak Ingles," he said, and grinned. "Soko once on Ingles ship."

"I am glad to know you, Soko," replied the captain. "I am Captain Marshall, of the ship *Stormy Petrel*. What island is this?" [259]

"Dis Yam-kolo Island," answered Soko, still grinning. "How you come dis way? Where he ship?"

"Some rascals have stolen my ship. She is a fine-looking bark. She was here a few days ago. Have you seen her?"

"No see ship, no—no ship, so many days," and the native held up four fingers, all stumpy and not overly clean. "Steal ship on you? Big thief, yes!"

"You are right. Where do you come from?"

"Come from Waponu. Dat on Sobago Island."

"Yes, I have heard of the place." The captain turned to the others. "It is a native village some ten miles from the town for which the *Stormy Petrel* was bound," he explained.

"Then perhaps they can take us to Sobago," said Dave, eagerly.

"Perhaps they can," answered the captain. "But it must be a long trip in such a canoe as that."

"Tell me," said Dave, to the native. "Do you come here often?"

"Sometime, not many time," answered Soko, still grinning. He was evidently of a sunny disposition.

"Did you ever come here with a man named Dunston Porter?"

[260]

At this question the native shrugged his shoulders and looked perplexed.

"I mean this man," went on the youth, and, taking the native by the hand, led him into the hut and up to the map on the wall. Instantly the face of Soko brightened.

"Yes, Soko know," he said. "Dat man come, so many time here——" He held up three fingers. "Look in ground, dig, not can find much, no. Go back to Sobago, so." And he made a dejected face, at which Roger and Phil had to laugh.

"He means Mr. Porter didn't locate the treasure," said the senator's son.

"Is that man in Sobago now?" went on Dave, paying no attention to his chum's remark.

"Yes, him at big town, Nanpi!"

"Good I Then I would like to get to Nanpi just as soon as I can," cried Dave, enthusiastically. "Will you take me there? I can pay you well," he added, for he still had his money belt and cash with him.

"Yes, can take to Nanpi," answered the native.

After that he explained that he and his companions had come to the island to hunt for some rare birds and for turtles. They were quite willing to return to Sobago Island immediately, if paid for so doing. A bargain was struck, and it was decided that the voyage should be begun in the morning. In the meantime all hands were to catch some fish and cook them, and also gather in a supply of other eatables. The natives had a number of hollow reeds with them, and these were filled with fresh water, just previous to setting out. It was calculated that, weather permitting, the distance would be covered in three days.

[261]

"These fellows know how to handle their big canoes very well," explained Captain Marshall. "They go out hundreds of miles, and sometimes weather the worst of storms. Occasionally, of course, they get swept away, but not often. They sail altogether by the sun and stars, and can strike almost as straight a course as if they were using a compass."

Dave questioned Soko further about Dunston Porter, but could learn little, outside of the fact that the man was a treasure hunter and had paid very well for what was done for him. Soko added, however, that he thought the man expected to remain at Sobago for some time.

The boys could sleep but little that night, so anxious were they concerning the trip before them. They were up at dawn, but, early as it was, found the natives ahead of them. A hasty breakfast was had by all, the things to be taken along were packed in the bow and stern of the canoe, and shortly after sunrise the craft was pushed from the shore, whites and natives scrambled in, and the start from the lonely island was made.

[262]

CHAPTER XXX

THE RETAKING OF THE "STORMY PETREL"

For the whole of that day the natives kept at the sweeps of the long canoe, one set of rowers relieving the other. The whites were willing to assist, but Soko said the natives could get along best alone, they having their own peculiar manner of handling the craft.

The weather remained fair, with only a bit of a breeze blowing, and the bosom of the ocean was as calm as they could wish. They were soon out of sight of the island, and then all they could

behold was the sky above and the sparkling waters on every side.

"It must be terrible to be lost on the ocean," remarked Phil, as he gazed around. "I don't wonder that men go mad, after they have been out days and days."

"And think of having nothing to eat or to drink," said Dave. "Ugh! it gives a fellow the shivers to think of it!"

At noon the whole party partook of a lunch, and toward nightfall had supper. Then the whites went to sleep, and so did half of the natives, the remaining blacks keeping at the sweeps, guiding themselves by the stars, now that the sun had gone down. [263]

When the boys awoke they were dismayed to see that a mist covered the sea.

"Hello! I didn't expect this!" cried the senator's son. "Why, a fellow can't see a hundred feet in any direction."

"What are the natives going to do now?" asked Dave of Captain Marshall, who had been awake for some time.

"Soko says they must rest and wait," answered the captain. "He cannot go ahead, for he knows not in what direction to steer."

"I've got a pocket compass!" cried Phil, bringing it forth. "How odd that I didn't think of it before."

The captain took the compass and showed it to the native who could speak English. He had seen such things before, and, after a short talk with the master of the *Stormy Petrel*, set the others to using the sweeps as before.

It was about ten o'clock of the forenoon that one of the natives, who was watching in the bow, uttered a short cry. At once those at the sweeps stopped pulling.

"What is it?" asked Captain Marshall, quickly.

"Big ship over dare!" announced Soko, a moment later. [264]

All of the whites looked in the direction pointed out, and through the mist saw a large vessel drifting along, the sails flapping idly against the masts. The wheel was lashed fast, and nobody was in sight on the deck.

"The *Stormy Petrel*!" ejaculated Captain Marshall.

"Are you sure?" asked Dave and Phil, in a breath.

"Sure it's the bark," cried Billy Dill. "Say, but this is great luck, ain't it?" and his face brightened up. "Now we can teach them dirty mutineers a lesson."

"Dat you ship?" asked Soko.

"It is," answered Captain Marshall. "See here, Soko," he went on, "can I depend upon your helping me? I will pay you and your men for whatever you do."

The native shrugged his ebony shoulders and then consulted with his fellow-tribesmen. All decided that they would aid the captain, providing he would give them each a piece of silver "so big," pointing out the size of a trade dollar. Captain Marshall agreed on the spot, and preparations were made for boarding the bark.

"It is queer that nobody is in sight!" remarked Phil, as the canoe drew closer.

"Somebody is coming on deck now!" cried Dave, in a low tone, and Paul Shepley appeared, followed by Jasper Van Blott and, close behind him, one of the sailors. [265]

"Hello! what's this?" sang out the first mate, on catching sight of the canoe.

"Captain Marshall and the others!" muttered the former supercargo. "Hi! keep away from here!" he roared.

"Surrender, you villains!" called out the captain. "What do you mean by running off with my ship in this fashion?"

"You keep off!" warned Paul Shepley, without answering the question. "Keep off, I tell you!"

"We'll fire on you, if you don't keep off," called the former supercargo, and he brought forth a big pistol.

"Be careful, cap'n, or somebody will git shot!" whispered Billy Dill. "Those fellers look like they was des'prit!"

"Don't you dare to shoot!" called out Captain Marshall. "The first man who fires shall swing from the yardarm!"

The loud talking had brought several sailors to the deck, and they were followed by the second mate, who stared at the canoe and its occupants as if he could not believe his eyes.

"Hello, Captain Marshall!" sang out Bob Sanders. "I am mighty glad you have come."

"Then you are not in this mutiny, Sanders?"

"Not by a jugful! They tried to buy me up, but I wouldn't consent. Podders, Diski, and McNabb are not in it, either." [266]

"I am glad to hear it. Sanders, take control of the ship until I get aboard."

"He will do nothing of the kind!" yelled Jasper Van Blott, and was about to turn on the second mate, when the latter hit him a blow in the ear, sending him headlong to the deck.

"McNabb! Podders!" called the second mate. "Grab Mr. Shepley!"

The sailors called upon understood, and before the first mate could turn, one tar had him from behind, so that he could not raise his arms. Then the other seized a pistol and, turning, faced the crew with the weapon.

The turn of affairs had been so sudden that Shepley and Van Blott were taken completely by surprise, as were likewise the sailors who had sided with the rascals, and, for the moment, none of them knew exactly what to do. In the meantime the canoe bumped alongside of the *Stormy Petrel*, and, catching hold of a trailing rope thrown overboard by the sailor named Diski, Captain Marshall hauled himself to the deck, followed by Billy Dill and the boys.

"Do you surrender?" demanded the captain, striding up to the first mate, revolver in hand.

"Ye-yes!" burst out Shepley. "It's—it's all a mistake, Captain Marshall—all a mistake!" [267]

"I reckon it was!" answered the captain, grimly. "What about you, Van Blott?" And he turned on the former supercargo, who was struggling to his feet.

"I suppose I've got to give in," muttered Jasper Van Blott.

"And what about you men?" demanded Captain Marshall, turning his stern eyes on the portion of the crew that had mutinied.

"We're with you, cap'n," said one, humbly. "Mr. Shepley led us into this, without us knowin' what we was a-doin'. Ain't that so, mates?"

"That's so," said the others, humbly.

"Are you willing to obey me, after this?"

"Yes! yes!" came in an eager chorus.

After this a long talk took place, and Jasper Van Blott and Paul Shepley were placed in irons and conducted to a closet in the bow of the ship, used for the storage of oil and lanterns. The place was given a rough cleaning, and then the pair were locked inside, Captain Marshall putting the key in his pocket. Both of the prisoners wanted to protest, but the master of the *Stormy Petrel* would not listen.

"You can do your talking later, when I have time to listen," said he. "Just now I have other matters to attend to."

From Bob Sanders and the three loyal sailors Captain Marshall got a fairly accurate account of the mutiny. He was told that Jasper Van Blott had done his best to get all hands to join in the plot. The former supercargo was the prime mover in the affair, and the first mate was a coward and had been little more than his tool. The sailors who had gone in had done so rather unwillingly, and, after thinking the matter over, Captain Marshall decided to read them a stern lecture and then forgive them. [268]

It was now no longer necessary for the natives to take the whites to Sobago Island, and, after a brief consultation, Soko and his men were paid off and given some presents, and then, the mists rising, the canoe was headed back for Yam-kolo Island. It was the last that Dave and his friends saw of these black men, who had proven so friendly.

With the first mate in irons, Bob Sanders was advanced to fill his place. This left the position of second mate vacant, and, after a consultation with the boys, the master of the *Stormy Petrel* offered Billy Dill the position, and he accepted gladly.

"I always kind o' wanted to be a mate," said the old tar. "I'm tickled to death!" And his face showed it.

With the lifting of the mist a stiff breeze came up, and preparations were made for continuing the voyage to Nanpi. It was found that the last storm had slightly disabled the rudder, which accounted for the fact that the bark had not made greater headway on her trip. But additional parts were on board, and by nightfall the damage was made good, and then the *Stormy Petrel* answered her helm as well as ever. [269]

"And now for Sobago Island!" cried Dave, to his chums. "I hope I have no more trouble in finding Mr. Dunston Porter!" [270]

CHAPTER XXXI

LIFTING THE CURTAIN

The second mate told the truth when he said Paul Shepley was a coward and under the thumb of the former supercargo. That very evening Shepley begged to see Captain Marshall alone, and, when given the opportunity, actually fell on his knees before the master of the *Stormy Petrel*.

"I am willing to do anything, captain!" he groaned. "Only don't—don't swing me from the—the yardarm!" He had it firmly fixed in his mind that he was to be executed.

"You deserve to be hanged!" answered the captain. "I don't see why I should spare you."

"It was all Van Blott's fault—he fixed the whole thing from beginning to end. He got the stolen cases on board and made me promise to help in getting rid of them. And he got up the plan to run away with the ship."

After that Paul Shepley told his story in detail, and the captain became convinced that the first mate was more of a sneak than a villain.

"I will let you off, upon two conditions," said Captain Marshall, at last. "The first is, that you serve [271] as a common sailor for the rest of this trip. Will you do it?"

"Yes, but it's pretty hard on me," whined Shepley.

"The second condition is, that you promise to appear against Van Blott, whenever called upon to do so."

"Yes, I'll do that."

"Then go forward and take Billy Dill's place in the forecabin."

"Where is Dill to go?"

"I have made him second mate and Sanders first mate."

"Oh!" murmured Paul Shepley, and said no more. It cut him deeply to take up quarters in the forecabin, where the men treated him any way but kindly, yet he was glad to get off so cheaply.

The next day was an anxious one for Dave, who was on the constant lookout for land. Toward nightfall a speck was seen in the distance, and in the morning, when he came on deck, the country youth saw before him Sobago in all of its tropical beauty, with its cozy harbor, its long stretch of white sand, and its waving palms. In the harbor were ships of several nationalities, and also numerous native canoes, and the scene was an animated one.

The boys had no difficulty in getting ashore, but once on the streets of Nanpi, they scarcely knew [272] how to turn. They walked along slowly until they came to a shipping office, in the window of which was a sign:

English Spoken Here.

"I am going in here to ask a few questions," said Dave, and entered, followed by Phil and Roger. They found in the office a very stout and very bald old gentleman, wearing big spectacles.

"You speak English, I believe," said Dave, politely.

"I speak English, and a dozen other languages, too," said the bald-headed gentleman, peering at them curiously. "Why—er—how's this?" he added, to Dave. "Is this some joke? Why did you shave so clean?"

"Shave?" repeated Dave. His heart gave a sudden bound. "Why do you ask that question?"

"Why, I—er—this is most extraordinary!" ejaculated the man, still staring at the country youth. "I don't understand it."

"Don't understand what?"

"You look so much like a man I know—a Mr. Dunston Porter. Maybe he is some relative of yours?" [273]

"The very man I am looking for!" cried Dave. "Can you tell me where I can find him?" His heart was almost in his throat as he asked the question. Supposing Mr. Dunston Porter had left Sobago Island for parts unknown?

"Find him? I think so. He was here yesterday and said he was going out to the ruins of the old temple on the Pokali Road. He expected to be gone all day on the trip. He'll be back to town by night."

"Then you'll have to wait, Dave," came from Phil.

"Oh, I can't wait!" burst out Dave. "How far is that old temple from here?"

"About three miles."

"Can I hire somebody to take me there? I want to see Mr. Porter as soon as possible."

"Certainly; you can get a boy for a few pennies," answered the bald-headed man. "There is a boy now who wants a job." And he beckoned to an urchin who sat on an empty box, eating a banana.

When the lad came up the man explained in the native tongue, and soon the party set off, Dave first thanking the bald-headed man for his kindness.

To Phil and Roger the walk on the tropical road was long, hot, and dusty. But Dave was so busy with his thoughts that he did not notice he was walking at all. How much the next hour or two might reveal!

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Presently they came in sight of a ruined pile, which the native boy pointed out as the old temple. Dave forged ahead and hurried into the ruins, and then around to the back. Here, from under some palms, could be had a fine view of the surrounding country.

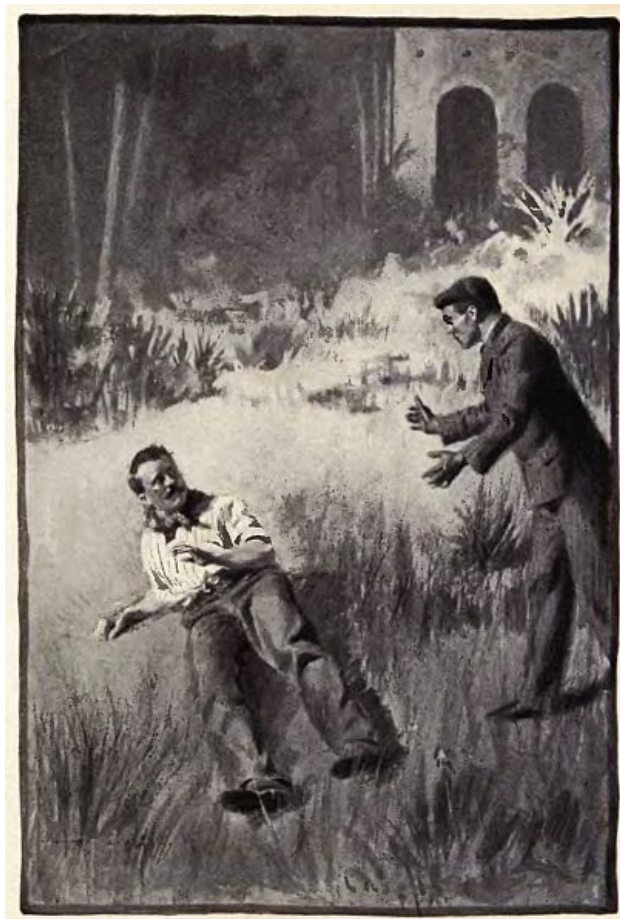
A hasty glance around revealed to Dave the form of a man, lying on the grass half asleep. The country youth hurried forward, gave a good look, and uttered a little cry, at which the man sat up suddenly.

"Who are you?" asked the man, and then he began to stare at Dave very hard.

"Is this Mr. Dunston Porter?" asked Dave, in a voice he tried in vain to steady.

"Yes, that's my name. But you——" The man paused expectantly.

"I am Dave Porter. I have come about seven thousand miles to see you."



"I have come about seven thousand miles to see you."—[Page 274](#).

"Dave Porter! Seven thousand miles to see me! I must be dreaming!" The man leaped to his feet and came up to Dave. "How is this? Won't you explain?"

"I will try, Mr. Porter."

"They do look exactly alike!" said Phil to Roger, in a whisper. "What an extraordinary likeness!"

"No wonder Billy Dill was startled when he first met Dave," added the senator's son.

Dunston Porter heard the talk and looked at the others. At this Phil took a step forward.

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"We are Dave Porter's school chums," he explained. "My name is Phil Lawrence, and this is Roger Morr."

"Glad to know you. Did you travel seven thousand miles to see me, too?" went on the man.

"Hardly that, but we took the trip with Dave," answered Roger.

"He wanted to find the man who looked like him," continued Phil, for he saw Dave could hardly speak for his emotion. "And he has found him. You two look exactly alike—that is, you would, if your mustache was shaved off."

"Yes?" Dunston Porter paused. "Is that all?"

"No! no!" cried Dave, struggling to keep calm. "I came to—to find out something about myself, if I could. It's a long story, and I'll have to start at the beginning. When I was a youngster about three years old, I was picked up alongside a railroad track by some farming people. They supposed I had been put off a train by somebody who wanted to get rid of me. They asked me my name, and I said something that sounded to them like Davy and Dun-Dun and Porter, and so they called me Dave Porter."

"Ah!" cried Dunston Porter, and he was all attention. "Go on."

"I was taken to the poorhouse, and then went to live with some other folks who were very kind to me, and one rich gentleman sent me to a boarding school. While there I helped an old sailor named Billy Dill——" [276]

"Billy Dill! Well, I never! Go on, please."

"He was struck when he saw me—said I was somebody else with my mustache shaved off, and a lot more. He finally told me about you, and said you had told him about a crazy nurse and a lost child, and so I made up my mind to find you, if I could, and see if you knew anything about my past." Dave's lips began to quiver again. "Can you tell me anything?"

"I—I—perhaps so." Dunston Porter's voice was also quivering. "Can you prove this story about being found near a railroad?"

"Yes."

"About thirteen years ago?"

"Yes."

"In the eastern part of the United States?"

"Yes, near a village called Crumville. They say I said something about a bad man who wouldn't buy some candy for me. It may be that that man put me off the train."

"He did!" almost shouted Dunston Porter. "It was Sandy Margot, the worthless husband of the crazy nurse, Polly Margot, you just mentioned. She took the child and turned the boy over to her husband. Margot wanted to make money out of the abduction, but, during his travels with the little one, he learned that detectives were after him, and, when the train stopped one day, he put the child off and promised it some candy to keep it from crying. He got away, and we never heard of him for about six years. Then he was rounded up in a burglary and badly wounded. He confessed at the hospital, but he could not tell the name of the place where the child had been dropped. We made a search, but could discover nothing. Margot died, and so did his crazy wife; and there the whole matter has been resting." [277]

"But who am I?" cried Dave, unable to restrain the question any longer.

"Oh, you don't know that? I thought Billy Dill knew. If what you have told me is true, you are the son of my twin brother, David Breslow Porter." [278]

CHAPTER XXXII

HOMeward BOUND—CONCLUSION

"I am the son of your twin brother?" repeated Dave, while Roger and Phil listened with intense interest.

"Yes," answered Dunston Porter. "He lost his son exactly as described, and the baby was said to resemble me very strongly."

"And where is your brother now?"

"He is traveling for his health. The last I heard of him he was in Europe, at one of the well-known watering places."

"Is his wife alive?"

"No, she died years ago. But he has a daughter with him, Laura—about a year younger than you." Dunston Porter took Dave's hand. "This is simply marvelous! I can hardly believe it! My nephew Dave! Why, it sounds like a fairy tale."

"It is marvelous, Mr. Por——"

"Hold on! If we are relatives, you'll have to call me Uncle Dunston," and the man smiled

pleasantly.

"Well, then, Uncle Dunston, are my father and my sister alone in the world?"

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"They are, excepting for me. We used to have other brothers, and a sister, but all of them are dead. I am alone here—an old bachelor."

"But you used to live with my father, is that it?"

"Yes, we were once in business together—owned a chemical works in New York and another in Chicago, and we also had some patents for manufacturing gas by a new process. But both of us liked to travel around, and so we sold out, and since that time we have been roaming around the world, sometimes together, and then again alone, although he always takes Laura with him, no matter where he goes. He is afraid to leave her behind, for fear she will be lost to him just as you were."

"Do you know his exact address now?"

"No; but I think a letter sent to a certain address in Paris will be forwarded to him. To tell the truth, I have been out here so long I have partly lost track of him. He will be amazed to hear from you, I am sure, and Laura will be surprised, too."

"I shall write to him as soon as possible," answered Dave.

"Of course! of course! And I will write too," rejoined Dunston Porter.

After that, sitting in the shade of the old temple and the palm trees, Dave and his chums told their story from beginning to end, and then Dunston Porter related some of his own experiences and told much more concerning Dave's father and sister Laura. He said that he and his twin brother looked somewhat alike, which accounted for Dave's resemblance to himself. He was glad to add that both he and his brother were well-to-do, so they could come and go as they pleased.

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"As you know, I am hunting for a treasure of pearls and precious stones," said Dunston Porter. "So far, I have been unsuccessful, but I feel sure that I shall find them some day. And, even if I don't, the task of looking for the treasure pleases me and gives me the chance to visit many of these beautiful islands of the South Seas."

The boy who had brought Dave and his chums to the old temple had been dismissed, and Dunston Porter took them back to Nanpi, where he had accommodations in the best public house the place afforded. Here Billy Dill visited him.

"Does my heart good to see ye again!" cried the old tar. "An' ain't it jest wonderful about Dave? Now stand up, side by side, an' look into that glass. As like as two beans, say I!" And Dunston Porter agreed with him.

Of course the old sailor had to tell all he knew, and Dave brought out pictures of Caspar Potts and the Wadsworths which he had brought along. In return, Dunston Porter gave Dave pictures of his father and his sister Laura. The boy gazed at the photographs a long while, and the tears filled his eyes as he did so.

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"Well, there is one thing sure!" he murmured to Roger. "At any rate, I am no longer a poorhouse nobody!"

"That's right, Dave," returned the senator's son, warmly. "Let me congratulate you. By that picture, your father must be a nice man, and your sister is handsome."

"And to think that they are rich," added Phil. "That's the best of all."

"No, the best of all is to find that I belong somewhere in this world—that I am not a nobody," answered Dave, earnestly.

"Won't Nat Poole and Gus Plum stare when they hear of this!" went on Roger. "I believe it will really make them feel sore."

"Ben and Sam and the others will be glad," said Phil. "And I am sure Doctor Clay will want to congratulate you. Dave, it paid to take this trip to the South Seas, after all, didn't it?"

"I should say it did!" cried Dave. "I shouldn't have wanted to miss it for the world!"

For several days Dave felt as if he was dreaming and walking on air, his heart was so light. The more the boy saw of his uncle Dunston the more he liked the man, and Dunston Porter was equally pleased. Both had long talks regarding the past and the future, and it was agreed that the man should return to the United States for the time being and, instead of hunting for the treasure, trace up the present address of David Porter, senior, and Dave's sister Laura.

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"I wish to meet this Caspar Potts, and also the Wadsworths," said Dunston Porter. "If I can, I wish to repay them for all they have done for you."

"I am sure they will not take any money," answered the boy. "But they will be glad to meet you." Later on Dave took his uncle on board the *Stormy Petrel*, where Captain Marshall gave the newly found relative a very enthusiastic welcome.

The captain of the bark had thought to bring Jasper Van Blott before the authorities at Nanpi, but

was prevented by an accident, which came close to terminating fatally and sending the bark up into smoke and flames. Jasper Van Blott attempted to break out of the oil closet in the bow of the *Stormy Petrel*, and, in so doing, lit a match. This fell on some oily waste in a corner and, before an alarm could be given, the former supercargo was seriously burned, and the whole bow of the bark was on fire. Jasper Van Blott had to be taken to a hospital, where it was said he would lose the sight of one eye and be disfigured for life. Under such circumstances, it was decided to let the case against him drop. The damage to the *Stormy Petrel* was so serious that the bark had to be laid up for repairs, and, in such an out-of-the-way place, it was said these would take a month or six weeks.

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"This has certainly proved to be a strange voyage," said Roger. "I must say, I don't like the idea of staying here six weeks. I'd like to get back home."

"Just what I say," answered Dave.

In the port was what is known as a "tramp" steamer, that is, one picking up any cargo to be found, from one port to the next. This steamer had secured a cargo for San Francisco, and was to sail on the following Saturday.

"We might secure passage on her," suggested Dunston Porter, and inside of twenty-four hours it was arranged that he, with Dave and Roger, should sail on the steamer. Phil was to remain with Captain Marshall, to straighten out the mess left by Jasper Van Blott.

"But never mind," said the shipowner's son, when the chums came to separate, "I'll see you again, sooner or later—and then we'll talk over all the many adventures we have had."

Dave and Roger found the accommodations on the steamer fully as good as those on the bark, and the voyage to San Francisco passed pleasantly enough. As soon as the boys went ashore, they hurried to the post-office, where they found half a dozen letters awaiting them. One, from Ben Basswood to Dave, interested them greatly:

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"You will be glad to learn that Shadow Hamilton is cleared of the trouble that was laid at his door," so ran the communication. "Doctor Clay had somebody set a watch, and, as a consequence, it has been proved beyond a doubt that Gus Plum took the stamps from where Shadow placed them in his sleep. When Plum was accused, he said he didn't know they were the doctor's stamps. It seems he needed money, as his father is down in the world and has cut off Gus' spending allowance. There was a big row, but the Plum family is hushing the matter up, and I understand Doctor Clay has agreed to give Gus one more chance at Oak Hall."

"It is just like Doctor Clay to give him another chance," was Roger's comment. "He is as kind-hearted as any man in the world."

"If I ever go back to school, I hope I have no more trouble with Gus Plum," said Dave. But he did have trouble, of a most peculiar kind, and what it was will be told in another volume of this series, to be entitled: "Dave Porter's Return to School; Or, Winning the Medal of Honor." In this new volume we shall meet all our old friends once more, and learn something further of Dave's father and sister Laura.

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Dave did not depend on the mails, but, as soon as he could, had telegrams flashed to Crumville and to Doctor Clay, stating he had found an uncle and soon expected to meet his father and sister. Then the party of three took a Pullman train for the East.

"I can tell you it feels good to get back to the United States once more," said the senator's son, as the boys sat by the car window, looking at the scenery as it glided by.

"Do you know, it seems an age to me since we went away," declared Dave. "And yet, it is only a little over two months!"

"That is because so much has happened in the meantime, Dave. It was certainly a remarkable trip!"

"And the trip brought remarkable results," said Dunston Porter, with a quiet smile.

When Dave arrived at Crumville there was quite a gathering to receive him and the others. All the Wadsworths were there, including Jessie, who rushed straight into his arms, and Caspar Potts and Ben Basswood.

"Oh, I am so glad you are back!" cried Jessie.

"We are all glad," added Ben.

"We cannot bear to think of losing you, Dave," said Mrs. Wadsworth, anxiously. "You have become very dear to us all."

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"You are not going to lose me; that is, not altogether," answered the boy. "No matter what happens, I shall never forget all my old friends!"

And all shook hands warmly. And here, kind reader, let us take our departure.

THE END

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Transcriber's Notes:

Table of Contents, "278" changed to "288"

Page 193, "prepossessing" changed to "[prepossessing](#)" (far from prepossessing)

Page 271, "forcastle" changed to "[forecastle](#)" (place in the forecastle)

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