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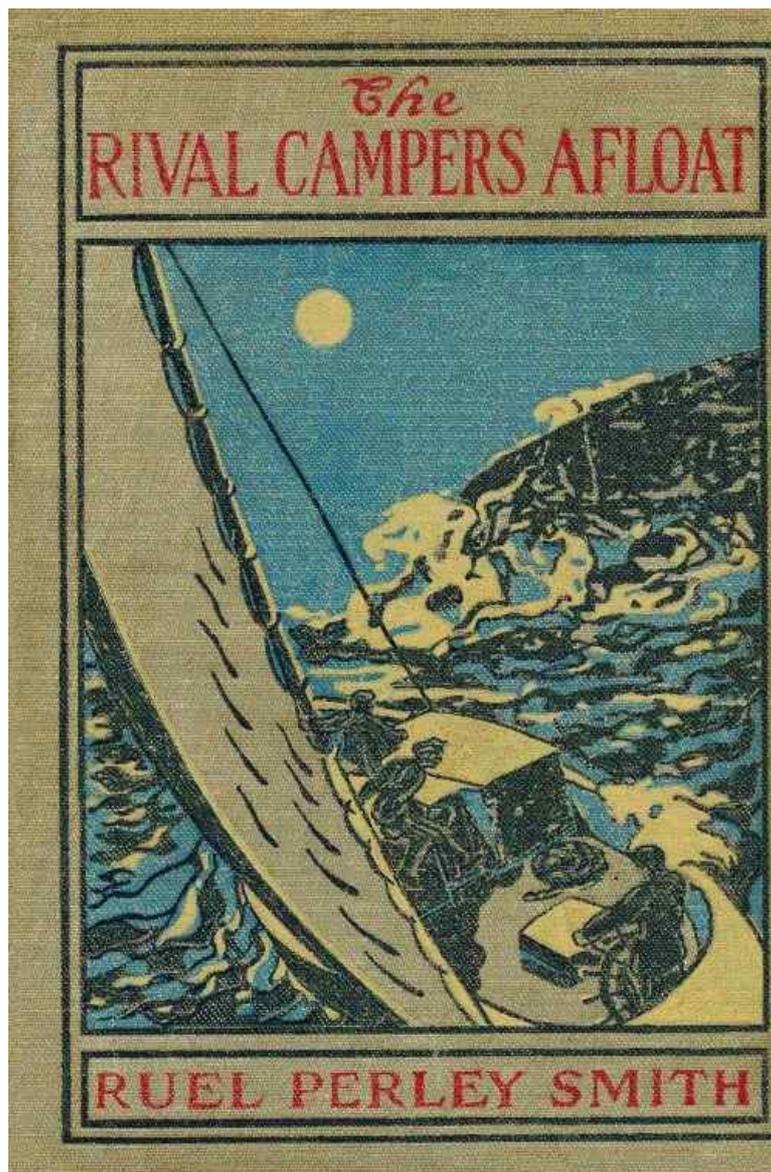
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE RIVAL CAMPERS AFLOAT; OR, THE PRIZE YACHT VIKING



The Rival Campers Afloat

Or, THE PRIZE YACHT VIKING

By
Ruel Perley Smith
Author of "The Rival Campers"

ILLUSTRATED BY
LOUIS D. GOWING

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[1]

THE RIVAL CAMPERS AFLOAT

CHAPTER I. DOWN THE RIVER

It was a pleasant afternoon in the early part of the month of June. The Samoset River, winding down prettily through hills and sloping farm lands to the bay of the same name, gleamed in the sunlight, now with a polished surface like ebony in some sheltered inlet, or again sparkling with innumerable points of light where its surface was whipped up into tiny waves by a brisk moving wind.

There had been rain for a few days before, and the weather was now clearing, with a smart westerly breeze that had come up in the morning, but was swinging in slightly to the southward. The great white cloud-banks had mostly passed on, and these were succeeded at present by swiftly moving clumps of smaller and lighter clouds, that drifted easily across the sky, like the sails below them over the surface of the water.

There were not a few of these sails upon the river, some set to the breeze and some furled; some of the craft going up with the tide toward the distant city of Benton, the head of vessel navigation; some breasting the tide and working their way down toward Samoset Bay; other and larger craft, with sails snugly furled, tagging along sluggishly at the heels of blustering little tugs,—each evidently much impressed with the importance of its mission,—and so going on and out to the open sea, where they would sail down the coast with their own great wings spread.

[2]

The river was, indeed, a picture of life and animation. It was a river with work to do, but it did it cheerfully and with a good spirit. Far up

above the city of Benton, it had brought the great log rafts down through miles of forest and farm land. Above and below the city, for miles, it had run bravely through sluice and mill-race, and turned the great wheels for the mills that sawed the forest stuff into lumber. And now, freed from all bounds and the restraint of dams and sluiceways, and no longer choked with its burden of logs, it was pleased to float the ships, loaded deep with the sawed lumber, down and away to other cities.

There was many a craft going down the river that afternoon. Here and there along the way was a big three or four masted schooner, loaded with ice or lumber, and bound for Baltimore or Savannah. Or, it might be, one would take notice of a trim Italian bark, carrying box-shooks, to be converted later into boxes for lemons and oranges. Then, farther southward, a schooner that had brought its catch to the Benton market, and was now working out again to the fishing-grounds among the islands of the bay.

Less frequently plied the river steamers that ran to and from the summer resorts in Samoset Bay; or, once a day, coming or going, the larger steamers that ran between Benton and Boston.

[3]

Amid all these, at a point some twenty miles down the river from Benton, there sailed a craft that was, clearly, not of this busy, hard-working fraternity of ships. It was a handsome little vessel, of nearly forty feet length, very shapely of hull and shining of spars; with a glint of brass-work here and there; its clean, white sides presenting a polished surface to the sunbeams; its rigging new and well set up, and a handsome new pennant flung to the breeze from its topmast.

The captain of many a coaster eyed her sharply as she passed; and, now and then, one would let his own vessel veer half a point off its course, while he took his pipe from his mouth and remarked, "There's a clean craft. Looks like she might go some." And then, probably, as he brought his own vessel back to its course, concluded with the usual salt-water man's comment, "Amateur sailors, I reckon. Humph!"

That remark, if made on this particular occasion, would have been apparently justifiable. If one might judge by their age, the skippers of this trim yacht should certainly have been classed as amateurs. There were two of them. The larger, a youth of about sixteen or seventeen years of age, held the wheel and tended the main-sheet. The other, evidently a year or two younger, sat ready to tend the jib-sheets on either side as they tacked, shifting his seat accordingly. The yacht was beating down the river against the last of a flood-tide.

"We're doing finely, Henry," said the elder boy, as he glanced admiringly at the set of the mainsail, and then made a general proud survey of the craft from stem to stern and from cabin to topmast. "She does walk along like a lady and no mistake. She beats the *Surprise*—poor old boat! My, but I often think of that good little yacht I owned, sunk down there in the thoroughfare. We had lots of fun in her. But this one certainly more than takes her place."

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"Who would ever have thought," he continued,

“when we saw the strange men sail into the harbour last year, with this yacht, that she would turn out to be a stolen craft, and that she would one day be put up for sale, and that old Mrs. Newcome would buy her for us? It’s like a story in a book.”

“It’s better than any story I ever read, Jack,” responded the other boy. “It’s a story with a stroke of luck at the end of it—and that’s better than some of them turn out. But say, don’t you think you better let me take my trick at the wheel? You know you are going to teach me how to sail her. I don’t expect to make much of a fist of it, at the start; but I’ve picked up quite a little bit of yacht seamanship from my sailing with the Warren boys.”

“That’s so,” conceded the other. “You must have got a pretty good notion of how to sail a boat, by watching them. Here, take the wheel. But you’ll find that practice in real sailing, and just having it in your head from watching others, are two different things. However, you’ll learn fast. I never knew any one who had any sort of courage, and any natural liking toward boat-sailing, but what he could pick it up fast, if he kept his eyes open.

[5]

“The first thing to do, to learn to sail a boat, is to take hold in moderate weather and work her yourself. And the next thing, is to talk to the fishermen and the yachtsmen, and listen when they get to spinning yarns and arguing. You can get a lot of information in that way that you can use, yourself, later on.”

The younger boy took the wheel, while the other sat up alongside, directing his movements. But first he took the main-sheet and threw off several turns, where he had had it belayed on the cleat back of the wheel, and fastened it merely with a slip-knot, that could be loosed with a single smart pull on the free end.

“We won’t sail with the sheet fast until you have had a few weeks at it, Henry,” he said. “There are more boats upset from sheets fast at the wrong time, or from main-sheets with kinks in them, that won’t run free when a squall hits, than from almost any other cause. And the river is a lot worse in that way than the open bay, for the flaws come quicker and sharper off these high banks.”

Henry Bums, with the wheel in hand and an eye to the luff of the sail, as of one not wholly inexperienced, made no reply to the other’s somewhat patronizing manner; but a quiet smile played about the corners of his mouth. If he had any notion that the other’s extreme care was not altogether needed, he betrayed no sign of impatience, but took it in good part. Perhaps he realized that common failing of every yachtsman, to think that there is nobody else in all the world that can sail a boat quite as well as himself.

He knew, too, that Jack Harvey had, indeed, had by far a larger experience in sailing than he, though he had spent much of his time upon the water.

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In any event, his handling of the boat now evidently satisfied the critical watchfulness of Jack Harvey; for that youth presently exclaimed,

"That's it. Oh, you are going to make a skipper, all right. You take hold with confidence, too, and that's a good part of the trick."

At this point in their sailing, however, the yacht *Viking* seemed to have attracted somewhat more than the casual attention of an observer from shore. A little less than a quarter of a mile down the river, on a wharf that jutted some distance out from the bank, so that the river as it ran swerved swiftly by its spiling, a man stood waving to them.

"Hello," said Henry Burns, espying the figure on the wharf, "there's a tribute to the beauty of the *Viking*. Somebody probably thinks this is the president's yacht and is saluting us."

"Well, he means us, sure enough," replied Jack Harvey, "and no joke, either. He's really waving. He wants to hail us."

The man had his hat in hand and was, indeed, waving it to them vigorously.

They had been standing across the river in an opposite direction to the wharf; but now, as Jack Harvey cast off the leeward jib-sheets, Henry Burns put the helm over, and the yacht swung gracefully and swiftly up into the wind and headed off on the tack inshore. Jack Harvey let the jibs flutter for a moment, until the yacht had come about, and Henry Burns had begun to check her from falling off the wind, by reversing the wheel. Then he quickly trimmed in on the sheets, and the jibs began to draw.

"Most beginners," he said, "trim the jib in flat on the other side the minute they cast off the leeward sheet. But that delays her in coming about."

Again the quiet smile on the face of Henry Burns, but he merely answered, "That's so."

They stood down abreast the wharf and brought her up, with sails fluttering. Jack Harvey, looking up from the side to the figure above on the wharf, called out, "Hello, were you waving to us?"

"Why, yes," responded the man, "I was. Are you going down the river far?"

"Bound down to Southport," said Harvey.

"Good!" exclaimed the stranger, and added, confidently, "I'll go along with you part way, if you don't mind. I'm on my way to Burton's Landing, five miles below, and the steamboat doesn't come along for three hours yet. I cannot get a carriage and I don't want to walk. You don't mind giving me a lift, do you? That's a beautiful boat of yours, by the way."

The man had an air of easy assurance; and, besides, the request was one that any yachtsman would willingly grant.

"Why, certainly," replied Harvey, "we'll take you, eh, Henry?"

"Pleased to do it," responded Henry Burns.

They worked the yacht up alongside the wharf, and the stranger, grasping a stay, swung himself off and leaped down on to the deck. Then he

pushed the boat's head off with a vigorous shove and advanced, smilingly, with hand extended, to greet the boys. The *Viking* gathered headway and was once more going down-stream.

The stranger was a rather tall, well-built man, light on his feet, and handled himself as though he were no novice aboard a boat. He descended into the cockpit and shook hands with Jack Harvey and Henry Burns.

His voice, as he bade them good afternoon, was singularly full and deep, and seemed to issue almost oddly from behind a heavy, blond moustache. As Henry Burns expressed it afterward, it reminded him of a ventriloquist he had seen once with a travelling show, because the man's lips seemed hardly to move, and the muscles of his face scarcely changed as he spoke. His eyes, of a clear but cold blue, lighted up, however, in a pleasant way, as he thanked them.

He wore a suit of navy blue, and a yachting-cap on his head.

"This is the greatest luck in the world for me," he said. "You see, I want to catch the train that will take me down to Bellport, and I can get it at the Landing below. This fine craft of yours will take me—"

He stopped with strange abruptness. If the attention of Jack Harvey and Henry Burns had, by chance, been directed more closely to him, and less upon the handling of their yacht, they might have observed a surprised and puzzled look come over his face. They might have observed him half-start up from his seat, like a man that had suddenly come, all unwittingly, upon a thing he had not expected to see.

But the two boys, intent upon their sailing, noticed only that the man had left a sentence half-finished. They turned upon him inquiringly.

"What were you going to say?" asked Henry Burns.

The man settled back in his seat, reached a hand calmly into an inner coat-pocket, and drew forth a cigar-case.

"I dare say you don't smoke," he said, offering it to them. "No, well, I didn't think so. You're a little bit young for that. Let me see, what was I saying?—oh, yes, I was about to remark that this boat would take me down to the Landing on time. She does walk along prettily, and no mistake."

With which, he lighted the cigar and began puffing enjoyably. But his eyes darted here and there, quickly, sharply, over the boat. Through a cloud of cigar smoke, he was scrutinizing it from one end to the other.

"You handle her well," he said. "Had her long?"

"Why, no," replied Harvey. "The fact is, though we have had other boats—that is, I have—and we have handled others, this is our first sail in this one. You see, we got her in an odd way, last season—just at the close of the season, in fact; and she was not in shape for sailing then. So we had to lay her up for the winter. This is really

the first trying out we have given her.”

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“Indeed, most interesting,” replied the stranger, arising from his seat and advancing toward the cabin bulkhead, where he stood, apparently gazing off across the river. Then, as he returned to his seat again, he added, “That’s rather an elaborate ornamenting of brass around the companionway.”

“Isn’t it, though!” exclaimed Harvey, proudly. “You don’t see them much handsomer than that often, eh?”

“Why, no, now you speak of it,” replied the man. “You don’t, and that’s a fact.”

“In fact,” he added, stealing a sidelong glance at the two boys, “it’s the only one just like it that I ever saw.”

“Pretty shore along here, isn’t it?” he remarked a few moments later, as they stood in near to where the spruces came down close to the water’s edge, with the ledges showing below. “What’s that you were saying about coming by the boat oddly? She looks to me as though your folks must have paid a good price for her.”

“Why, that’s the odd part of it,” answered Harvey. “The fact is, our folks didn’t pay for her at all. An old lady bought her for us. Made us a present of her. Perhaps you’d like to hear about it.”

“Indeed I should,” replied the stranger. “It will while away the time to the Landing.”

“You tell it, Henry,” said Harvey.

So Henry Burns began, while the stranger stretched his legs out comfortably and listened.

“Well,” said Henry Burns, “this yacht, the *Viking*, was named the *Eagle* when we first saw her.”

The stranger’s cigar was almost blazing with the vigour of his smoking.

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“She came into the harbour of Southport—that’s on Grand Island, below here, where we are bound—one day last summer, to pick up a guest at the hotel. There were two men aboard her, and it turned out that these two men, and the man they were after at the hotel, had committed a robbery at Benton. That’s way up the river.”

“Well, it’s a long story how they were discovered; but they were, and some jewels they had hidden were recovered. I said they were captured—but one, a man named Chambers, got away in this very yacht. But he came back, later, and set fire to the hotel for revenge.”

“That was along toward the end of the summer. Then it happened that Jack, here,—Jack Harvey,—captured the man, Chambers, in this yacht, down in a thoroughfare below Grand Island. Jack’s boat, the *Surprise*, was sunk there, when the two yachts crashed together, bow on.”

“Poor old *Surprise!*” interrupted Jack Harvey.

“Well, then,” continued Henry Burns, “there is a man over at Southport, Squire Brackett, that hates all us boys, just because he is mean. He

told Witham, the hotel proprietor, that he had seen us boys in the hotel basement, shortly before the fire; and he and Witham had us accused of setting it, although everybody in Southport was indignant about it. And all this time, Jack was on the right track, because he had seen the man running from the fire and had followed him over to the other shore of the island, and recognized the boat he sailed away in.

“So Jack sailed down the other side of the island, and captured the man, Chambers, in the thoroughfare; that is, Jack and his crew did. And they brought Chambers back just at the right time—and Squire Brackett and Witham were so ashamed they wanted to go and hide away somewhere.”

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The man they had taken aboard looked smilingly at Henry Burns.

“That is certainly a remarkable story,” he said, knocking the ashes carelessly from the end of his cigar.

“Yes, but the rest of it is the oddest part of it,” responded Henry Burns. “There was an old lady named Mrs. Newcome, whose life we saved at the fire. She was furious at the squire and Witham for blaming us, and thankful enough when Jack got us out of it.

“Now, when Chambers was tried, he was so bitter against the other two who had got him into trouble, he confessed the yacht did not belong to any one of them. So the yacht was taken over by the sheriff, and advertisements were sent out all around to try to find the rightful owner. But they never did find him, and finally the yacht was condemned and put up for sale. There is where old Mrs. Newcome came in. She has no end of money, and no one to spend it on except herself and a cat. The yacht went cheap, and what did she do but buy it in and give it to us.”

Henry Burns paused, and there was silence for a few moments aboard the *Viking*. The stranger smoked without speaking, apparently lost in his own thoughts.

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“That’s all of the yarn,” said Henry Burns, at length.

The man started to his feet, tossed his cigar away, and walked forward, with his hands in his pockets.

“That’s one of the oddest stories I ever heard,” he said. “You’re lucky chaps, aren’t you? Sounds like some novels I’ve read. By the way, isn’t that Burton’s Landing just ahead there?”

He seemed eager to get ashore.

“Yes, that is the Landing,” answered Harvey.

A few moments more and they were up to it, and the stranger was stepping ashore upon the pier.

“Well,” he said, shaking hands with them again, “I’m much obliged to both of you—really more than I can begin to tell you. Perhaps I can return the favour some day. My name is Charles Carleton. Live around at hotels pretty much, but spend most of my time in Boston. Hope I meet

you again some day. Perhaps I may be down this way later, down the bay somewhere, if I like the looks of it, and the hotels. Good day."

"Good day; you're very welcome," called out Henry Burns and Jack Harvey.

Again the yacht swung out into the river, gathering headway quickly and skimming along, heeling very gently.

The strange man stood watching her from the pier.

"No," he said, softly, to himself, "I never saw but one boat just like her before. But who would have thought I should run across them the first thing? That was a stroke of luck."

[14]

[15]

CHAPTER II. THE COLLISION

"Pleasant sort of a man, wasn't he?" commented Harvey, as the *Viking* left the pier astern, and the stranger could be seen walking briskly up the road toward the town.

"Why, yes, he was, in a way," responded Henry Burns. "Most persons manage to make themselves agreeable while one is doing them a favour. Really, though, he isn't one of the open, hearty kind, though he did try to be pleasant. I don't know why I think so, but he seemed sort of half-concealed behind that big moustache."

Harvey laughed.

"That's a funny notion," he said.

"Well," responded Henry Burns, "of course it wasn't just that. But, at any rate, he is the kind of a man that has his own way about things. Did you notice, he didn't exactly ask us to take him into the boat. He said, right out at the start, that he was going along with us—of course, if we were willing. But he was bound to come aboard, just the same, whether we were willing or not."

"Hm!" said Harvey. "You do take notice of things, don't you? I didn't pay any attention to what he said; but, now I think of it, he did have that sort of way. However, we shall probably never set eyes on him again, so what's the odds?"

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They were getting down near to the mouth of the river now, and already, a mile ahead, the bay broadened out before their eyes.

The wind was blowing brisk, almost from the south by this time, and the first of the ebb-tide running down against it caused a meeting between the two that was not peaceful. At the point where river and bay blended, and for some distance back up the river, there was a heavy chop-sea tumbling and breaking in short, foam-capped waves. Farther out in the bay there was considerable of a sea running.

Harvey, lounging lazily on the seat opposite Henry Burns, suddenly sprang up and uttered an

exclamation of surprise. Then he pointed on far ahead, over the port bow, to a tiny object that bobbed in the troubled waters of the river, low lying and indistinct.

"What do you make of that, Henry?" he cried.

"Why, it looks like a log from one of the mills up above," replied the other, after he had observed it with some difficulty. "Oh, no, it isn't," he exclaimed the next moment. "There is something alive on it—or in it. Say, you don't suppose it can be Tom Harris and Bob White, do you? That is a canoe, I believe."

Without waiting to reply, Jack Harvey dodged quickly down the companionway, and returned, a moment later, from the cabin, holding a spy-glass in one hand.

"Hooray! clap that to your eye, Henry," he cried, when he had taken a hasty survey ahead with it.

"That's it!" exclaimed Henry Burns, taking a long look through the glass, while Harvey assumed his place at the wheel. "There they are, two of them, paddling away for good old Southport as hard as ever they can. There are two boys, as I make them out. Yes, it's Tom and Bob, sure as you live. Won't it seem like old times, though, to overhaul them? You keep the wheel, Jack. We can't catch up with them any too soon to suit me."

[17]

"Shall we give them a salute?" cried Harvey.

"No, let's sail up on them and give them a surprise," suggested the other. "They know we own the boat, but they haven't seen her under sail since we have had her. They may not recognize us."

While the yacht *Viking* was parting the still moderate waves with its clean-cut bows, and laying a course that would bring it up with the canoe in less than a half-hour, the occupants of the tiny craft were bending hard to their paddles, pushing head on into the outer edge of the chop-sea. They were making good time, despite the sea and the head wind.

"There go a couple of them Indians from away up the river yonder," sang out a man forward on a stubby, broad-bowed coaster to the man at the wheel, as the canoe passed a two-master beating across the river. The boys in the canoe chuckled.

"Guess we must be getting good and black, Bob," said the boy who wielded the stern paddle to the other in the bow. "And our first week on the water, at that, for the season."

"Yes, we've laid the first coat on pretty deep," responded his companion, glancing with no little pride and satisfaction at a pair of brown and muscular arms and a pair of sunburned shoulders, revealed to good advantage by a blue, sleeveless jersey that looked as though it had seen more than one summer's outing.

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"What do you think of the bay, Tom?" he added, addressing the other boy. This youth, similarly clad and similarly bronzed and reddened, was handling his paddle like a practised steersman and was directing the canoe's course straight down the bay, as though aiming fair at some

point far away on an island that showed vaguely fifteen miles distant.

"Oh, it's all right," answered Tom. "It's all right for this evening. Plenty of rough water from now until seven or eight o'clock to-night, but it's just the usual sea that a southerly raises in the bay. We won't get into any such scrape as we did last year, when we came down here, not knowing the bay nor the coast of Grand Island, and let a storm catch us and throw us out pell-mell on the shore. We'll not give our friends, the Warren boys, another such a fright this year. We can get across all right—that is, if you don't mind a bit of a splashing over the bows."

"It won't be the first time,—nor the last, for that matter, I reckon," responded Bob.

"And I always get my share of it, in the end, too," said the other boy; "because when it sprays aboard it runs down astern and I have to kneel in it. Well, on we go, then. It's fifteen miles of rough water, but think how we'll eat when we get there."

"Won't we?" agreed Bob. "Say, now you speak of it, I'm hungry already. I could eat as much as young Joe Warren used to every time he took dinner at the hotel. He used to try to make old Witham lose money—do you remember?—and I think he always won."

"Hello!" he exclaimed, a moment later, as he looked back for an instant toward the stem. "Just glance around, Tom, and take a look at that yacht coming down the river. Isn't she a beauty? I wouldn't mind a summer's cruise in her, myself."

"Whew!" exclaimed the other, as he held his paddle hard against the gunwale and glanced back. "She is a pretty one, and no mistake. She's about as fine as we often see down this way. I don't recall seeing anything handsomer in the shape of a yacht around the bay last summer, unless it was the one Chambers had—you know, the man that set the hotel afire."

"I believe it is the very yacht," he continued. "There isn't another one like it around here. You remember the boys wintered her down the river."

"Yes, but wouldn't they hail us?" asked Bob.

"Perhaps not," answered Tom. "Henry Burns likes to surprise people. They are due down the bay about this time. At any rate, we shall have a chance to see the yacht close aboard, for she is heading dead up for us."

The yacht *Viking* was indeed holding up into the wind on a course that would bring her directly upon the canoemen, if she did not go about. She kept on, and presently the boys in the canoe ceased their paddling and watched her approach.

"She won't run us down, will she, Tom?"

"No, they see us, all right."

There was evidence of this the next moment, for a small cannon, somewhere forward on the deck of the yacht, gave a short, spiteful bark that made the canoemen jump. There followed

immediately the deep bellowing of a big fog-horn and the clattering of a huge dinner-bell; while, at the same time, two yachtsmen aboard the strange craft appeared at the rail, waving and blowing and ringing alternately at the occupants of the canoe. A moment later, the yacht rounded to a short distance up-wind from the canoe, and the hail of familiar voices came across the water:

"Ahoy, you chaps in that canoe, there! Come aboard here, lively now, if you don't want that cockle-shell blown out of water. Hurry up before we get the cannon trained on you! We know you, Tom Harris, and you, Bob White, and you can't escape."

"Well, what do you think!" exclaimed Tom Harris, raising himself up from his knees in the stem of the canoe, with a hand on either gunwale, "if there isn't that old Henry Burns and Jack Harvey. Say, where in the world did you fellows steal that yacht, and where are you running off to with it? Don't tell us you own it. You know you don't."

"Just hurry up and come alongside here and we'll show you," cried Henry Burns, joyfully. "Our ship's papers are all right, eh, Jack?"

The boys in the canoe needed no urging. A few sharp thrusts with the paddles brought them under the lee of the *Viking*; a line thrown aboard by Bob White was caught by Harvey and made fast; and the next moment, Bob White and Tom Harris were in the cockpit, mauling Henry Burns with mock ferocity—a proceeding which was received by that young gentleman serenely, but with interest well returned—and shaking hands with the other stalwart young skipper, Jack Harvey.

The bow-line of the canoe was carried astern by Harvey and tied, so that the canoe would tow behind; and the yacht was put on her course again.

"You don't mind taking a spin for a way in the good ship *Viking*, do you?" asked Harvey. "I have hardly seen you since we got this yacht, you know, as my folks moved up to Boston the last of the summer."

"We will go along a little way till we strike the worst of the chop," replied Tom Harris. "Our canoe will not tow safely through that. That is, we will, if you allow Indians aboard."

"Yes, and by the way, before anybody else has the chance to apply," said Bob White, "you don't want to hire a couple of foremast hands, do you, off and on during the summer? I'd be proud to swab the decks of this boat, and wages of no account."

"We'll engage both of you at eighteen sculpins a week," answered Henry Burns. "But of course you know that the laws against flogging seamen don't go, aboard here. Harvey there, he is my first mate; and I make it a rule to beat him with a belaying-pin three or four times a day, regular, to keep him up to his work. Of course you forecastle chaps will get it worse."

Harvey, surveying his more slender companion, saluted with great deference.

"How do you fellows happen to be up here?" he asked. "Haven't you gone to camping yet?"

"Yes," replied Bob. "The old tent is down there on the point. We have had it set up for three days. We had an errand that brought us up here."

"And the Warren boys?" inquired Henry Burns.

"Oh, they are down there in the cottage, sort of camping out, too; that is, the family hasn't arrived yet. George and Arthur are working like slaves trying to keep young Joe fed."

"*He's* a whole famine in himself," remarked Henry Burns.

"Say, how is old Mrs. Newcome's cat, Henry, the one you saved from the fire?" asked Tom Harris.

"Why, the cat hasn't written me lately," answered Henry Burns. "But I got a letter from Mrs. Newcome a few weeks ago; said she hoped we would have a good summer in the yacht, lots of fun, and all that."

"My! but you are lucky," exclaimed Bob. "I have been as polite as mice to every cat I've seen all winter, but I haven't received any presents for it."

Renewing old acquaintanceships in this manner, they were shortly in rougher water.

"Here!" cried Tom Harris at length, "we must be getting out of this. That canoe will not stand towing in this chop much longer. We shall have to leave you."

"Pull it in aboard," said Jack Harvey.

"No, it would be in the way," replied Tom Harris. "Just as much obliged to you. We'll meet you at the camp. Say that you will come ashore and eat supper with us, and Bob will have one of those fine chowders waiting for you; won't you, Bob?"

"Ay, ay, sir," replied Bob.

"You mean that you will cook one while we sit by and watch you, don't you?" asked Harvey. "We shall get there before you do."

"Perhaps not," returned Bob. "You have got to beat down, while we push right through. It is four o'clock now, and there's some fourteen miles to go. We can do that in about three hours, because when we get across the bay we can go close alongshore under the lee, in smooth water; while you will have to stick to the rough part of the bay most of the time."

"All right," said Harvey, "we will have a race to see who gets there first. But we'll do it in half that time."

So saying, he luffed the *Viking* into the wind, while Bob White drew the dancing canoe alongside. The canoeists and the yachtsmen parted company, the *Viking's* sails filling with the breeze, as she quickly gathered headway, throwing the spray lightly from her bows; the canoe plunging stubbornly into the rough water, and forcing its way slowly ahead, propelled by the energy of strong young arms.

The *Viking* stood over on the starboard tack, while the canoe made a direct course for the island; and the two craft were soon far apart. In the course of a half-hour the canoe appeared from the deck of the *Viking* a mere dancing, foam-dashed object. But, in the meantime, another boat had appeared, some way ahead, that attracted the attention and interest of the yachtsmen. It was a small sailboat, carrying a mainsail and single jib. The smaller yacht was coming up to them from the direction of Grand Island, and was now running almost squarely before the wind, with its jib flapping to little purpose, save that it now and then filled for a moment on one side or the other, as the breeze happened to catch it.

"There's a boat that is being badly sailed," exclaimed Harvey, as the two watched its progress. "Look at it pitch; and look at that boom, how near it comes to hitting the waves every time it rolls. There's a chap that doesn't know enough, evidently, to top up his boom when running in a seaway. What does he think topping-lifts are made for, anyway, if not to lift the boom out of the reach of a sea like this?"

"And let me tell you, running square before the wind in a heavy sea, with a boat rolling like that, is reckless business, anyway. It is much better to lay a course not quite so direct, and run with the wind not squarely astern, with the sheet hauled in some. That's no fisherman sailing that boat."

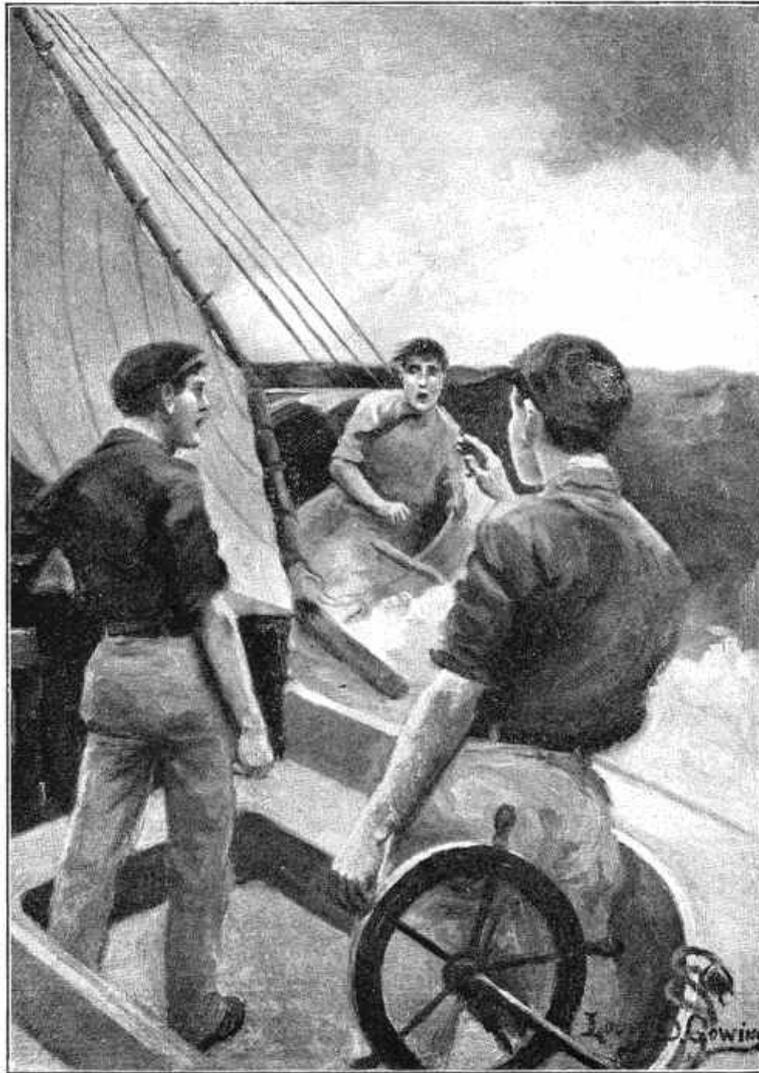
"It may be some one caught out who doesn't know how to get back," said Henry Burns. "See, there he is, waving to us. He is in some trouble or other. Let's stand on up close to him and see what the matter is."

"Well, I'll take the chance," replied Harvey. "There, he's doing better now. He is pointing up a little bit. We'll keep on this tack and run pretty close to him, and hail him. I'll just sing out to him about that topping-lift, anyway; and if he doesn't like our interfering, why he can come aboard and thrash us."

As the sailboat drew nearer, there appeared to be a single occupant, a youth of about Harvey's age, perhaps a year older, holding the tiller. His hat was gone and he was standing up, with hair dishevelled, glaring wildly ahead, in a confused sort of way. The boom of the sailboat was well out on the starboard side. Harvey kept the *Viking* on the starboard tack, and near enough to have passed quite close to the other boat.

A little too close, in fact, considering that the youth at the tiller of the oncoming boat had, indeed, completely lost his head. Suddenly, without warning, he put his tiller over so that the sailboat headed away from the *Viking* for an instant. Then, as the wind got back of his sail, and the boat at the same time rolled heavily in the seas, the boom jibed with terrific force. The sailboat swung in swiftly toward the starboard beam of the *Viking*, and the wind and sea knocked it down so that the water poured in over the side, threatening to swamp it. At the instant, Jack Harvey had thrown the *Viking* off the wind to avoid a crash with the other boat. The boom of the sailboat swept around with amazing swiftness, and then, as the boat careened, threatening to founder, the end of the boom brought up with a smashing blow against

the *Viking's* starboard quarter, breaking off several feet of the boom and tearing the sail badly.



"THE BOOM BROUGHT UP WITH A SMASHING BLOW AGAINST THE VIKING'S STARBOARD QUARTER."

The sailboat, half-filled with water, fell heavily into the trough of the sea and rolled threateningly; while at every pitch the boom struck the waves as though it would break again.

The *Viking*, under Jack Harvey's guidance, stood away a short distance, then came about and beat up in to the wind a rod or two above the wreck.

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"Get that mainsail down as quick as ever you can!" shouted Jack Harvey to the strange youth, who had dropped the tiller, and who stood now at the rail, dancing about frantically, as though he intended to jump overboard.

"I can't," cried the youth, tremulously. "Oh, come aboard here quick, won't you? I'm going to sink and drown. This boat's going down. I don't know how to handle her."

"We guessed that," remarked Henry Burns, and added, reassuringly, "Don't lose your head now. You know where the halyards are. Go ahead and get your sail down, and we'll stand by and help you."

Henry Burns's calm manner seemed to instil a spark of courage into the youth. He splashed his way up to the cabin bulkhead, where the

halyards were belayed on cleats on either side, and let them run. The sail dropped a little way and then stuck. The youth turned to the other boys appealingly.

"Pull up on your peak-halyard a little," said Jack Harvey, "and let the throat drop first a way. Then the throat won't stick."

The youth made another attempt and the sail came nearly down, hanging in bagging folds.

"Lucky that's not a heavy sail nor a heavy boom," exclaimed Jack Harvey, "or the boat would be over and sunk by this time. I think I could lift the boom inboard if I could only get aboard there."

"Here," cried Harvey, coiling up a light, strong line that he had darted into the cabin after, "catch this and make it fast up forward—and mind you tie a knot that will hold."

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He threw the line across, and it was clutched by the boy aboard the smaller boat. The boy carried it forward and did as Harvey had directed.

"Now," said Harvey to Henry Burns, as he made fast the line astern, "the moment we get near enough so that I can jump aboard, you bring the *Viking* right on her course, with a good full, so she won't drift back on to the wreck completely."

He, himself, held the wheel of the *Viking* long enough to allow the yacht to come into the wind a little. Thus it lost headway sufficiently so that the seas caused it to drift back, without its coming about or losing all steerageway. Then, as the *Viking* drifted within reach of the smaller boat, he leaped quickly and landed safely on the deck. At the same time, or an instant later, Henry Burns threw the wheel of the *Viking* over so that the yacht gathered headway again and tautened the rope that connected the two boats.

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CHAPTER III. A RESCUE UNREWARDED

Harvey, having landed on the deck of the sailboat, steadied himself by grasping the starboard stay, and took a quick, comprehensive glance over the situation. A foot and a half or so of the boom had split off from the end, and the mainsail was badly torn. The main-sheet had been snapped by the jibing of the boom, but the break in the boom was beyond the point where the sheet was fastened. The broken end of the sheet was trailing in the water. The boat could be got in hand if that were regained.

Seizing the end of the main-sheet that remained in the boat, and casting it loose from the cleat, Harvey found he had still the use of a rope of considerable length. Coiling this up, and hanging it over one arm, he regained the deck, over the small cabin, and took up his position on the port side of the boat. The stay on that side had been saved from carrying away only because the quarter of the *Viking* had arrested

the force of the boom. Having this stay, then, to hold fast to, Harvey leaned over the side, as far as he was able, passed an end of the rope about the boom, took a turn, and made it fast.

Carrying the other end aft, Harvey handed it to the youth, who stood gazing at his efforts stupidly, evidently knowing not in the least what to do.

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"Now you hold on to that," said Harvey, "and when I tell you to, you haul as hard as ever you can."

The youth took the rope silently and sullenly.

Harvey sprang again upon the deck, caught the flying ends of the halyards and ran the mainsail up. It was slow work, for the sail was soaked with water, and the tear in it began to rip more when the strain was brought to bear. When Harvey had hoisted the sail sufficiently so that the topping-lift would have lifted the boom, he started for that; but it had parted, and was of no use.

"Well," said Harvey, "we'll get the boom up a little more, with the sail, no matter if it does tear. We can't help it."

So he took another pull at the peak-halyard. The boom lifted a little.

"That's enough," said Harvey. "Now haul in on that sheet lively, before the sail tears any more. Get that boom in quick!"

The youth, with no great spirit nor heartiness in his movements, did as directed, and the boom came inboard. Then Harvey once more dropped the sail.

He was brim full of life, was Jack Harvey, and now that there was something here worth doing, and necessary to be done quickly, he was eager with the spirit of it.

"Have you got anything aboard here to bail with?" he asked, hurriedly; and, without waiting for the more sluggish movements of the other, he darted forward, through the water in the cockpit, to where he had espied a pail half-submerged under the seat. With this he began bailing furiously, dipping up the pailfuls and dashing them out over the side, as though the boat were sinking and he had but one chance for life in a hundred.

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Harvey was working in this way, with never a thought of his companion, when presently there came a hail from the *Viking*. He paused and looked across the water to where Henry Burns was standing at the wheel of the larger craft, with a look of amusement on his face.

"I say, Jack," called Henry Burns, drawling very slightly, as was his habit at times when other youths of more excitable temperament would speak quickly, "that other chap aboard there is just dying to help bail the boat. Why don't you let him do his share of it?"

Harvey glanced back astern at his companion of the sailboat. What he saw caused an angry flush to spread over his face. But the next moment the cool effrontery of it made him laugh.

The youth whom Harvey's surprised gaze rested upon was a rather tall, thin, sallow chap, with an expression on his face that looked like a perpetual sneer. He wore no yachting costume nor clothing of any sort fit for roughing it. Instead, he was rather flashily dressed, in clothes more often affected by men of sporting propensities than youths of any age. In a scarf of brilliant and gaudy tint he wore a large pin in the form of a horseshoe, with imitation brilliants in it. In fact, his dress and whole demeanour were of one who had a far more intimate knowledge of certain phases of life than he should. A telltale smear upon the fingers of his right hand told of the smoking habit, which accounted for his thin and sallow appearance—and which habit was now in evidence.

It was this latter that particularly angered Harvey, as he paused, perspiring, from his work.

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The youth had seated himself calmly on the edge of the after-rail, with an elbow rested on one knee. In this comfortable attitude, and smoking a cigarette, he was aimlessly watching Harvey work.

Harvey glared for a moment in amazement. Then his face relaxed.

"I say!" he exclaimed, throwing down the pail, wiping his brow, and advancing aft toward the other youth, "this seems to be a sort of afternoon tea, or reception, with cigarettes provided by the host."

"No, thanks," he added, shortly, as the other reached a hand into his pocket and proffered a box of them. "You're just too kind and generous for anything. But I don't smoke them. Some of my crew used to. But I tell little Tim Reardon that that's what keeps him from growing any. He's at them all the time. Guess you are, too, by the looks of you."

Harvey glanced rather contemptuously at the lean, attenuated arm that the other displayed, where he had rolled his cuffs back.

"Well, you don't have to smoke them if you don't want to," said the other, surlily. "But don't preach. I'm as old as you are. My smoking is my business."

"Of course it is," said Harvey. "I don't care whether you smoke or not. But what I object to is your doing the smoking and letting me do the work. Your smoking is your business, and so is bailing out your own boat your business—that is, your share of it is. Now, if you want any more help from me, you just break up this smoking party and take that pail and go to bailing. I've got enough to keep me busy while you are doing that."

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The youth glanced angrily at Harvey, but made no reply. Harvey's stalwart figure forbade any unpleasant retort. Sullenly, he tossed away the half-finished cigarette, slumped down once more into the cockpit, took up the pail that Harvey had dropped, and went to work.

"He looks like a real man now," called out Henry Burns.

The youth, with eyes flashing, shot one glance at

the smiling face of Henry Burns, but deigned no reply.

Harvey, without further notice of his companion, proceeded to hoist the sail a little so that he could take two reefs in it. This brought the sail down so small as to include the torn part in that tied in. The sail would, therefore, answer for the continuation of the trip.

"Say," asked Harvey finally, "why didn't you reef before, when it began to blow up fresh and the sea got a bit nasty? You might have saved all this."

The youth hesitated, glanced at Harvey sheepishly, and mumbled something that sounded like he didn't know why he hadn't.

"Hm!" said Harvey, under his breath. "He didn't know enough."

"Well," he continued, after a little time, "you're all right to start off again, if you think you can get along. That sail is down so small it won't give you any more trouble, and there is plenty of it to keep headway on the boat; that is, if you are going on up the bay. Where are you bound for, anyway?"

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"Up to Springton," replied the other. "Straight ahead."

"All right," said Harvey, "you can get there if you will only be a little more careful. Don't try to run straight for the town. Keep off either way—do you see?" And Harvey designated how the other could run in safety.

"Run on one course a way," he said, continuing, "and then put her about and run on the other. But look out and don't jibe her. Let her come about into the wind. Now do you think you can get along?"

"Yes," answered the youth, shortly. He had by this time finished his bailing, and the cockpit floor was fairly free of water.

"Well, then, I'll bid you an affectionate farewell," said Harvey, who had taken mental note of the fact that the youth had not offered to thank him for all his trouble. "Sorry to leave you, but the best of friends must part, you know. Good day."

"Good day," answered the youth, without offering even to shake hands.

Harvey lost little time in regaining the deck of the *Viking*. Henry Burns was still smiling as Harvey took the wheel from him.

"We seem to have made a very pleasant acquaintance," he said.

"Haven't we though!" exclaimed Harvey. "If we were only in some nice, quiet harbour, where the water wasn't very deep, I'd just see whether that young chap can swim or not. He'd get one ducking—"

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"Oh, by the way," called Henry Burns, as the two boats were separating, "you're entirely welcome to our assistance, you know. You needn't write us a letter thanking us. We know your feelings are just too deep for thanks."

"Little thanks I owe you," snarled the other boy. "Twas all your fault, anyway. If you had kept off, my boat wouldn't have gone over."

Jack Harvey sprang from his seat and shook his fist in the direction of the disappearing boat.

"Hold on there, Jack," said Henry Burns, catching him by the arm. "Don't get excited. Do you know the answer to what he just said? Well, there isn't any. Just smile and wave your hand to him, as I do. He's really funnier than Squire Brackett."

"Oh, yes, it is funny," answered Jack Harvey, scowling off astern. "It's so funny it makes me sick. But perhaps you'd think it was funnier still, if you had gone at that bailing the way I did, and had looked up all of a sudden and seen that chap sitting back there at his ease, smoking. I'll just laugh about it for the rest of the week. That's what I will."

Jack Harvey certainly did not appear to be laughing.

"Above all things," he said at length, "what do you suppose he meant by saying it was our fault? That's the last straw for me. We didn't jibe his boat for him."

"No," said Henry Burns, "but he probably owns the bay, and was mad to see us sailing on it. He acted that way."

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"Well, it has cost us about an hour and a half good time," exclaimed Harvey—"though I should not begrudge it if he hadn't acted the way he did. We won't win that race in to Southport, by a long shot. It's about half-past six o'clock, and we cannot make it in less than two hours and a half, even if the wind holds."

This latter condition expressed by Harvey was, indeed, to prove most annoying. With the dropping of the sun behind the far-distant hills, the wind perceptibly and rapidly diminished. They set their club-topsail to catch the upper airs, but the last hour was sluggish sailing. It was a few minutes to ten o'clock when the *Viking* rounded the bluff that guards the northeastern entrance to the snug harbour of Southport.

"There's no show for that warm supper to-night, I'm afraid," said Harvey, as they turned the bluff and stood slowly into the harbour.

The immediate answer to this remark was an "Ahoy, there, on board the *Viking!*" from across the water. The next moment, the familiar canoe shot into sight and Tom Harris and Bob White were quickly on deck.

"We beat you fellows by a few minutes," said Tom Harris, laughing at Harvey.

"Look out for Jack," said Henry Burns, with a wink at the other two. "He has been having so much fun that he doesn't want any more. And, besides, he's starving—and so am I; and we might eat little boys up if they plague us."

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"Why, what's the matter?" asked Tom, observing that Harvey was half-scowling as he smiled at Henry Burns's sally.

"Oh, we have been entertaining a friend up the bay," answered Henry Burns, "and he didn't appreciate what Jack did for him. Seriously now, I don't blame Jack for being furious." And Henry Burns gave a graphic account of the adventure.

When he had finished, both Tom Harris and Bob White gave vent to whistles of surprise.

"Say," exclaimed Bob White, "you couldn't guess who that young chap is, if you tried a hundred years."

"Why, do you know him, then?" cried Jack Harvey.

"Yes, and you will know him, too, before the summer is over," replied Bob White. "That's Harry Brackett, Squire Brackett's son."

"Didn't know he had any," exclaimed Harvey.

"Neither did we till this summer," said Bob White. "He dropped in on us one day, early, and wanted to borrow some money. That was up in Benton. He said he must have it, to get right back to Southport; and Tom's father let him have a little. But we saw him several days after that driving about the streets with a hired rig. So that's where the money went, and I think Mr. Harris will never see the money again. He's been off to school for two years, so he says; but if he has learned anything except how to smoke, he doesn't show it.

"But, never mind that now," added Bob. "Let's get the *Viking* in to anchorage and made snug, for you know there's something waiting for you over to the camp."

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"What! You don't mean you have kept supper waiting for us all this time?" cried Henry Burns, joyfully.

"Oh, but you are a pair of bricks!" exclaimed Harvey, as Bob White nodded an affirmative. "I can smell that fish chowder that Bob makes clear out here."

A few minutes later, the four boys, weighting the canoe down almost to the gunwales, were gliding in it across the water to a point of land fronting the harbour, where, through the darkness, the vague outlines of a tent were to be discerned. Soon the canoe grazed along a shelf of ledge, upon which they stepped. Tom Harris sprang up the bank and vanished inside the tent. Then the light of a lantern shone out, illuminating the canvas, and Tom Harris, as host, stood in the doorway, holding aside the flap for them to enter.

Inside the tent, which had a floor of matched boards, freighted down from up the river for the purpose, it was comfortable and cosy. Along either side, a bunk was set up, made of spruce poles, with boards nailed across, and hay mattresses spread over these. There were two roughly made chairs, which, with the bunks, provided sufficient seats for all. At the farther end of the tent, on a box, beside another big wooden box that served for a locker, was an oil-stove, which was now lighted and upon which there rested an enormous stew-pan.

The cover being removed from this, there issued

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forth an aroma of fish chowder that brought a broad grin even to the face of Jack Harvey.

"Hooray!" he yelled, grasping Bob White about the waist, giving him a bearlike embrace, and releasing him only to bestow an appreciative blow upon his broad back. "It's the real thing. It's one of Bob's best. It is a year since I had one, but I remember it like an old friend."

"You get the first helping, for the compliment," said Bob White, ladle in hand.

"And only to think," said Henry Burns, some moments later, as he leaned back comfortably, spoon in hand, "that that was Squire Brackett's son we helped out of the scrape. He certainly has the squire's pleasing manner, hasn't he, Jack?"

"Henry," replied Jack Harvey, solemnly, "don't you mention that young Brackett again to me tonight. If you do, I'll put sail on the *Viking* and go out after him."

"Then I won't say another word," exclaimed Henry Burns. "For my part, I hope never to set eyes on him again."

Unfortunately, that wish was not to be gratified.

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CHAPTER IV.

SQUIRE BRACKETT DISCOMFITED

"But say," inquired Henry Burns, in a somewhat disappointed tone, as they were about to begin, "where are the fellows? It doesn't seem natural to me to arrive at Southport and not have them on hand. Didn't you tell them we were coming?"

"Didn't have a chance," replied Bob. "We went up to the cottage, but there wasn't anybody there. Then we met Billy Cook, and he said he saw all three of them away up the island this afternoon."

Henry Burns went to the door of the tent and looked over the point of land, up the sweep of the cove.

"They have come back," he exclaimed. "There's a light in the cottage. Come on, let's hurry up and eat, and get over there."

But at that very moment the light went out.

"Hello!" he said. "There they go, off to bed. Guess they must be tired. Too bad, for I simply cannot stand it, not to go over to the cottage tonight—just to look at the cottage, if nothing more. And I am afraid if I do, I may make a little noise, accidentally, and wake one of them up."

Henry Burns said this most sympathizingly; but there was a twinkle in the corners of his eyes.

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"Come on, Henry," cried Harvey, "you are missing the greatest chowder you ever saw."

"Looks as though I might miss a good deal of it, by the way you are stowing it aboard," replied

Henry Burns, reëntering the tent and observing the manner in which Harvey was attacking his dish, while Tom and Bob looked on admiringly.

"Never mind, Henry," said Bob. "There's enough. And, besides, Harvey is a delicate little chap. He needs nourishing food and plenty of it."

Harvey squared his broad shoulders and smiled.

"I'm beginning to get good-natured once more," he said.

The campers' quarters were certainly comfortable enough to make most any one feel good-natured. The tent was roomy; the stove warmed it gratefully against the night air, which still had some chill in it; the warm supper tasted good after the long, hard day's sailing; and Tom and Bob were genial hosts.

Outside, the waves, fallen from their boisterousness of the afternoon to gentle murmurings, were rippling in with a pleasing sound against the point of land whereon the camp stood. The breeze was soft, though lacking the mildness of the later summer, and the night was clear and starlit.

It had passed the half-hour after ten o'clock when the boys had finished eating. They arose and went out in front of the tent.

"It is all dark over yonder at the Warren cottage," said Tom. "What do you think—had we better go over? The fellows are surely asleep."

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"Yes, indeed," said Henry Burns. "Why, they would never forgive me if I didn't go over the first night I arrived here. We can just go over and leave our cards at the front door. Of course we don't have to wake them up if they are asleep."

"Oh, of course not," exclaimed Harvey. "But just wait a moment, and I'll go out aboard and bring in that fog-horn and that dinner-bell."

"We'll get them in the canoe, Jack," said Bob. He and Harvey departed, and returned shortly, bringing with them a fog-horn that was not by any means a toy affair, but for serious use, to give warning in the fog to oncoming steamers; likewise, a gigantic dinner-bell, used for the same purpose aboard the *Viking*.

"We haven't anything in camp fit to make much of a noise with," said Tom, almost apologetically. "We keep our tent anchored in a fog, you know."

"Who said anything about making a noise?" inquired Henry Burns, innocently; and then added, "Never mind, there's stuff enough up at the cottage."

They proceeded without more delay up through the little clump of spruce-trees which shaded the camp on the side toward the village, and struck into the road that led through the sleeping town. Sleepy by day, even, the little village of Southport, which numbered only about a score of houses, clustered about the harbour, was seized with still greater drowsiness early of nights. Its inhabitants, early to rise, were likewise early to bed; and the place, before the summer visitors arrived, was wont to fall sound

asleep by nine o'clock.

It was very still, therefore, as the boys went on up the main street. Presently they turned off on a road to the right that led along the shore of the cove, and back of which was a line of summer cottages, now for the most part unopened for the season.

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"There's Captain Sam's," remarked Henry Burns, as they passed a little frame cottage just before they had come to the turn of the road. "I'd like to give him one salute for old time's sake. He's the jolliest man in Southport."

"He is not at home," said Tom. "We asked about him to-day, when we got in. He started up the bay this afternoon. Queer you did not see him out there somewhere."

"Why, we saw one or two boats off in the distance at the time of the collision," said Harvey; "but we were pretty much occupied just about that time, eh, Henry? I didn't notice what boats they were."

They were approaching the Warren cottage by this time, and their conversation ceased. The cottage was the last in the row that skirted the cove, somewhat apart from all the others, occupying a piece of high ground that overlooked the cove and the bay, and affording a view away beyond to the off-lying islands. This view was obtained through a thin grove of spruces, with which the island abounded, and which made a picturesque foreground.

The cottage itself was roomy and comfortable, with a broad piazza extending around the front and one side. Upon this piazza the boys now stepped, quietly—"so as not to disturb the sleepers," Henry Burns put in.

"Well, Henry, what's up? You are master of ceremonies, you know," said Tom.

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"Why, we want to wake them very gently at first," replied Henry Burns. "You know it is not good for any one to be frightened out of his sleep. They might not grow any more; and it might take away young Joe's appetite—No, it would take more than that to do it," he added.

They stepped around cautiously to the front door. As they had surmised, the peacefulness of Southport made locks and keys a matter more of form than usage, and the Warren boys had not turned the key in the lock. They entered softly.

"Hark! what's that?" whispered Bob.

They paused on tiptoe. A subdued, choky roar, or growl, was borne down the front stairway from above.

"You ought to know that sound by this time," said Henry Burns. "It's young Joe, snoring. Don't you remember how the other boys used to declare he would make the boat leak, by jarring it with that racket, when we had to sleep aboard last summer? Why, he used to have black and blue spots up and down his legs, where George and Arthur kicked him awake, so they could go to sleep."

The sound was, indeed, prodigious for one boy to make.

"We may as well have some light on the subject," said Henry Burns, striking a match and lighting the hanging-lamp in the sitting-room. It shed a soft glow over the place and revealed a room prettily furnished; the hardwood floor reflecting from its polished surface the rays from the lamp; a generous fireplace in one corner; and, more to the purpose at present, some big easy chairs, in which the boys made themselves at home.

But first a peep into the Warren kitchen pantry rewarded Bob with a mighty iron serving-tray, and Tom with a pair of tin pot-covers, which, grasped by their handles and clashed together, would serve famously as cymbals.

"Now," said Henry Burns, when they were all assembled and comfortably seated, "you remember how we used to imitate the village band when it practised nights in the loft over the old fish-house? Well, I'll be the cornet; Tom, you're the bass horn—"

"He is when his voice doesn't break," remarked Bob, slyly.

"That's all right," replied Henry Burns. "Every musician strikes a false note once in awhile, you know." And he continued, "You are the slide-trombone, Jack; and you, Bob, come in with that shrieking whistle through your fingers for the flute."

"Great!" exclaimed Bob. "What shall we try?"

"Oh, we'll give them 'Old Black Joe' for a starter," said Henry Burns, "just out of compliment to young black Joe up-stairs."

Presently, there arose through the stillness of the house, and was wafted up the stairway, an unmelodious, mournful discord, that may perhaps have borne some grotesque resemblance to the old song they had chosen, but was, indeed, a most atrocious and melancholy rendering of it.

Then they paused to listen.

There was no answering sound from above, save that the snoring of young Joe was no longer deep and regular, but broken and short and sharp, like snorts of protest.

"Repeat!" ordered Henry Burns to his grinning band.

Again the combined assault on "Old Black Joe" began.

Then they paused again.

The snoring of young Joe was broken off abruptly, with one particularly loud outburst on his part. There was, also, the creaking of a bed in another room, and a sound as of some one sitting bolt upright.

"Here, you Joe! Quit that! What on earth are you doing?" called out the voice of George Warren, in tones which denoted that he had awakened from slumber, but not to full consciousness of what had waked him, except that it was some weird sound.

Then another voice, more sleepily than the

other: "What's the matter, George? Keep quiet, and let a fellow go to sleep."

"Why, it's that young Joe's infernal nonsense, I suppose," exclaimed the elder brother. "Now, that will be enough of that, Joe. It isn't funny, you know."

"That's it! always blaming me for something," came the answer from the youngest boy's room. "You fellows are dreaming—gracious, no! I hear a voice down-stairs."

It was the voice of Henry Burns saying solemnly, "Repeat."

"Old Black Joe," out of time, out of tune, turned inside out and scarcely recognizable, again arose to the ears of the now fully aroused Warren brothers.

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There was the sound of some one leaping out of bed upon the bare chamber floor.

"Now you get back into bed there, Joe!" came the voice of George Warren, peremptorily. "Let those idiots, Tom and Bob, amuse themselves till they get tired, if they think it's funny. We are not going to get up to-night, and that's all there is about it. Say, you fellows go on now, and let us alone. We're tired, and we are not going to get up."

"Too dictatorial, altogether," commented Henry Burns, softly. "Give them the full band now, good and lively."

So saying, he seized the huge dinner-bell; Harvey took up the great fog-horn; Tom and Bob, the pot-covers and serving-tray, respectively. A hideous din, that was the combined blast of the deep horn, the clanging reverberation of the tray beaten upon by Bob's stout fist, the bellowing of the dinner-bell and the clash of cymbals, roared and stormed through the walls of the Warren cottage, as though bedlam had broken loose. The rafters fairly groaned with it.

Down the stairway appeared a pair of bare legs. Then the form and face of young Joe came into view. He stared for a moment wildly at the occupants of the Warren easy chairs, and the next moment let out a whoop of delight.

"Oh, hooray!" he yelled. "Come on, George. Come on, Arthur. Hurry up! Oh, my! but it's Henry Burns."

A small avalanche of bare feet and bare legs poured down the stairs, belonging in all to Joe, Arthur, and George Warren. Three sturdy figures, clad in their night-clothes, leaped into the room, whooping and yelling, and descended in one concerted swoop upon the luckless Henry Burns. That young gentleman went down on the floor, where he afforded a seat for two of the Warren boys, while young Joe, with pretended fury, proceeded to pummel him, good-naturedly.

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The three remaining boys were quickly added to the heap, dragging the Warrens from off their fallen leader; and the turmoil and confusion that raged about the Warren sitting-room for a moment might have meant the wreck and ruin of a city home, adorned with bric-à-brac, but

resulted in no more serious damage than a collection of bruises on the shins and elbows of the participants.

Out of the confusion of arms and legs, however, each individual boy at length withdrew his own, more or less damaged.

"You're a lot of villains!" exclaimed George Warren. "Wasn't I sound asleep, though? But, oh! perhaps we are not glad to see you."

"I tell you what we will do," cried young Joe. "We will hurry up and dress and go out in the kitchen and cook up a big omelette—"

The roar that greeted young Joe's words drowned out the rest of the sentence.

"Isn't he a wonder, though!" exclaimed George Warren. "Why, he had his supper only three hours and a half ago, and here he is talking about eating."

"I don't care about anything to eat," declared young Joe. "I thought the other fellows would like something."

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"He's so thoughtful," said Arthur.

Young Joe looked longingly toward the kitchen.

"Well, we are not going to keep you awake," said Henry Burns at length, after they had talked over the day's adventures. "We thought you would like to have us call. We'll be round in the morning, though."

But the Warrens wouldn't hear of their going. There were beds enough in the roomy old house for all, as the rest of the family had not arrived. So up the stairs they scrambled. Twenty minutes later, the fact that young Joe was sleeping soundly was audibly in evidence.

"He can't keep me awake, though," exclaimed Harvey. "I have had enough for one day to make me sleep, haven't you, Henry?"

But Henry Burns was asleep already.

The next afternoon, as the crowd of boys sat about the Warren sitting-room, talking and planning, the tall figure of a man strode briskly up the road leading to the cottage. He was dressed in a suit of black, somewhat pretentious for the island population, with a white shirt-front in evidence, and on his head he wore a large, broad-brimmed soft hat. In his hand he carried a cane, which he swung with short, snappy strokes, as a man might who was out of temper.

George Warren, from a window, observed his approach.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "Here comes the squire. Doesn't look especially pleasant, either. I wonder what's up."

That something or other was "up" was apparent in the squire's manner and expression, as he walked hastily across the piazza and hammered on the door with the head of his cane.

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"Good morning, Captain Ken—" began young Joe.

But he got no further. "Here, you stop that!" cried the squire, advancing into the room and raising his cane threateningly. "Don't you ever call me 'Captain Kendrick' again as long as you live. It's no use for you to say you mistake me for him, for you don't."

Young Joe disappeared.

"Confound that Joe!" said Arthur. "He always says the wrong thing."

Captain Kendrick was the squire's bitterest enemy; and it was a constant thorn in the squire's side that they really did resemble each other slightly.

"Good morning, squire," said George Warren, politely. "Won't you have a seat?"

"No, I won't!" said Squire Brackett, shortly. "I don't need any seat to say what I want to say. I want to talk with those two young scamps over there."

Squire Brackett pointed angrily toward Jack Harvey and Henry Burns.

"What can we do for you, squire?" inquired Henry Burns, quietly.

"Do for me!" repeated the squire, his voice rising higher. "You have done enough for me already, I should say. What do you mean by running down my sailboat in the bay yesterday? Hadn't you done enough to annoy me already, without smashing into the *Seagull* and tearing a brand-new sail and ripping things up generally?"

"What can you do for me, indeed! Well, I'll tell you what you can do: you can pay me forty dollars for a new sail; and you can pay for a new boom to replace the broken one. And there's some rigging that was carried away. That is all I think of now."

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The squire paused for breath.

"Yes, I guess that is about all," remarked Henry Burns.

But Jack Harvey was on his feet and facing the angry squire. "See here," he began, "do you mean to say that that young chap we helped out of his scrape blames us for the wreck? Just bring him—"

"Hold on, Jack," said Henry Burns. "Take it easy. We were not to blame, so let's not get into a quarrel with the squire. Perhaps he has not heard just how it did happen."

"Haven't I?" roared the squire. "That's impudence added to injury. Didn't my son, Harry, tell me all about it—how you ran him down; how you steered in on to him when he was trying his best to keep clear of you? Haven't I heard of it, indeed! I have heard all I want to about it. Now, there is only one thing left for you two young men to do, and that is to settle for the damages. That is all I want of you—and no impudence.

"It won't do you any good to try to lie out of it," he added, as he started for the door. "I've got no time to waste listening to denials. You can just come down to Dakin's store and settle to-day or

to-morrow, or there will be a lawsuit begun against both of you, or whoever is responsible for you. I guess my son Harry's word is good as a dozen of yours. He's told me all about it. Good morning to you."

The squire swung himself angrily out of the door and strode away down the road, flipping off the grass-tops with his cane.

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Harvey and Henry Burns sat back in their chairs in amazement.

"And to think that I helped that young cub bail out his boat!" groaned Jack Harvey.

Henry Burns snickered.

"It's no joke, Jack," he said. "But I can't help thinking of that young Brackett, sitting up there on the rail and watching you work.

"It is a bad scrape, too," he added, more seriously. "It does mean a real lawsuit. The squire is in the mood for it; and, the worst of it, there weren't any witnesses. It is his word against ours. It's a bad start for the summer, and no mistake."

A half-hour later, a procession of sober-faced boys strolled down into the village. Villagers, who had always liked Henry Burns, and had come to like Jack Harvey since he had atoned for many past pranks by gallantry at the end of the last season, greeted the new arrivals cordially.

"See you boys got into a leetle trouble with the squire," remarked one of them. "Well, that's too bad. He's a hard man when it comes to money matters. What's that? You say young Brackett was the one to blame? Pshaw! Well, I do declare. Hm!"

Down in Rob Dakin's grocery store there was the usual gathering of the villagers and fishermen, lounging about, with elbows on counters, half-astride sugar and cracker barrels, and a few of the more early comers occupying the choice seats about the sheet-iron stove. This inevitable centre of attraction, having done its duty faithfully throughout the winter, was, of course, now cold and not an object of especial beauty; but it still possessed that magnetic quality that pertains to a stove in a country store, to draw all loungers about it, and make it the common meeting-place.

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There was Billy Cook, from over across the cove, who was always barefoot, although a man of forty. There was Dave Benson, from the other side of the island, who had deposited a molasses-jug on the floor in a corner, and who now stood, apparently extracting some nourishment, and at least comfort, from a straw held between his teeth. There was Old Slade, from over on the bluff opposite, slyly cutting a sliver of salt fish from one in the bale upon which he sat. Also a half-dozen or more others.

To this assembled group of his townsfolk, the squire, accompanied now by his hopeful son, Harry, was holding forth, as the party of boys entered the door.

"Here they be now, squire," remarked Dave Benson. "Hello, boys! Ketchin' any lobsters

lately?"

"Yes, here they are, and here they shall pay!" cried the squire, turning upon them.

Jack Harvey advanced toward young Brackett.

"Do you dare say we ran you down?" he inquired, angrily.

"Yes, you did," answered young Brackett, sullenly, and sidling up close to his father.

"Why, of course they did!" exclaimed the squire. "And it won't do them any good—"

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But at this point his remarks were interrupted.

A strongly built, heavy-shouldered man entered the store, gave a loud, good-natured "Haw! Haw!" for no apparent reason except that his natural good spirits prompted him to, and bade everybody good evening in a voice that could be heard a quarter of a mile away.

"Why, hello, Cap'n Sam," said Dave Benson, hailing him as he entered the doorway. "Haven't seen you much lately."

Captain Sam Curtis roared out a salutation in return. If there was a voice within a radius of twenty miles about Southport that could equal that of Captain Sam Curtis, no one had ever heard of it. It had a reputation all its own, far and wide.

"Why, hello, squire," cried Captain Sam. He had failed to notice Harvey and Henry Burns for the moment in the crowd. "Good evening, squire, good evening. Guess you're glad to get that 'ere boy of yours back again, ain't yer?"

"Yes," answered the squire, irritably.

"Well, I guess you better be!" exclaimed Captain Sam. "I thought he was a goner there, yesterday, when I saw the *Seagull* go kerflop."

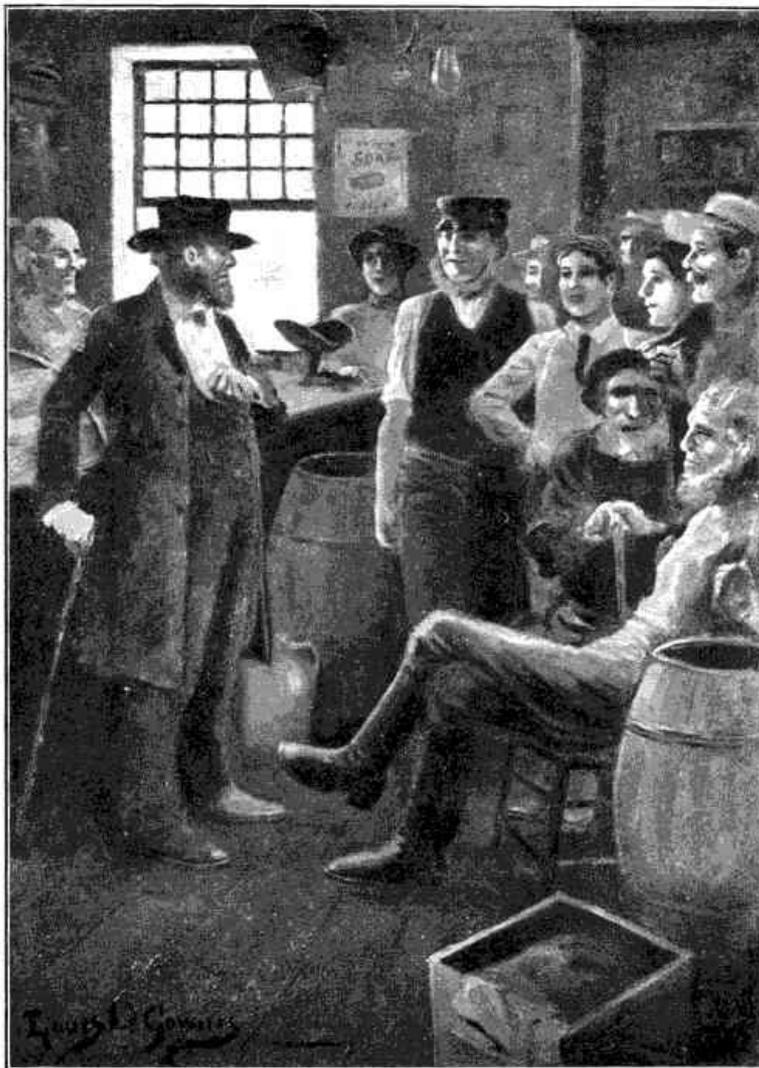
"What!" cried the squire. "You saw it? How is that? I thought you said there weren't any other boats around, Harry."

The squire turned to his son; but young Harry Brackett was vanishing out the store door.

"See it? I rather guess I did see it," bawled Captain Sam, warming up to his subject, while the villagers sat up and paid attention. "Why, I had the spy-glass on that 'ere youngster for twenty minutes before he did the trick. He was a-sailing that 'ere boat like a codfish trying to play 'Home, Sweet Home' on the pianner."

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"Nonsense!" roared the now infuriated squire, who observed the audience in the store snickering and nudging one another. "Nonsense, I say. He can sail a boat just as good as you can. Why, he told me, only the other day, before I let him have the *Seagull* at all, how he won races last summer in a yacht off Marblehead."



“‘NONSENSE,’ ROARED THE INFURIATED SQUIRE, ‘HE CAN SAIL A BOAT AS GOOD AS YOU CAN.’”

“Mebbe so, squire,” retorted Captain Sam. “But he was a-sailin’ this ‘ere boat of yours like a mutton-head. Haw! Haw! That’s what he was a-doin’, squire.

“Why, sir, squire, he was a-standing up in that boat, with his hat blown off, lookin’ as scared as you was last summer when you and old Witham took that sail down the bay with me. Haw! Haw! And that ‘ere boom was a-jumpin’, and that ‘ere sail was a-slattin’ around like an old alpacker dress out on a clothes-line.

“‘Gracious goodness!’ says I to myself, ‘that youngster is a-scared out of his wits. He’ll jibe her, as sure as a hen sets.’ And he done it, too. Bang! she went, and the boom slat up against that other boat that was comin’ down ‘tother way—and I says, ‘It’s all up with poor Harry.’ And so it would have been if it hadn’t been for the chaps in that other boat—

“Why, hello, Henry Burns! And if there ain’t young Harvey, too,” cried Captain Sam, interrupting himself, as he espied the two boys. “Why, that was your boat, eh? Well, I guess the squire is mightily obliged to you, both of yer.

“Reckon you’ve thanked these young chaps, good and hearty, for saving young Harry, eh?” cried Captain Sam, advancing to the squire.

But, to the utter amazement of Captain Sam, the squire turned upon his heel, with an exclamation

of disgust, dashed out of the store, and disappeared in the direction taken shortly before by his son, while a roar of laughter from the assembled villagers followed after him.

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CHAPTER V. HARVEY GETS BAD NEWS

Harvey and Henry Burns left the store together in high spirits, surrounded by their companions, loudly jubilant over the turn affairs had taken. It was growing dusk, and Rob Dakin was preparing for the usual illumination of his store with one oil-lamp. Harvey and Henry Burns started for the shore, but were stopped by a hail from George Warren.

"Come on over to the post-office with me," he said. "You're in no hurry for supper. It's my turn to go for the mail, and we are expecting a letter from father up in Benton."

So the two boys retraced their steps, and the three friends went along up the road together.

"We haven't a very extensive correspondence to look after, eh, Jack?" remarked Henry Burns; "but we'll go along for company's sake. My aunt never writes to me, and I think I never received but two letters in my life. They were from old Mrs. Newcome."

"I never got any," declared Harvey. "My dad says to me at the beginning of the summer, 'Where are you going?' and I say, 'Oh, down in the bay,' or wherever it is I am going. Then he says, 'Well, take care of yourself,' and forgets all about me, except he sends money down to me regularly—and more when I ask him."

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The boy's remark was, in fact, an unconscious criticism of the elder Harvey, and accounted, perhaps, for some of Harvey's past adventures which were not altogether commendable. Harvey's father was of the rough and ready sort. He had made money in the Western gold-fields, where he had started out as a miner and prospector. Now he was enjoying it in generous fashion, and denied his family nothing. He had a theory that a boy that had the "right stuff in him," as he put it, would make his way without any particular care taken of him; and he was content to allow his son, Jack, to do whatever he pleased. A convenient arrangement, by the way, which also left Mr. Harvey free to do whatever he pleased, without the worry of family affairs.

The boys walked through the fields, up a gentle incline of the land, which led to the general higher level of the island, overlooking the bay and the islands in the distance. They gazed back presently upon a pleasing prospect.

There was the cove, sweeping in to the left, along the bluff opposite, which was high and rock-ribbed. At the head of the cove the shores were of clean, fine sand, broken here and there at intervals by a few patches of clam-flats, bared at low water. Out from where the boys stood, straight ahead rolled the bay, with an unbroken

view away across to the cape, some five miles off. A thoroughfare, or reach, extended south and eastward from the cape, formed by the mainland and a chain of islands. Then, to the south, the bay extended far, broken only by some islands a few miles away.

At anchor in the cove lay the Warren boys' sailboat, the *Spray*, and the larger yacht, the *Viking*.

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"Well, George," said Henry Burns, with his right arm over the other's shoulder, "it looks like some fun, now that the trouble with Squire Brackett is cleared away."

"Great!" exclaimed George Warren.

The post-office, called such by courtesy, the office consisting of the spare room of whatsoever fisherman or farmer happened to be honoured with Uncle Sam's appointment, was about a mile from the harbour of Southport. It was, in this case, in the house of one Jerry Bryant, and was about a quarter of a mile, or less, from the western shore of the island, where a small cove made in from that bay.

"Good evening, Mr. Bryant," said George Warren, as they arrived at the post-office door. "Mail in yet?"

"Be here right away," replied the postmaster. "I saw Jeff's packet coming in a moment ago. There he comes now up the lane."

Jeff Hackett, whose commission it was to fetch the mail across from the mainland in a small sloop daily, now appeared with a mail-sack over his shoulder.

The formality of receiving the attenuated mail-sack and sorting its somewhat meagre contents, being duly observed, Postmaster Bryant threw open a small sliding door, poked his head out, and was ready for inquiries.

"Anything for the Warren cottage?"

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"Not a thing."

"Anything for the neighbours, a few doors below?"

"Nothing for them, either."

"Looks as though we had come over for nothing," said George Warren. "Too bad, but you fellows don't mind the walk, do you?"

"Not a bit," answered Henry Burns.

They were departing, when the postmaster hailed them.

"Say," he called out, "who is Jack Harvey? He is the chap that caught Chambers, isn't he? Doesn't he stop over near you, somewhere?"

"Here I am," said Harvey, taken by surprise. "What do you want?"

"Why, I've got a letter for you," said the postmaster. "It has been here three days. I couldn't find out where you were."

"Well, that's odd," exclaimed Harvey, stepping back and receiving the envelope. "I never got

one before. Say, we came over for something, after all."

He tore open the envelope and read the letter enclosed.

"Whew!" he exclaimed as he finished. "That's tough." And he gave a disconsolate whistle.

"What's the matter? Nothing bad, I hope," asked Henry Burns.

In reply, Harvey handed him the letter. It was dated from Boston, and read as follows:

"MY DEAR JACK:—Sorry to have to write you [60] bad news, but you are big enough to stand it, I had to work hard when I was a boy, and perhaps you may now, but you'll come out all right in the end. I don't know just where I stand, myself. Investments have gone wrong, and Saunders has brought suit in court, claiming title to the land where the mine is. May beat him out. Don't know. He is a rascal, but may win.

"Now I haven't got a dollar to send you, and don't see where I'll get any all summer for you, as I shall need every cent to pay bills. I have got to go out to borrow money to pay lawyers, too, to fight the case.

"Too bad, but you will have to come home, or shift for yourself for the summer. Let me know, and I'll send money for your fare, if you are coming.

"Affectionately, your dad,
"WILLIAM HARVEY."

An hour later, Jack Harvey and Henry Burns sat in the comfortable cabin of the *Viking*, talking matters over. The yacht swung lazily at anchor in the still cove. A fire burned in the little stove, and the smoke wreathed out of a funnel on the starboard side. The boys were superintending the baking of a pan of muffins in a sheet-iron oven, while two swinging-lanterns gave them light.

"I declare I don't know what to do about it," said Harvey. "You see, I never thought about getting along without money before. All I have had to do is just ask for it. Now, you see, I'm behind on my allowance. We paid Reed thirty-five dollars, you know, for wintering and painting the boat, and something more for some new pieces of rigging. That, and what I've spent for clothes, has cleaned me out."

"Yes, but I owe you twelve dollars on the boat account, which I'm going to pay as soon as I receive my own allowance from my aunt," said Henry Burns.

"Well, that won't go very far," responded Harvey, gloomily. "We owe—or shall owe—for the freight on that box of provisions that's coming from Benton; we have got to hire a tender to take the place of the old one I sold last fall. We can't keep on borrowing this one all summer—"

"Never mind," interrupted Henry Burns. "You know it costs us scarcely anything to live down here. We can catch all the fish and lobsters we

want, dig clams, and all that sort of thing. All we need to buy is a little meal and flour and coffee and sugar from time to time, and we'll do that all right on my allowance."

"That's kind in you, Henry," said Harvey, warmly, "but I don't quite like the idea of living all summer on you."

"Why not?" demanded Henry Burns, and added, quickly, "You used to provide everything for all your crew last summer, didn't you?"

"Why, yes, I did," replied Harvey. "Ha! ha! catch one of them buying anything. But of course they couldn't buy much of anything, anyway. They hadn't any money. But somehow this is different. You see,—well—the fact is, I'm not quite used to being hard up. And I don't exactly like to take it. Of course, I know just how you mean it, too."

"Yes, but think how small our expenses need be if we are careful," urged Henry Burns. "We live right aboard here all the time, you know."

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"Yes," answered Harvey, "but it all counts up more than you think, especially when one is short of money. You can't run a big boat like this all summer without expense. It's a rope here and a block there, and a spare anchor we need, and a lot of little things all the time. I know how it was on the *Surprise*."

Their conversation was interrupted at this point by a voice close alongside. The canoe had glided quietly up, and the next moment Tom and Bob were descending into the cabin.

"My, but you chaps have elegant quarters down here," exclaimed Tom. "We envy you your summer aboard here, don't we, Bob?"

Henry Burns and Harvey, somewhat taken aback, made no reply, and looked embarrassed.

"Why, what's up?" asked Tom, observing something was wrong. "No more trouble, I hope."

Harvey explained the situation.

"That need not be so bad," said Tom. "It doesn't cost but little to live here. We spend scarcely anything, do we, Bob? We can lend you something to help you through. You don't want to think of giving up the summer."

"I dare say I could stick it out all right," said Harvey, "if I was just camping once more. That doesn't cost much. It is this boat that bothers me. We can't run it for nothing."

"Well, then," exclaimed Henry Burns, vigorously, with more demonstrativeness than was usual with him, "I'll tell you what we will do. We'll make the boat work. We will make it pay its own way, and pay us something besides. We'll fit out and go down among the islands fishing, and take our fish over to Stoneland and sell them, the same as the fishermen do. There won't be a fortune in it, with a boat no bigger than this, but it will support us, and more too, after paying all expenses."

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"Henry," cried Harvey, gratefully, "you're a brick! I thought of that once, and I'd have proposed it if this had been the old *Surprise*; but

I didn't know as you would be willing to do it with this boat. It dirties a craft up so."

"That doesn't hurt a boat any," said Henry Burns. "The fishermen down around Wilton's Harbour take out sailing parties all summer, and their boats are always handsome and clean, and they don't smell fishy. And the men always use them for fishing in the fall and spring, when the fishing is at its best. It simply means that we have got to take out all the nice fittings from the cabin, stow them away somewhere on shore, fit out with some tackle, and go ahead. At the end of the summer we will overhaul the *Viking* from deck to keelson, take out every piece of ballast in her, clean it and dry it and put it back, and paint the yacht over after we wash everything inside and out. She will be just as fine as she was before."

"That's great!" exclaimed Tom Harris. "You can do it all right, too. I wish we had a boat. We'd go along with you, wouldn't we, Bob?"

"I'd like nothing better," answered Bob.

"Then come along with us," said Harvey. "We really need two more to handle this boat properly. You can fit yourselves out with fishing-tackle, and we'll all share in the catch."

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"Hooray! we'll do it," cried Bob. "But we don't want a share of the catch. We will be glad enough to go for the fun of it."

"Yes, but this is part business," said Henry Burns. "You must have some share in every trip you make with us. How will two-thirds for us and a third for you do, as we own the boat?"

"That is more than fair," replied Tom.

"Then it's a bargain, eh, Jack?" said Henry; and, as the other gave hearty assent, he added, "We'll go about it right away to-morrow, if the weather is good."

When George Warren heard of the plan the next day, however, he was not equally elated. "It's the thing to do, I guess," he said, but added, "It's going to keep you away from Southport; that is the only drawback."

"No, only part of the time," said Henry Burns. "We are not going to try to get rich, only to support ourselves. We shall be back and forth all summer. We'll have some fun here, too."

Then the boys went and hunted up Captain Sam Curtis.

"Yes, you can do it all right," said Captain Sam, when he had heard of the plan. "But it's rough work. You can count on that. You want to get right out to big Loon Island—you know, with the little one, Duck Island, alongside. There's where the cod are, out along them reefs; and you can set a couple of short trawls for hake. May get some runs of mackerel, too, later. I'll get you a couple of second-hand pieces of trawl cheap. They'll do all right for one season. But it ain't just like bay-sailing all the time, you know, though you may not get caught. When it's rough, it's rough, though."

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"And there's one thing you've got to look out for," added Captain Sam. "Of course the men

around this coast will be fair to you and won't bother. But there's a rough crowd that comes up from the eastward. They may not take kindly to a pack of boys coming in on the fishing-grounds. Just keep your weather eye out; that's all."

The boys went about their preparations eagerly. Already they had begun removing the fine fittings from the cabin of the *Viking*, carrying them up to the Warren cottage, and putting the yacht in condition for rougher usage. They worked hard all day. At night, however, an unexpected event occurred, which delayed their fishing-trip until the next week.

George Warren came down to the shore that evening with another letter for Jack Harvey, much to the latter's amazement.

"Hang it!" he exclaimed, as George Warren handed the letter over. "They say troubles never come singly. I wonder if here's more. I hope things are no worse at home—Hello, it isn't from Boston. It's from Benton. Who can have written me from there?"

He tore open the envelope hastily. The letter, badly written in an uncouth scrawl, read thus:

"DEAR JACK:—You remember you told us [66] fellows last year that we could come down to the island again this year and live in the tent, the same as we did before you got the boat, and you would see that we got along all right. Me and George Baker have got the money to pay our fares on the boat, and Tim and Allan will work part of their passage. Dan Davis, who's on the boat, told us you was down there. So we'll be along pretty soon if you don't write and stop us.

"So long,
"JOE HINMAN."

"Well, here's a mess," said Harvey, ruefully, and looking sorely puzzled. "I'd clean forgotten that promise I made to the crew last year, that they could come down, and I'd take care of them. You see, I thought I was going to have plenty of money; but I don't know just what to do now. Would you write and tell them not to come?"

"No, let them come," said Henry Burns. "They'll get along somehow. We will help them out, and they'll have your tent to live in."

"All right," said Harvey. "I hate to disappoint them. They don't get much fun at home. I'll send them word to come, as long as you are willing."

So it happened that a few days later there disembarked from the river steamer a grinning quartette of boys. The youngest, Tim Reardon by name, was barefoot; and the others, namely, Joe Hinman, George Baker, and Allan Harding, were not vastly the better off in the matter of dress. This was Harvey's "crew," who had sailed the bay with him for several years, in the yacht *Surprise*, and had camped with him on a point that formed one of the boundaries of a little cove, some three-quarters of a mile down the island from where Tom and Bob were encamped.

The united forces of the boys, including the Warrens, made things comfortable for the new arrivals in short order. Harvey's old tent, which

had been stored away in Captain Sam's loft for the winter, was brought out and loaded aboard the *Viking*; and the entire party sailed down alongshore, and unloaded at Harvey's former camping-ground, where there was a grove of trees and a good spring close by. The tent was quickly set up, the bunks fashioned, a share of the *Viking's* store of provisions carried ashore, and everything made shipshape.

"Now," said Harvey, addressing his crew, after he had confided the news of his embarrassed circumstances, "I'll help you out all I can, and you'll get along all right, with fishing and clamming. But, see here, no more shines like we had before. I know I was in for it, too. But no more hooking salmon out of the nets. And let other people's lobster-pots alone, or I won't look out for you."

"Oh, we'll be all right, Jack," cried the ragged campers, gleefully; while little Tim Reardon, standing on his head and hands in an ecstasy of delight, seemed to wave an acquiescence with his bare feet.

"That's your doing," said Harvey, thoughtfully, turning to Tom and Bob. "Since you saved my life the crew really have behaved themselves."

Two days later, the bare feet of Tim Reardon bore him, breathless, to the door of the other tent, where Harvey and Henry Burns sat chatting with Tom and Bob.

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"Say, Jack," he gasped out, "you just want to hurry up quick and get down into the Thoroughfare. They're going to raise the *Surprise*. I got a ride on behind a wagon coming up the island this morning, and two men were talking about it. One of them said he heard Squire Brackett say that that yacht down in the Thoroughfare was anybody's property now, as it had been abandoned, and he calculated it could be floated again, and he'd bring it up some day and surprise you fellows. But he hasn't started to do it yet, and so it's still yours, isn't it? If he can raise it, we can, can't we?"

Harvey sprang to his feet.

"Raise it!" he exclaimed. "Why, I've thought all along of trying it some day. Captain Sam said last fall he thought it might be done. But I had this other boat to attend to, and then I was called home. We'll go after it this very afternoon. What do you say, Henry?"

"Yes, and I think I have a scheme to help float her," replied Henry Burns.

Acting on Henry Burns's suggestion then, the boys proceeded to the store, where, in a spare room, Rob Dakin kept a stock of small empty casks which he sold to the fishermen now and then for use as buoys. They hired the whole supply, some twoscore, agreeing to pay for the use of them and bring them back uninjured. These they loaded hastily aboard the *Viking*, having sent word in the meantime to the Warren boys. They, joining in heartily, soon had sail on their own boat, the *Spray*, and went on ahead, down the coast of the island.

Completing the loading of the *Viking*, and taking aboard an extra supply of tackle, borrowed for

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the occasion, Henry Burns and Harvey got up sail and set out after the *Spray*, stopping off the cove below to pick up the others of Harvey's crew. They overhauled the *Spray* some miles down the coast, later in the afternoon, and thence led the way toward the Thoroughfare. They had the wind almost abeam from the westward, and went along at a good clip in a smooth sea.

That evening at sundown they sailed into the Thoroughfare. This was a stretch of water affording a somewhat involved and difficult passage between the Eastern and Western Bays, the two bays being so designated according to a partial division of these waters by Grand Island. The island was some thirteen miles long, lying lengthwise with its head pointing about northeast and the foot southwest.

The waters of the Thoroughfare were winding, flowing amid a small chain of islands at the foot of Grand Island. The channel was a crooked one, the deeper water lying along this shore or that, and known only to local fishermen and to the boys who had cruised there.

Henry Burns, on the lookout forward, presently gave a shout of warning.

"There she is, Jack," he cried, pointing ahead to where the mast of a yacht protruded above water some three-fourths of its length. "There's the ledge, too. Look out and not get aground."

"Oh, I know this channel like a book," said Harvey, and demonstrated his assertion by bringing the *Viking* to, close up under the lee of the submerged yacht, in deep water.

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The yacht *Surprise*, sunken where it had been in collision with the very yacht that had now come to its rescue, lay hung upon a shelving reef, with its bow nearer to the surface than its stern. The tide was at the last of its ebb, and it was clear that by another hour there would be only about two feet of water over the forward part of the boat and about five feet over the stern.

"We are in luck," cried Harvey. "She has worked up higher on the reef, somehow, since last year, either by the tides, or perhaps some ice formed here in the winter and forced her up. She was deep under water when I last saw her."

"But it's a wonder the mast did not go," he added. "The bobstay went when we smashed into the *Viking*; and the mast wasn't any too firm when we last saw it. It wouldn't have stood after we struck if we hadn't let the mainsail go on the run."

Evening was coming on, but the boys lost no time in going to work. Getting into the dory that they had hired for the season as a tender, Henry Burns and Harvey stepped out carefully on to the reef, and made their way down its slippery sides to the bow of the *Surprise*. Then, with trousers rolled up and divested of jackets and shirts, they proceeded, as soon as the tide had fallen, to nail some strips of canvas over the hole smashed in the bow. They fastened it with battens, putting several layers on, one over another.

"It isn't a handsome job," said Henry Burns,

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finally; "but the water will not run in there as fast as we can pump it out. It's a fair start."

The yacht *Spray* came in now and brought up alongside the *Viking*.

"What are you going to do?" inquired George Warren.

"Why, everybody has got to go in for a swim," answered Henry Burns, setting the example by throwing off his remaining garments. The others, willing enough at all times for that, followed.

Henry Burns next brought forth several coils of rope, which he had busied himself with, on the voyage down, knotting it at regular intervals into loops.

"There," said he, "the *Surprise* lies, luckily, on these irregular rocks. We have got to duck under and pass these ropes underneath the keel, wherever there is a chance. Then we'll bring the ends up on either side and make them fast aboard, wherever there is a thing to hitch to. Then we'll attach the kegs to the loops. See?"

"Good for you, Henry!" cried Harvey, enthusiastically. "You always have some scheme in your head, don't you?"

"Wait and see if it works," said Henry Burns, modestly.

"Ouch!" cried young Joe, as the boys splashed overboard. "This water is like ice."

"Oh, shut up, Joe!" said Arthur Warren. "Just think of that hot coffee we are going to have for supper."

The boys worked eagerly and hurriedly, for the waters of Samoset Bay had not, indeed, fully recovered from their long winter's chill, and the sun had sunk behind the distant hills. The ropes, passed beneath on one side, were grasped by numbed but skilful hands on the other. In a quarter of an hour they had some six or eight of these passed under and made fast, and the empty casks, tightly stopped with cork bungs, tied into the loopholes. This, in itself, was no easy task. The buoyant casks persisted in bobbing up to the surface, escaping now and then from their hands. Two of the boys would seize a cask by the lashings that had been passed about it and fairly ride it below the surface with their united weight. Then, holding their breath under water, they would make it fast to a loop.

It was dark when they had finished; and a hungry, shivering crowd of boys they were, as they danced about the decks and scrambled into their clothes. But the cabins of the *Viking* and the *Spray* were soon made inviting, with warmth and the odours of hot coffee and cooking food. They were only too glad to go below and enjoy both.

"Hello, Henry," called young Joe from the deck of the *Spray*, some time later, as the boys were hanging their lanterns forward to warn any stray fisherman that might sail through in the night; "the *Surprise* doesn't seem to come up very fast."

"Well, wait till to-morrow and see," answered Henry Burns.

They were soon sleeping soundly, weary with the day's hard work.

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CHAPTER VI.

OUT TO THE FISHING-GROUNDS

While the boys were thus concerned down in the Thoroughfare, at the foot of Grand Island, certain events were happening away over across the Western Bay that might perhaps affect them later.

If a direct line were drawn across the middle of Grand Island, and extended straight across the Western Bay to the neighbouring mainland, it would touch that shore in about the locality of the town of Bellport. This was a little community, dull in winter, and flourishing in summer with the advent of cottagers and visitors from the little city of Mayville, some miles up along the shore of the bay, and from the towns farther north up the river. It was a favourite resort of yachtsmen in a modest way.

On the afternoon that young Harry Brackett had quietly withdrawn from the crowd of villagers in the store at Southport, coincident with the disclosures of Captain Sam regarding his adventure in the squire's sailboat, he had not seen fit to return to the shelter of his father's roof. Instead, he had taken the night boat over to Mayville, and thence, the following morning, made his way to Bellport, where he had some bosom friends after his own heart.

What this meant was that, instead of entering into the healthful sports that made the place of especial attraction, he and they were more often to be found loitering about the office of the principal hotel, the Bellport House, or playing at billiards in a room off the office, or occupying the veranda chairs, with their feet upon the railing.

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Young Brackett had been engaged one afternoon, soon following his arrival, in a game of billiards with a companion, when he was accosted by another acquaintance.

"Hello, Brackett," said the newcomer. "You're quite a stranger. How are things over at Southport? Going to stay at home now for awhile?"

This salutation, commonplace as it was, had, it seemed, an effect upon a tall, light-complexioned man, who was seated in a corner of the room, where he had been enjoying his cigar and idly watching the game. For he looked up quickly toward the boy addressed, and, during the continuation of the game, certainly paid more attention to Harry Brackett than to the play itself.

At the conclusion of the game, young Brackett's companions bade him good day and departed. Thereupon the stranger arose and advanced

toward Harry Brackett, smiling pleasantly. Stroking a heavy blond moustache with the fingers of his left hand and picking up one of the cues with the other, he said:

"You play a good game, don't you? Shall we have another? I'll be pleased to pay for it, you know. Glad to have some one that plays as well as you do for an opponent."

It being inbred in young Brackett's nature never to decline to enjoy himself at another's expense, he accepted the invitation at once. Moreover, he was pleased at the compliment—which was, perhaps, more in the nature of flattery, as he was but indifferently skilful at best.

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"Do you come from around this way?" asked the stranger, as they proceeded to play.

"Yes," answered young Brackett. "My home is at Southport. Harry Brackett is my name. I'm Squire Brackett's son."

"Indeed!" said the stranger, as though the answer was a matter of information, whereas he had distinctly heard the boy's companion refer to him as coming from Southport. "But you are not an islander. You've been about some, I can see."

Most persons would have said that it would have been better for the boy if he had had more of the sturdy qualities of the islanders and less of those manners to which the stranger referred. But young Brackett took the remark as a compliment, as it was intended, and answered, "Oh, yes, I've been about a good deal—up Boston way and that sort of thing—Benton and different cities. But I live at Southport. My father owns a good deal of the place, you see."

"Well, I'm glad to know you, Mr. Brackett," said the stranger, with a renewed show of cordiality. "My name is Carleton. I come from Boston, too. I am just living around at any place I take a fancy to for the summer. Oh, by the way, I came here to look at some boats. Do you know of a good one over your way that a man might buy?"

"Why, no, I don't know as I do," replied young Brackett. "That is, not what you would want. There's only one elegant boat, and I guess she is not for sale. She belongs to some boys. They'd better sell her, though, if they get the chance. They think they are smart, but they can't sail her a little bit."

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"Hm!" ejaculated Mr. Carleton, and made a mental note of the other's evident antipathy to the boys he referred to.

"You don't mean the *Viking*?" he inquired. "Somebody in the town here was speaking about her the other day."

"Yes, that's the one," replied young Brackett. "But I don't think you can buy her."

"Oh, most any one will sell a thing, if you only offer him enough," said Mr. Carleton, carelessly. "Somehow I think she is about the boat I want. I had a talk with a captain here the other day, and he said she was the best sailer about here."

"Oh, by the way," he added, apparently intent upon his game and studying a shot with great

care, "did you ever hear of anything queer about that yacht—anything queer discovered about her?"

"Why, no!" cried young Brackett, in a tone of surprise. "Is there anything queer about her? Do you know about her? That is a funny question."

If Mr. Carleton, making his shot unmoved, had got exactly the information he was after, he did not betray the least sign of it. Instead, he laughed and said:

"No, no. You don't understand. I mean any 'out' about the boat. Has she any faults, I mean. Does she sail under? Run her counters under? Knock down in a wind and heavy sea? Carry a bad weather helm—or still worse, a lee helm? You know what I mean. When a man is buying a boat he wants to know if she is all right."

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He said it easily, in his deep, full voice, that seemed to emerge from behind his heavy moustache, without his lips moving.

"Oh, I understand," said young Brackett. Then he added, mindful of his anger at the owners of the *Viking*, "I guess the boat is good enough—better than the crowd that owns her."

"Well, I want you to do something for me," continued Mr. Carleton. "I think I want her. When you return to Southport, I wish you would make them an offer for me. Do you know what they paid for her?"

"Why, I think she brought only about eight hundred dollars," said young Brackett. "She's worth twice that, I guess. But there wasn't anybody to buy her. She went cheap."

"Tell them you know of a party that will give them fifteen hundred dollars for the boat," said Mr. Carleton. "And if you buy her for me for that price I will give you two hundred dollars. The boat is worth all of that from what I hear."

Young Brackett's eyes opened wide in surprise.

"Oh, I am in earnest," said the man. "I can afford it. I'm out for a good time this summer. I'll be much obliged if you will do the business for me. Business is business, and I don't ask you to go to the trouble for nothing. Here's something on account."

He handed young Brackett a ten-dollar bill, which the boy pocketed promptly. It seemed a queer transaction, but he was satisfied.

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"And, say, don't mention my name," said Mr. Carleton, carelessly. "You see, if a man that has any money is known to be looking for a particular boat, they always put the price up."

"All right, I won't," replied Harry Brackett.

"I hate to tackle that fellow, Harvey," he thought, as he turned the matter over in his mind. "But it's worth trying for two hundred dollars."

Then, in great elation, he proceeded to beat Mr. Carleton at the game; though that person's intimate friends, wherever they might be, would have laughed at his attempts to make poor shots instead of good ones. It pays to be a loser

sometimes, was his way of looking at it. At least, he and Harry Brackett parted excellent friends.

The day came in warm and pleasant down in the Thoroughfare, and the boys were early astir.

"Any more swimming to do to-day, Henry?" inquired George Warren, as the fires were building in the cabin stoves, preparatory for breakfast.

"Only a plunge for one of us," answered Henry. "I'll do that. And that reminds me; I'd better do it before breakfast, for one doesn't want to swim right after eating. Just throw us a line and trip your anchor, and we will draw you up close astern of the *Surprise*, opposite us."

The Warren boys did as he requested, and the two boats were soon almost side by side, astern of the sunken yacht. Then Henry Burns, getting George Warren to unhook the tackle from the throat of the mainsail of the *Spray*, did likewise aboard the *Viking*. Taking the two pieces of tackle in hand, while the boys let the halyards run free, he ducked down at the stern of the sunken yacht and hooked in the tackle to one of the stout ropes that had been passed under the boat's keel.

"That will do till after breakfast," he said, coming to the surface and clambering out aboard the *Viking*.

"No, let's have a pull on the thing now," exclaimed Harvey. "I'm eager to see the old *Surprise* above water—that is, if she is going to float."

"All right," said Henry Burns. "Come on, fellows."

The boys on each yacht caught hold of the halyards with a will, and hoisted as they would have done to raise the throat of the mainsail. The tackle, hooked on to the stern of the sunken yacht, was at first as so much dead weight on their hands. Then, of a sudden, it began to yield ever so little, and the halyards began to come home.

"She's coming up, boys!" cried Harvey, gleefully. "Pull now, good and hard."

But the next moment something seemed to have given way. The ropes ran loose in their hands, and the boys that held the ends sprawled over on the decks.

"Oh, confound it! The rope must have slipped off the stern," exclaimed Harvey.

"No, it hasn't," cried Henry Burns, joyfully. "There she comes to the surface. Look! Look! Quick, get in the slack of the ropes and make them fast."

The yacht buoyed by the numerous casks and lifted by the tackle, had, indeed, hung on bottom only for a moment. Then, released by the strain from the ledge and the seaweeds and slime that had gathered about it, it had come to the surface with a rush. Loaded with ballast as it was, however, and with the weight of water still within it, it could not rise above the surface. Its rail showed just at the top of water, and the cabin deck slightly above.

"Hooray! that's great!" cried Harvey, slapping Henry Burns on the shoulder. "That will do now. Let's have some breakfast."

"It's about time," said young Joe.

They spent little time at breakfast, however, for they were eager to resume. With each yacht alongside the *Surprise*, they began bailing that yacht out with pails tied to ropes, which they slung aboard. When they had lightened her sufficiently, two of them sprang over into the cockpit and bailed to better advantage there.

Then, while they took turns at the pump, the others got up a part of the floors, and began lifting out the pieces of pig-iron ballast, passing them aboard the other two yachts. Finally they rigged the tackle on to the mast of the *Surprise* and, with great care so as not to wrench the boat, lifted it clear and lowered it into the water alongside.

Now it would be safe to beach the yacht; and this they did at high tide that afternoon, towing it in on to a beach that made down in a thin strip between the ledges, and drawing it up as far as it would float, where they made it fast with a line passed ashore to a small spruce-tree.

It had been a good job, and Henry Burns surveyed it proudly. But he merely remarked to young Joe, "Well, she's up, isn't she?"

The yacht *Surprise* was at present a sorry-looking sight. The bottom was very foul, covered with long streamers of slimy grass and encrusted with barnacles. These had fastened, too, upon the mast and spars; and inside the yacht was in the same condition. The sails were slime-covered and rotten. Everything was snarled and tangled, twisted and broken about the rigging. The bowsprit had been broken off short in the collision of the fall before. This, with the carrying away of the bobstay, necessitated the taking out of the mast now. Rust from the iron ballast had stained much of the woodwork.

"There's a job," said Harvey, eying the wreck. "There's a good week's work, and more, in scraping and cleaning her, and cleaning that ballast. We wanted to get to fishing, too."

"Well, you go ahead and leave us to begin the work," said Joe Hinman, speaking for himself and the crew. "It's no more than fair that we should do it, seeing as we are to have the use of the yacht this summer. Just leave us a little coffee and some cornmeal and some bread and a piece of pork and one of the frying-pans. We'll catch fish, and live down here for a week, till you come for us."

"Where will you stay?" inquired Harvey. "The other yacht is going back to Southport, you know."

"Up in the old shack there," replied Joe, pointing back to where there stood a tumble-down shelter that had been used at some time to store a scant crop of hay that the island produced. "Give us a blanket apiece and we'll get along. You've got to go back to the harbour before you go fishing, and you can get ours down at the camp."

"All right," said Harvey, "I guess we'll do it. You can run things, Joe, and there won't anybody trouble you."

So with this prophecy—which might or might not hold good—Harvey proceeded to install his crew in temporary possession of the yacht *Surprise*, and of the little island where they had dragged it ashore, which was one of the chain of narrow islands that lay off Grand Island.

Late that afternoon the two yachts sailed out of the Thoroughfare and went on to Southport, leaving the crew masters of their island domain and of the wreck.

The next morning Henry Burns and Jack Harvey were up before the sun, for Harvey had waked and found a light west wind blowing, and this was a fair one for the trip down the bay. They roused the campers in the tent on the point, and soon Tom and Bob, their canoe loaded with blankets and provisions, were paddling out to the *Viking*. They made two trips, and then, leaving the canoe up on shore alongside the tent, fastened that good and snug. Henry Burns took them aboard the *Viking* in the tender.

The mooring which they had put down for the season was slipped, the sail hoisted, a parting toot-toot sounded on the great horn in the direction of the Warren cottage, and the *Viking's* voyage in search of work had begun.

The course the *Viking* was now shaping was about due south from the harbour they had just left. Far away to the southward, some twenty-two miles distant, lay the islands they were seeking, at the seaward entrance to East Samoset Bay. Some six miles ahead on the course lay a group of small islands, on one of which was erected a lighthouse. Beyond these, to the southwest, a few miles away, lay two great islands, North Haven and South Haven. Off to the eastward from the foot of these, across a bay of some six miles' width, lay Loon Island, with little Duck Island close adjacent.

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As the day advanced, the promise of wind did not, however, have fulfilment. It died away with the burning of the sun, and when they had come to within about a mile of the first group of islands, it threatened to die away altogether. It sufficed, however, to waft them into a little cove making into one of these islands at about two hours before noon.

"Well, we've got to Clam Island, anyway," said Harvey. "We'll load up our baskets, and be in time to catch the afternoon's southerly."

Clam Island well merited its name. Its shores were long stretches of mud-flats, corrugated everywhere with thousands of clam-holes. It would not be high tide until three in the afternoon, and the flats were now lying bare.

Equipped with baskets and hoes, the boys set to work, with jackets off and trousers rolled up. In two hours' time, each one of them had filled a bushel basket to the brim, for the clams were thrown out by dozens at every turn of a hoe.

"That's enough bait for a start," said Harvey, wiping his forehead. "We can buy more of the fishermen if we run short."

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"My!" exclaimed Henry Burns, straightening himself up with an effort. "My back feels as though it had nails driven into it. I don't wonder so many of these old fishermen stoop."

The day was very hot, and the boys went in for a swim. Then, when they had eaten, they stood out of the little harbour; but the wind had dropped almost entirely away, and, with the tide against them, they scarce made headway.

"I'm afraid we won't make Loon Island to-day," said Tom.

"Oh, perhaps so," said Harvey. "See, there's a line of breeze way down below."

A darkening of the water some miles distant showed that a southerly breeze was coming in. They got the first puffs of it presently, and trimmed their sails for a long beat down the bay.

The *Viking* was a good boat on the wind, the seas did not roll up to any great size, as the wind had come up so late in the day, and it was easy, pleasant sailing in the bright summer afternoon. Still, the breeze was too light for any good progress, and they had only reached Hawk Island, on which the lighthouse stood, and which was fifteen miles from Loon Island, by two o'clock.

They were going down a long reach of the bay now that rolled some six miles wide, between North and South Haven on the one hand, to starboard, and a great island on the other. Back and forth they tacked all the afternoon, with the tide, turning to ebb just after three o'clock, to help them.

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By six o'clock they were two miles off the southeastern shore of South Haven, with great Loon Island, its high hills looming up against the sky, four miles across the bay.

"Well, shall we try for it?" asked Harvey, eagerly scanning the sky.

It looked tempting, for there had come one of those little, deceptive stirrings of the air that happen at times before sundown when the wind makes a last dying flurry before quieting for the night. The sun, just tipping the crests of the far-off western mountains across the bay, had turned the western sky into flame. Loon Island looked close aboard. So they kept on.

Then by another hour the glow had faded from the sky and the waters blackened and the shadows began to die away on the hills of Loon Island, and all the landscape grew gray and indistinct. They were two miles above the harbour, when the bluffs that marked it blended into the dark mass of its surroundings and there was no guide left for them to follow. The wind had fallen almost to nothing.

"We can't miss it," said Harvey, stoutly. "I've been in there once before."

"No, we're all right," said Henry Burns. He went forward and stood looking off eagerly for some sign of light on shore. The island grew black in the twilight, and then was only a vague, indefinite object.

They were in great spirits, though,—so they

made out,—but it was just a bit dreary for all that, almost drifting down with the tide, and only a few puffs of wind now and then, with not even a light in a fisherman's cabin showing on that shore.

Then, too, the very calmness of the night made sounds more distinct. And just a little to seaward, a mile or two below where the harbour should be, there sounded the heaving of the ground-swell against the reefs that lay about Loon Island so thickly. And the sound of the shattering of a wave as it drops down upon a reef in the night, amid strange waters, is not a cheerful thing to hear.

Perhaps it was this doleful, ominous sound more than anything else that somehow took the enthusiasm out of them. It was such an uncertain sound, that subdued crashing upon the reefs. Was it a half-mile away? Was it a mile? Was it near? It was hard to tell.

Just how uncertain they did feel, and just how anxious they had grown in the last half-hour of darkness, was best revealed by Henry Burns when, from his watch forward, he said suddenly, but very quietly, "There are the lights, Jack. We're close in."

It was his manner of expression when he was most deeply affected—a calm, modulated tone that had a world of meaning in it.

"A-h-h!" exclaimed Harvey. There was no mistaking the relief in his expression. "I knew they ought to be here, but they were a long time showing."

"Well, I don't mind saying they could have showed before and suited me better," said Bob. "Say, those reefs have a creepy, shivery sound in the night, don't they? I'd rather be in the harbour."

There was a twinkling of lights to guide them now, for a little flotilla of fishing-boats lay snug within, each with its harbour light set; and the lamps in the fishermen's houses that were here and there straggling along the shores of the large and small island facing the harbour gleamed out from many a kitchen window.

They drifted slowly in under the shadow of the hills of Loon Island and entered the little thoroughfare that ran between the two islands, at a quarter to nine o'clock.

"We are in luck at the finish, at any rate," said Henry Burns, presently, picking up the boat-hook. "Jack, there's a vacant buoy to make fast to."

The buoy, a circular object painted white, showed a little way off the windward bow, and Jack Harvey luffed up to it. Henry Burns caught the mooring; Tom and Bob had the mainsail on the run in a twinkling; and a moment more they were lying safe and snug at their voyage's end.

Fifteen minutes later, the sound of heavy sweeps, labouring and grinding in rowlocks, told them that another boat was coming into the harbour from outside with the aid of an "ash breeze," the wind having died wholly away. The boat came in close to where they were lying.

From their cabin, as they sat eating supper, they could hear a man's voice, rough and heavy, complaining apparently of the bad luck he had had in getting caught outside, deserted by the breeze.

The next moment the young yachtsmen got a rude surprise. The dishes they had set out on the upturned leaves of the centreboard table rattled, and the yacht shook with the shock caused by the other boat clumsily bumping into them astern. Then the rough voice sounded in their ears:

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"Git away from that mooring! Don't yer know I have the right ter that? What are yer lyin' here for?"

The yachtsmen rushed out on deck. The boat they saw just astern was a dingy, odd-shaped little sailboat, about twenty-five feet long, sharp at both ends, with the stern queerly perked up into a point like the tail of a duck. A thickly bearded, swarthy man stood at her tiller, where he had been directing, roughly, the efforts of two youths, who had worked the boat in with the sweeps.

"What's the matter with you?" cried Harvey, angrily. "What do you mean by bumping into us? We've got our lights up."

"You git off from that mooring, I tell you!" cried the man, fiercely. "Ain't I had it all summer? What right have you got interfering?"

The man's manner was so threatening and his voice so full of the fury that told of a temper easily aroused, that a less aggressive youth than Harvey might have been daunted. But Harvey had got his bearings and knew where he was.

"No, you don't!" he replied, sharply. "You can't bully us, so it won't do you any good to try. This is a government buoy, and the first boat up to it has the right to use it unless the revenue men complain. You can push your old tub out of the way."

"Better tell him we will give him a line astern if he wants it," suggested Henry Burns. "That won't do any harm."

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"I won't," exclaimed Harvey. "He's taken enough paint off the *Viking* already, I dare say. But"—he added—"you can if you want to. I don't care."

So Henry Burns made the offer.

The answer the man made was to order the two youths to work the "pinkey," as the fishermen call his style of craft, up to the buoy, where he could cut the yachtsmen adrift.

Harvey sprang to the bow of the *Viking*, drew her up close to the buoy by taking in on the slack of the rope, and held her there by a few turns. Then he snatched up the boat hook. Henry Burns and Tom and Bob likewise armed themselves with the sweeps of the *Viking* and a piece of spar. They stood ready to repel an attack.

It looked serious. But at this point the two youths aboard the strange boat failed to obey orders. There arose, thereupon, a furious dispute aboard the other craft, the youths

remonstrating in what seemed to be a broken English, and the man railing at them fiercely in English that was plain, but still had not just the Yankee accent; in the course of which the man at the tiller rushed upon one of them, and would have struck him had not the other youth interfered.

It ended in the wrathful stranger taking his craft ahead, quite a distance up the harbour, ignoring Henry Burns's offer to moor astern of the *Viking*.

"Just as well he didn't stay," commented Henry Burns. "I don't think he would improve on longer acquaintance, do you, Jack?"

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"Well, hardly," said Harvey. "I guess he must be one of those chaps Captain Sam spoke of."

"I wonder if he will make us any more trouble to-night," remarked Bob.

"No, he'll have to fight it out with his own crew first," said Harvey. "But I'll just keep an eye out for a little while. You fellows can turn in."

And Harvey kept vigil till eleven o'clock, muffled in a greatcoat, outside, until he nearly fell over asleep in the cockpit. Then he rolled in below, and was sound asleep before he could get his boots off.

The *Viking* was not molested through the night, though so wearied were the yachtsmen with their day's sailing that a man might have come aboard blowing a fog-horn and not have aroused them from their deep slumber.

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CHAPTER VII. NEAR THE REEFS

The sound of voices calling cheerily over the water and the creaking of blocks awoke the boys a little after four o'clock the next morning. Henry Burns dragged himself drowsily to one of the cabin ports and looked out. It was a picturesque sight, for a small fleet of fishing-craft, of all sorts and shapes and sizes, was passing out of the thoroughfare, on its way to the fishing-grounds, with a light morning breeze that just filled the sails.

Back of the harbour the land went up gradually for a way, dotted here and there with the snug, tidy homes of the fishermen, until it rose in the centre of the island, forming hills of some considerable height—the first landfall for ships coming in from sea at that point. Now the tops of the hills glinted with the rays of the morning sun, which soon streamed down the slopes and made the whole island glow with warmth and brightness.

The pleasing landscape had at that moment, however, no particular attraction for Henry Burns. He gave a groan of self-commiseration, tumbled back into his warm blanket, and remarked:

"Oh, but these fishermen do begin the day early! Say, we don't have to, do we, Jack? I vote for

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another hour's sleep."

"Make it four," said Bob, who had been eying Henry Burns with apprehension.

Harvey and Tom muttered an assent that was not distinguishable.

By five o'clock, however, the sounds of men and boats had them awake again; and by another half-hour they were breakfasting on their way out of the harbour, beating against a light southerly.

"Do you know the fishing-grounds, Jack?" inquired Henry Burns.

"Only in a general way," replied Harvey. "But we'll follow the others, and get in somewhere near them."

They stood out of the harbour and headed down the coast of the island, which extended seaward thus for some four miles. Harvey, at the wheel, was studying carefully a chart of the waters; Henry Burns and Tom and Bob, arrayed in oilskins, were busily engaged in "shucking" clams into some wooden buckets.

Presently an unexpected hail came across the water to them from a sailboat they had overhauled.

"Why, hello," called Harvey, and added to his companions, "Here's luck. It's Will Hackett, Jeff's brother. You know Jeff, who carries the mails in his packet."

"What are you chaps doing way down here? Aren't you lost?" asked the other, a stalwart, red-faced youth, who, with a crew composed of one small boy, was navigating a rough-looking sloop that looked as though it had seen a score of hard summers.

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Harvey explained.

"Well, you won't get rich," said Will Hackett, bringing his craft in to head along with them. "But I'll show you where to fish. The depth of water makes all the difference around here. They call me lucky, but there's something in knowing where to drop a line. I'm down only for the day, but you follow me around and you'll know where to go next time."

When they had told him of the adventure of the night before, Will Hackett slapped a heavy fist down upon his knee.

"Good for you!" he cried. "So you've run foul of old Jim Martel, have you? Why, I offered to thrash him and his two boys only three weeks ago, for hanging around after dark where I had a trawl set. They come from over eastward, and quarrel with everybody; and I wouldn't trust one of them with a rotten rope. You'd better keep away from them, though. He's got a hot temper, has Jim Martel."

They were in the swell from the open sea now, and the *Viking* and its companion, the *Gracie*, were lifting and dipping amid the long, rolling waves. About them, and ahead here and there, clouds of spray, cast like chaff into the air, told of reefs; sometimes marked with a spindle, or a cask set on the top of a pole, if it lay near the

course; sometimes with a thin point of the ledge rising a few feet above water.

Some three miles down the coast of Loon Island a reef of several rods in length broke the force of the waves from seaward; and as these dashed in upon it they crashed into a thousand particles, which gleamed transiently with the colours of the rainbow as the sun shone upon the drops. Close under the lee of this reef went Will Hackett, and cast anchor a few rods away, not far from another boat, already at anchor. The *Viking* followed, and likewise anchored at a little distance, and sails were furled.

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Quickly the heavy cod-lines, equipped with two hooks each, and bulky sinker, were dropped overboard; and the boys waited expectantly, their baits close to bottom.

"A prize to the one that gets the first cod," said Harvey.

"What's the prize?" asked Bob.

"Why, he can keep the cod's head," said Henry Burns. "Hello!" he exclaimed a moment later. "I've hooked on bottom, I guess. No, it must be seaweed."

Henry Burns began hauling in with considerable effort.

"Why, it's a fish!" he exclaimed the next moment. "There's something moving on the end of the line. But he doesn't fight any. Comes up like so much lead."

"That's the way they act," said Harvey. "They don't make any fuss. But you've got a big one."

Henry Burns, hauling with all his might, hand over hand, presently brought to the surface an enormous cod.

"There's a whole dinner for a hotel in that fellow," said he. And, indeed, the fish would weigh fully twenty pounds.

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"Not quite so lively sport as catching mackerel, is it?" he remarked, looking at his hands, which were reddened with the chafing of the hard line.

"No, this is more like work," said Harvey. "But they won't all run anywhere near as big as that. You've caught one of the old settlers."

The fish were biting in earnest now, and the boys were bringing them in over the rail almost as fast as they could bait and cast overboard. By noon they had two great baskets full, stowed away in the cabin out of the sun, and were glad enough to take a long hour for rest, feasting on one of the smallest of their catch, rolled in meal and fried to a tempting crispness.

Then near sundown they were among the first to weigh anchor and run for harbour, tired but elated over their first day's rough work.

Will Hackett had advised them how to dispose of their catch. A trader at the head of the harbour bought for salting down all that the fishermen did not sell alive to the schooners that carried them in huge wells, deep in their holds, to the Portland or Boston markets.

So they ran in with the other craft, and took their catch in to his dock in their dory.

The trader, a small, wiry, bright-eyed Yankee, scrutinized Henry Burns and Jack Harvey sharply, as they entered the little den which bore the imposing word "*Office*" over its door.

"So you're fishermen, eh?" he remarked. "Rather a fine craft you've brought down for the work. Guess you might manage to keep alive somehow if you didn't fish for a living."

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He was interested, though, when they told him their circumstances.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Well, I'm paying a dollar a hundredweight for cod caught on hand-lines, and less for trawl-caught. But you don't calculate to do trawl-fishing, I reckon."

"Not just yet," answered Harvey.

They hitched the tackle at the end of the pier on to the baskets of fish, and the cod were hoisted up to the scales.

"Three hundred and sixty pounds, I make it," said the trader. "That's three dollars and sixty cents."

The boys went away, clinking three big silver dollars, a fifty-cent piece, and a dime, and passing the money from hand to hand, admiringly.

"That never seemed like very much money to me before," said Harvey, thoughtfully. "It makes a difference whether you earn it or not—and how, doesn't it?"

"It's all right for the first day," said Henry Burns. "We'll do better as we get the hang of it. And then later, if we get a catch of mackerel on the first run of the fish, why, we've got the boat to make a fast trip over to Stoneland, and sell them to the hotel. There'll be money in that."

The next morning, beating out of the harbour early, they had an unpleasant experience.

They had anchored off the dock at the head of the harbour, and had just begun to work their way out through the channel, which was there quite narrow, against a light southwest breeze. Henry Burns had the wheel, with Harvey tending sheet, and Tom and Bob working the single jib that they had set. A little way ahead of them a boat was coming in, running free.

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"There's our friend," remarked Henry Burns, noting the pinkey's sharp, queer stern. "It's old Martel coming in from under-running his hake-trawls. We'll try to keep clear of him."

But it seemed this was not wholly possible.

The *Viking* was standing up to clear a buoy a short distance ahead, which marked the channel, and would just barely fetch by it if she was not headed off any. It became apparent soon, however, that the skipper of the pinkey was heading so that, if one or the other did not give way, there would be a collision.

"Better give him the horn," suggested Tom, as the boys watched the oncoming boat.

"No, I don't think we need to," said Henry Burns. "They see us. Look, there they are pointing. Old Martel knows what he is doing. It's just a case of bullying. We've got the right of way over a boat running free, and he knows it."

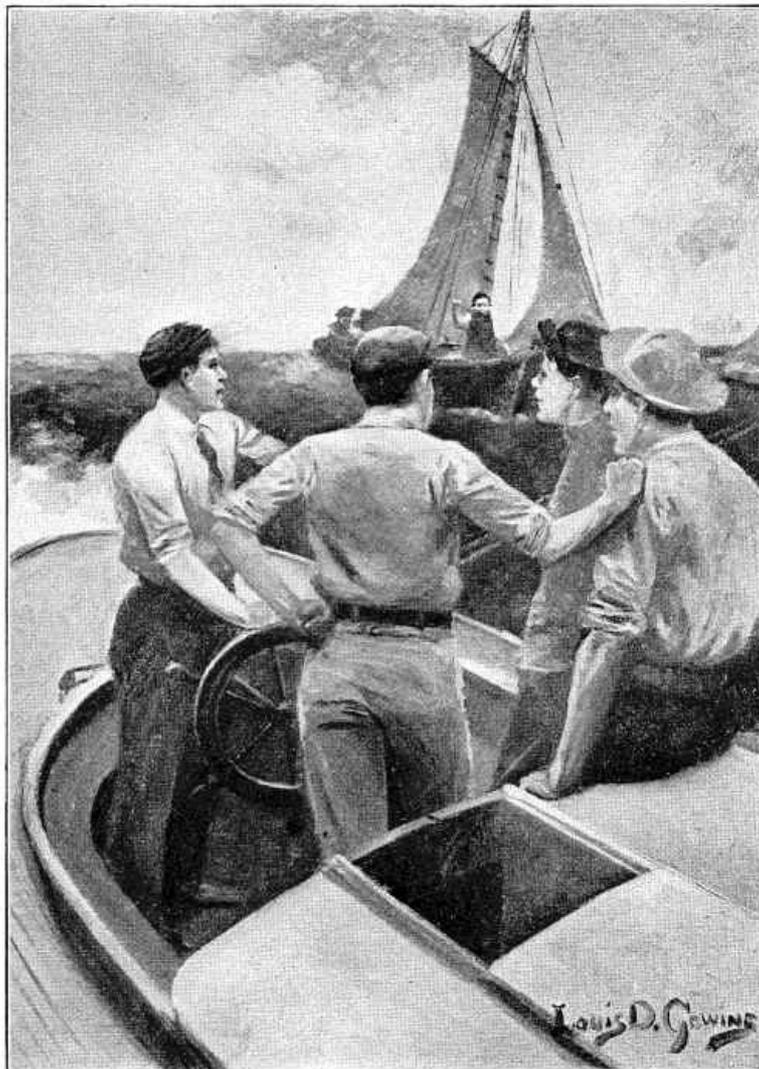
"That's right, Henry," exclaimed Harvey. "We might as well show him we know our rights. Keep her on her course, and don't give way an inch."

There was plenty of water on the pinkey's starboard hand, and the course was free there; but for the *Viking* to head off the wind meant failure to clear the buoy, and another tack, with loss of time. It was all a mere trifle, of course, but they knew the skipper of the pinkey was trying to crowd them; and they were bound to stand on their rights.

The pinkey came up perilously close; then, just barely in time, sheered off so that its boom almost came aboard the *Viking*. Henry Burns, unmoved, had held the *Viking* close into the wind, without giving way an inch even when it had looked as though the two boats must come together.

"We might as well fight it out right now with old Martel," he said, quietly. "Perhaps he will let us alone if he finds we're not afraid of him."

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THE CREW OF THE VIKING MEET SKIPPER MARTEL.

Captain Jim Martel's anger at being outmanœuvred was not lessened by the figure of

Jack Harvey standing up astern and grinning at him derisively. He glared back angrily at the young yachtsmen.

But Harvey's blood was up, too.

"Why don't you learn to sail that old tub of yours?" he called out, sneeringly.

Martel's answer was to put his helm hard down, bring his boat about, and stand up on the track of the *Viking*.

"Come on, we'll give you a tow out to sea again," cried Harvey.

"Go easy, Jack," said Henry Burns. "He's the pepperiest skipper I've seen in all Samoset Bay. Better let him alone. He's angry enough already."

"Yes, but he's to blame," said Harvey. "When anybody hits me, I hit back." And forthwith he made gestures toward the other boat, as of urging it to hurry, by beckoning; and he coiled a bit of the free end of the main-sheet and threw it back over the stern, indicating that it was for the other craft to pick up, so as to be towed by the *Viking*.

The effect on Skipper Martel was, indeed, amusing. He sprang up from his seat, handed the tiller to one of his boys and rushed forward, where he stood, shaking a fist at the crew of the *Viking* and calling out angrily.

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He made a comical figure, with his black, shaggy head wagging, and with his angry sputtering and his pretence of pursuit, whereas the *Viking* was leaving the pinkey rapidly astern. Henry Burns joined in the laughter, but he repeated his warning: "Better let him alone, Jack."

Which warning, now that the skipper of the pinkey strode aft again, Jack Harvey finally heeded.

"Funny how that fellow gets furious over nothing," he said. "We'll have to have some fun with him."

"You like an exciting sort of fun, don't you, Jack?" said Henry Burns, smiling. But it was plain he took it more seriously.

They fished for four days more with varying success, and with a Sunday intervening. They were getting toughened to the work; their hands growing calloused with the hard cod-lines; their knowledge of working their boat in rough water and heavy weather increasing daily; their muscles strengthened with the exercise; and their appetites so keen that young Joe might have envied them.

One day it rained, but they went out just the same, equipped for it in oilskins, rubber boots, and tarpaulins, and made a good haul.

"Well, here's our last day for a week or so," said Henry Burns, as they stood out one morning for the fishing-grounds. "It's back to Southport tomorrow. We mustn't get too rich all at once."

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It was a day of uncertain flaws of wind, puffy and squally, after a day of heavy clouds. They were sailing under reefed mainsail, for at one

moment the squalls would descend sharp and treacherous, though there would succeed intervals when there was hardly wind enough to fill the sails. They worked down to the fishing-grounds and tried several places, but with no great success. Some of the boats put back to harbour early in the afternoon, dissatisfied with the conditions, as it was evidently an off day for cod. Others, including the *Viking*, held on, hoping for better luck.

Then, of a sudden, the wind fell away completely two hours before sunset, and the sea was calm, save for the ground-swell, which heaved up into waves that did not break, but in which the *Viking* rolled and pitched and tugged at anchor.

"Perhaps we will get a sunset breeze and be able to run back," said Harvey.

But evidently the fishermen, more weather-wise, knew better; for some of the lighter, open boats furled their sails snug, got out their sweeps, and prepared to row laboriously back the three long miles. Others of the big boats made ready to lie out for the night.

"Well, we've got a good anchor and a new line," said Harvey. "There's nothing rotten about the *Viking's* gear. We'll lie as snug out here as in the harbour."

They tripped the anchor just off bottom, got out the sweeps, and worked the *Viking* back a dozen rods or so from the shallow water about the reef. Then they dropped anchor again, with plenty of slack to the rope, to let the yacht ride easy with less strain on the anchorage. There were a half-dozen boats within hailing distance, similarly anchored, including Skipper Martel and his pinkey.

"We're in good company," said Henry Burns, laughing. "But I'm glad Jack isn't near enough to stir him up."

Evening came on, and the little fleet resembled a village afloat, with the tiny wreaths of smoke curling up from the cabin-funnels. The night was clear overhead and the hills of Loon Island shone purple in the waning sunlight, streaked here and there with broad patches of black shadow. The ground-swell broke upon the reef heavily, sending up a shower of spray high in air, weird and grimly beautiful in the twilight.

"That's good music to sleep by," said Bob, as the booming from the reef came to their ears while they sat at supper.

"Yes, it's all right on a night like this," assented Harvey. "You'll sleep as sound as in the tent."

It grew dark, and the little fleet set its lanterns, though it was mere conformance to custom in this case, since no craft ever made a thoroughfare where they lay.

"What do you think?" asked Henry Burns two hours later, as he and Harvey stood outside, taking a survey of the sea and sky, and making sure once more that their anchor-rope was clear and well hitched—"What do you think, Jack, do we need to keep watch?"

He had quite a bump of caution for a youth who

did not hesitate at times to do things that others considered reckless.

"Oh, it's still as a mill-pond," replied Harvey. "We've had the clearing-off blow, and there are the clouds banking up off to southward, where the breeze will come from in the morning. See, there isn't a man out on any of the other boats. No, we'll just turn in and sleep like kittens in a basket."

So they went below.

The roaring of the reef was, in truth, a not all unpleasant sound to those who felt safe and snug in its lee, securely anchored. To be sure, there was a grim suggestion in the crashing of the swell against its hollows and angles at first, but the steady repetition of this became in time almost monotonous. There was the heavy, roaring, thudding sound, as the swell surged in against its firm base. Then this blended into a crisp rushing, as the waters raced along its sides; and then a crash as of shattered glass as the mass thrown up broke in mid-air and fell back in countless fragments of white, frothing water upon the cold rocks.

The boys went off to sleep with this ceaseless play of the waters in their ears.

The hours of the night passed one by one. And if any boy aboard the *Viking* roused up through their passing and heard the surf-play upon the reef, there was no more menace in it than before. Just the same steady hammering of water upon rock.

Yet Harvey's prophecy of sound sleep was not wholly borne out—at least, in the case of Henry Burns. He was a good sleeper under ordinary conditions, but he roused up several times and listened to the wash of the seas.

"It may be grand music," he muttered once, drowsily, "but I can't say I like it quite so near."

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Something awoke him again an hour later. His perception of it as he half-sat up was that it sounded like something grating against the side of the *Viking*.

He sat still for a moment and listened. The sound was not repeated.

"I thought I heard something alongside," he said aloud, but talking to himself. "Did you hear anything, Jack?" he inquired in a louder tone, as Harvey stirred uneasily.

There was no reply. Harvey had not wakened.

"Hm! guess I've got what my aunt calls the fidgets," muttered Henry Burns, rolling up in his blanket once more. "It's that confounded reef. No, it's no use. I don't like the sound of it at night. Pshaw! I'll go to sleep, though, and forget it."

Something just alongside the *Viking* that looked surprisingly like a dory, with some sort of a figure crouched down in it,—and which may or may not have caused the sound that had awakened Henry Burns,—lay quiet there for ten, fifteen, twenty minutes,—a good half-hour in all. Then it moved away from the side of the boat, passed on ahead for a moment, and stole softly

away over the waves.

The booming of the seas upon the reefs! How the hollow roar of it sounded far over the waters. How the thin wisps of spray, like so much smoke, shot up through the darkness, white and ghostlike!

A strange phenomenon! But if by chance there had been some shipwrecked man clinging to that reef, he might have fancied that the rocks to which he clung were drifting in the sea—strangely shifting ground and drawing up closer to a yacht at anchor.

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Or was it something different? Was the yacht really no longer lying anchor-bound? And was it drifting, drifting slowly down upon the rocks, soon to be lifted high upon a crest of the groundswell—and then to be dropped down heavily upon one of the streaming, foam-covered points of ledge?

Crash and crash again! Was it louder and heavier than before?

Henry Burns's eyes opened wearily.

The sound of the sea seemed stunning. What was it about the noise that seemed more fearful, more terrifying, more dreadful than before?

He sprang up now. Yes, there could be no doubt. Something was wrong. The sea rising, perhaps. The wind blowing up. There it came, again and again. It was louder—and louder still. A mind works slowly brought quickly from sleep; but Henry Burns was wide awake now.

The boys had turned in half-undressed, to be ready for an early start in the morning. Henry Burns slipped on his trousers, scrambling about in the darkness.

"Jack, get up!" he cried, seizing his sleeping comrade and shaking him roughly. "Wake up, fellows—quick! Something's the matter."

He burst open the cabin doors and rushed out on deck.

No, there was no delusion here. The reef lay close aboard. The din of the beating, crashing waters seemed deafening. The *Viking*, dipping and falling with the long swells, was going slowly but surely down upon it.

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Henry Burns reached for a short sheath-knife that he carried when aboard the yacht, moved quickly along from the stern to the foot of the mast, and cut the stops with which the sail had been furled. Then he dashed to the bulkhead, and, without stopping to cast off the turns from the cleats, seized the throat and peak halyards and began hauling desperately.

The next moment, Tom and Bob had tumbled forward and caught hold with him; while Harvey, emerging half-awake from the companionway, seized the wheel.

Three athletic pairs of arms had the mainsail up quicker than it had ever been set before.

"Quick now with the jib!" cried Harvey. "That will head us off, if there's any breeze to save us. Jump it for dear life, boys."

They needed no urging. It was set almost before Harvey had finished speaking. Tom, holding it off as far as he could reach to windward, stood on the weather-bow, shivering in the cool night air and glaring fearfully at the rocks close ahead. The white spray, writhing up half as high as the mast, seemed to be coming nearer and nearer.

Henry Burns, having seen the mainsail and jib set, and realizing there was nothing left to do only to hope that there was wind enough stirring to fill the sails, dashed down into the cabin. He brought up the spare anchor, which he proceeded to bend on to a coil of rope. But the danger had passed before he had it ready to cast astern.

The yacht, like a living thing, seeming to feel its own peril, had caught just the faintest of the wandering night airs in its great white sail. The tide, ebbing, was urging it down to destruction. Then, as the wind caught the sail, the boat responded slightly, but began to head up, pointing fair at the black rocks. Harvey let the sheet run off. The jib, held far out to windward, caught another faint puff of air and headed the yacht slowly but surely off the wind.

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The yacht had saved itself. Gliding ever so slowly, it skirted along the edge of the reef for a moment, till Harvey had brought it around fairly before the wind. Then there was one final contest between breeze and tide. The yacht hung upon the waves sluggishly, so close in upon the reefs that the spray, dashing over, wetted the boys aboard.

Then it moved slowly up against the tide, rising and falling heavily upon the seas, but gaining a little, and then more.

It was enough. The spare anchor went overboard, the yacht brought up and held. They dropped the sails once more, unharmed, with the black, hungry reef stretching out its white arms of foam and spray, vainly, balked of their prey.

"O-oh!" said Harvey, sinking down on a seat. "That was a close shave. But what could have made that rope part? That's what I can't understand. It was a brand-new one."

They found out a half-hour later, after they had gone below and put on their jackets and warmed themselves and had returned on deck. They drew the end of the line aboard and examined it by a lantern in the cabin.

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It was not broken. The end was clean, without a frayed strand in it. It had been severed with a single sweep of a fisherman's knife, sharp as a razor-blade.

"Ah!" ejaculated Harvey. "We might have guessed. It's old Martel's work. We'll have the law on him for this."

But when they peered across the water with the coming daylight there was no pink-stern sloop to be seen, because it had gone out with the tide long before, just as they went adrift, and was out upon the sea now, standing off to the eastward.

"Well, we have learned two lessons," said Henry

Burns. "One is to have the spare anchor where it can be got at quicker when it's needed. I'd have gone for that first if I hadn't remembered that we had it buried under that lot of stuff forward."

"And what's the other lesson?" asked Bob.

"It's to be never without a knife when you are sailing a boat," answered Henry Burns. "I heard a fisherman say that once, and so I bought one to wear in a belt aboard here. But I never thought just what it would mean to be without one when every second counts."

"I wish young Joe were here," remarked Tom.

"Why's that?" asked Harvey.

"He would have the coffee on by this time," replied Tom. "That night air sent the shivers through me."

"Something else sent the shivers through me," remarked Henry Burns. "I'll go and start the fire."

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CHAPTER VIII. LITTLE TIM A STRATEGIST

Joe Hinman, with his crew of three, composed of George Baker, Allan Harding, and little Tim Reardon, did not intend to be idle during the absence of the yacht *Viking*. The yacht *Surprise*, when it should be patched up, cleaned, and once more floated, and equipped with a spare set of sails that had been left in the *Viking* when she came into the possession of Harvey and Henry Burns, was to become the property for the summer of Joe and the rest of the crew. The morning after the *Viking* had left the Thoroughfare, in company with the *Spray*, the boys set to work in earnest upon the hull of the *Surprise*, with the tools that had been left for them.

It was hard work, for the barnacles and sea-grasses had covered the yacht everywhere, not only below, but on deck and even in the cabin. They got some pieces of joist that had been cast up ashore with a lot of other ruffraff and shored the yacht up on an even keel, so they could work to better advantage, without getting in one another's way.

They worked industriously to the noon hour, only Little Tim knocking off work an hour before the others, in order to go down on the rocks and catch a mess of cunners for their dinner. He had these cleaned and cooking by the time the other three were ready, and they ate the meal heartily, in sight of their labours. Then they were at it again shortly, and worked hard till sundown. The yacht had begun to have a different appearance.

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The next three days they made even better progress, and had the most of the deck scraped down, so that it began to look bright again, as Harvey and his crew had always kept it.

"She'll be the fine old boat she was before," exclaimed Joe Hinman, joyfully, as they stood

that next evening eying their work approvingly. "Jack won't know her when he gets back."

But the following morning, when Joe had arisen and dressed and taken a peep out of the old shed in which they had found shelter, he could scarce believe his eyes. His first thought was, however, when he had begun to think at all, that the yacht *Spray* had returned, and that the Warren boys had surprised them by coming to lend a hand, and that they had begun work early.

Then he saw that the yacht that lay anchored close in shore was not the *Spray*, but a strange boat; and furthermore that the four persons who were busily engaged at work upon the hull of the *Surprise* were not the Warren boys, but larger youths, and strangers.

No, they were not all strangers, either. For there was one with whom they had a slight and brief acquaintance. It was Harry Brackett. What had happened was this:

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When Harry Brackett had ventured finally to return to his father's home, he had not received that fond welcome that one might expect from an indulgent parent. In fact, Squire Brackett was so incensed at having been led to make the exhibition of himself in the store before his fellow townsmen that he stormed roundly at his son, and he made some remarks about having wasted his money for the last few years in sending young Brackett to the city to school, an assertion which perhaps Harry Brackett knew the full truth of even better than the squire.

"Now," said the squire at length, "let's see if you can't make yourself of some use, instead of just spending my money. You get Tom Dakin and Ed Sanders and John Hart, and take the *Seagull* and get down there in the Thoroughfare and see if you can't raise up that yacht that those young scamps wrecked there last fall. She's abandoned, and she belongs to anybody that can get her. I'd just like to fetch her back here and rig her up handsome, and let them see what they might have done. I'll show them a thing or two.

"Now you work smart," continued the squire, "and get that boat, and I'll give her to you to use while you are at home; and I'll get John Hart to teach you how to sail her. And see here, don't you go fooling around with the *Seagull* any. You let John Hart sail her. That was a pretty story you told me about winning races around Marblehead! Now clear out and see what you can do."

It might be said that if young Harry Brackett had had any knowledge of boat-sailing he could not have gained it from the squire, for, whereas that gentleman had property interests in several sailing-craft, by way of business, he knew nothing of seamanship himself, and was invariably seasick when he went out in rough water.

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Harry Brackett was not wholly disinclined to the task imposed upon him, although he had certain misgivings as to how it would coincide with the commission imparted to him by the man, Carleton, whom he had met at Bellport. He figured, however, that the *Surprise*, if she could be floated, would be worth vastly more than the promised two hundred dollars. So he went about

the village hunting up the youths his father had named. These three were rough fellows, whose worth the squire had well in mind in selecting them. They were strong and able-bodied, older by some years than Harvey and his companions; youths who went alternately on short fishing-voyages and hung about the village at other times, ready equally for work or mischief.

The four accordingly embarked at evening and sailed down to the Thoroughfare that night. Great was their surprise to find, on coming to anchor, that the yacht they had expected to see deep under water lay out on shore, with evidences of having been worked upon.

Not to be defeated so easily, however, they resolved, on the spur of the moment, to lay claim to the yacht, especially as they saw no boat of any description anchored anywhere in the Thoroughfare. They would take possession of the *Surprise* and, if it should prove that a party of the campers had raised her,—and not any of the villagers,—they would swear that they themselves had found her in shoal water and had dragged her out.

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As to the future possession of her, they would trust to the squire to fight a lawsuit, if necessary, to retain her. It was a lonely place, down there in the Thoroughfare, and there could be no outside witnesses.

Therefore, before the sun was up, they had rowed ashore and begun work upon the yacht. They began differently, however, than the boys had done. They realized that the first thing for their purpose was to get the *Surprise* afloat. Once in possession of the yacht, afloat and towed back to harbour, whoever should claim it then might have trouble in making their claim good.

John Hart was something of a shipwright in a small way, and they had brought carpenter's and calking tools along.

They, in turn, busily engaged at their work, were taken by surprise all of a sudden at the appearance of Joe Hinman and his crew, tearing down upon them, half-dressed, and their eyes wide with amazement and indignation.

"Here, that's our boat," cried Joe, rushing up to them, panting for breath. "You've got no right to touch it. We raised it."



"HERE, THAT'S OUR BOAT,' CRIED JOE, 'YOU'VE GOT NO RIGHT TO TOUCH IT.'"

John Hart, with sleeves rolled up, displaying a pair of brawny arms, looked at the crew sneeringly. They were certainly not formidable as against himself and his two comrades, to say nothing of young Harry Brackett.

"You raised it!" he exclaimed, roughly. "That's a likely story. What did you raise her with—your hands? You're a fine wrecking-crew. Why, we had this boat out on shore two days ago. What are you interfering with us for?"

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"Now, see here," said Joe Hinman, "that won't work, so you better not try it. There are too many on our side." And he narrated, rapidly, the history of the raising of the *Surprise* by the Warrens and Henry Burns and Harvey and himself and crew.

John Hart and his comrades seemed a bit nonplussed at this. It did put a different phase upon the matter. They looked at one another inquiringly for a moment. But they were rough fellows, not given to weighing evidence critically. Might was right with them if it could be carried through.

"That's a lie!" exclaimed John Hart, suddenly, advancing toward Joe Hinman. "You think you can fool us with your city ways, but you'd better look out. Where are all these fine youngsters that you say raised the boat? This boat is ours, because we saved her. You get out and don't come around bothering, because we won't stand

any nonsense."

There was no present hope for Joe and his crew. They were clearly outmatched. They withdrew, therefore, to the shed, cooked their breakfast and ate it with diminished appetites.

"What will Jack say," remarked Little Tim, ruefully, "if he gets here and finds the boat gone? We can't get away to give the alarm, either. We've got to stay here till he comes back."

"Never mind," exclaimed Joe, bitterly. "They can't keep it long. We'll prove in the end that we saved her."

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"Yes, but that means half the summer wasted in fighting over it," said George Baker, despondently. "You see, when one person gets hold of a thing, that gives him some advantage. They will have that boat afloat, and rigged, before they can be sued."

The task of making the *Surprise* tight enough to float was, however, not to be so easy as it might appear at first glance. It was a nice and particular job fitting in new planking where the hole had been stove. It took a good part of the day, though John Hart and his comrades worked industriously.

Then it was apparent that the yacht had strained all along her bilge badly and about the centreboard, so that it would require all of another day to calk her and set the nails that had been wrenched loose. By evening of the next day, however, she was ready for hauling off, in the opinion of John Hart; and they would do that in the morning and tow her back to Southport.

But they had not reckoned wholly with Joe and his crew. Finding themselves outmatched in strength, these youngsters had wandered disconsolately about the little island for the last two days, fishing and swimming and passing the time as best they could; watching eagerly out through the Thoroughfare, in hopes that Harvey and Henry Burns and the others might put in an appearance; and all the while keeping sharp watch of the progress of work upon the *Surprise*.

Hart and the other three, fearing no interruption from the boys, had ignored them. At night they went out aboard the *Seagull*, where they had provided temporary quarters for all four of them by stretching the mainsail over the boom for a shelter, and tying it to the rail at the edges.

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"They're all ready to haul her off in the morning, I think," said Joe Hinman, as the boys sat gloomily by the door of the shed on the evening of the second day after the arrival of the men. "I heard them singing and laughing out aboard, and saying something about 'to-morrow' and 'Southport.' Oh, if there was only another day's work on her, the boys might get here in time yet."

"Then I'll keep her here another day," exclaimed Little Tim, "if they beat me black and blue for it."

"You can't do it," said Joe.

"Can't I, though?" responded Tim. "Well, watch

me and see. Will you fellows help?"

The boys assented, not to be outdone in courage by the smallest one of them.

"We can do it," said Little Tim. "They leave their tools aboard the cabin of the *Surprise* at night. I saw John Hart put the box in there before he went out aboard. He said another hour's work would fix something or other. I couldn't hear what. But we'll fix her so it will take longer than that, I reckon."

"O-o-oh!" exclaimed George Baker. "But we'll catch it, though, when they find it out."

"All right," said Tim. "I'll take my share if the rest will."

Again the others assented somewhat dubiously.

Toward midnight, the four lads stole cautiously down to the shore, and climbed noiselessly aboard the *Surprise*. As Little Tim had described it, there, tucked away in the cabin, was a box of carpenter's tools.

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"Here's what we want first," said Little Tim, softly, producing a big auger from the box. "We'll use this for awhile, because it doesn't make any noise."

"Great!" exclaimed Joe Hinman, whose imagination was now fired with the idea of mischief. "Let me have the first turn at it."

Little Tim yielded him the precedence.

Climbing out of the yacht again, Joe Hinman proceeded to bore into the planking of the *Surprise*, on the opposite side from the shore. This served to hide their operations and also to deaden what little sound it made. He went laboriously along the length of one plank, and then turned the auger over to Little Tim, who went to work with a subdued squeal of delight.

"Keep to the same plank," said Joe. "We don't want to ruin the whole bottom of the boat."

They bored the holes in turn, close together, all around one plank, and then began on another. It was tiresome work, but they served three long pieces of planking the same way.

Then they brought out a great chisel and pried off the planking, fearful of the noise it made. But they had done their work well, and the sound of the tearing wood was not sharp. No one stirred out aboard the yacht.

"That's enough," said Joe, as the third plank came away. "They'll have hard work to match that up in two days. They're short of wood now, by the way they patched the other place."

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"We'll take away the pieces of planking we've cut out, to make sure, and bury them in the sand up alongshore," suggested George Baker.

"Why not take the box of tools, too?" said Little Tim, whose blood was fired, and who would have stopped at nothing.

"Not much!" exclaimed Joe. "We're in for it enough as it is. Tim, I didn't know you had so much pluck."

"I wish it was over with," said Tim, looking apprehensively toward the *Seagull*.

They stole softly away again, back to the shanty. But it was long before they dropped off to sleep.

When Tim Reardon awoke, the next morning, he was dreaming that he had jumped up suddenly in the cabin of the *Surprise* and had bumped his head against the roof of the cabin. It was a hard bump, too. Then it seemed as if the boat was turning upside down, and jumping out of water, and the floor rising up and hitting him. The next moment, however, he realized that he was in the shanty, where he had gone to sleep, but that a strong hand held him fast, and was shaking him roughly, while another hand was cuffing him over the head and ears.

He let out a lusty yell for mercy, and the others jumped up, fearful of what was coming.

Little Tim, in the grasp of John Hart, was receiving the soundest cuffing and mauling that had ever fallen to his lot in a somewhat varied experience with the world. It had been his misfortune, lying nearest the entrance, to be the one on whom John Hart's heavy hand had fallen, as he entered, followed by the other three, Harry Brackett bringing up the rear.

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"Oh, I'll larn ye to scuttle other people's boats!" cried John Hart, wrathfully. And he cuffed young Tim again, whereat that youngster howled for mercy.

"You're a coward!" cried Joe Hinman, hotly. "Licking a boy half your size."

"Well, you're nearer my size," exclaimed John Hart, dropping Little Tim and making a rush for Joe. They clinched, but the younger boy was no match for Hart, who was, too, reinforced by his three companions. Though it was noticeable that Harry Brackett discreetly held aloof until one of his companions had overpowered an adversary, when he essayed to put in a blow or two.

There was no help for them. The boys got what they had expected—and worse. They were soundly thrashed when John Hart and his companions had satisfied their vengeance.

"Now, see here," said John Hart, wrathfully, shaking a rough fist at the boys. "What you have just got is like a fly lighting on you compared to what you'll get the next time, if you lay another hand on that boat."

"We won't," blubbered Little Tim.

And he meant it.

"Ouch!" groaned Allan Harding, as he tried to rub a dozen places at once with only one pair of hands. "You got us into a nice mess; that's what you did, Tim."

"Yes," wailed Little Tim. "But, o-o-h, it's over now. And," he added, sniffing and chuckling at the same time, "the boat stays, doesn't it? You knew we'd catch it, so what's the use blaming me?"

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"I didn't think it would be such a dose," said Joe Hinman. "But I'll stand it all right, if Jack only gets here in time. Let's have something to eat."

We'll feel better."

The yacht *Surprise* did, sure enough, stay. They had done their part well. Try as best they could, the workers could not fasten her up again before sundown. They finished the job, however, by the aid of a lantern-light, and, taking no more chances, got some pieces of old spars for rollers and dragged the yacht down into the water, where they moored her close to land, a few rods away from the *Seagull*.

There was no sleep for the boys that night. They were stiff and sore, for one thing. But it was the last chance for rescue. It was the seventh day since the *Viking* had sailed away. They took turns watching, away down on the point of the little island, an eighth of a mile below where the *Seagull* and the *Surprise* lay. Nor did they watch in vain. Along about eleven o'clock, Little Tim saw the moonlight shining on a familiar sail away down the Thoroughfare.

With the return of daylight, following their narrow escape, Henry Burns and his friends, wide awake, had begun fishing early. It proved a record morning for them. They filled their baskets with cod, and piled the cockpit deep with them, and only hauled in their lines finally, about the middle of the forenoon, when they had exhausted the supply of herring which they had purchased for bait of the trader. They had about six dollars' worth of fish when they weighed in their catch at the trader's dock.

It had been a satisfactory trip, on the whole, and had showed them what they could do. Deducting the money they had paid out for bait and for some provisions, they had netted nearly eighteen dollars, having fished a part of five days. The division of this gave six dollars to Tom and Bob and left twelve dollars to the two owners of the *Viking*. True, they would have a new anchor and some new line to buy out of this; but that was, in a way, an incidental of yachting, and might have happened in some other manner.

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There was a southwesterly blowing, with some prospect of its holding on late. So, after clearing up accounts with Mr. Hollis, the trader, and having an early supper in the harbour, where they were free from the pitching of the sea outside, they got under way and stood up once more for Grand Island, running free before a good breeze. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, and, if the wind held, they would make the foot of Grand Island by nine o'clock. They were impatient to be back at Southport, and were willing to sail at night if need be.

And yet it was a mere chance that should bring them in to the Thoroughfare on time; for, just north of North Haven, and before they had come to the group of islands beyond, some one suggested that they stand on for Southport and go down to the Thoroughfare the next morning. Harvey half-assented, and then, with a fondness that still lingered for his old boat, was doubtful.

"What do you say, Henry?" he had asked of Henry Burns. "I'll do as you think about it."

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"Oh, better go down to-night and relieve the crew," said Henry Burns. "They're probably sick of staying there by this time, all alone. At any rate, we'll leave them a new supply of food."

But Henry Burns himself would rather have gone to Southport.

The wind held on for all of the eighteen miles they had to run; but it dropped away to a very light breeze just at sundown, then freshened a little soon after. It was not until near eleven o'clock, however, instead of nine, as they had expected, that they entered and sailed up the Thoroughfare.

Tom Harris, as lookout forward to watch the shoaling of the channel, saw, all at once, something that made his flesh creep. A stout, wholesome lad was Tom Harris, too, with no superstition about him. Yet he had heard sailors' yarns of ghostly things in the sea—and he might almost have been warranted in thinking he now beheld something of that sort.

There, off the port bow, about an eighth of a mile from shore, was something that did look strangely like a human head bobbing along; and if there wasn't an arm lifted again and again from the water, as of some one swimming a side-stroke, why, then Tom Harris was dreaming, or seeing some seaman's phantom. He had to believe his own eyes, though; and yet how could it be, away down at this end of the island, where there were no cabins of any sort—and the crew up beyond?

"Jack, Henry, Bob," he whispered, excitedly, "there's a queer thing swimming just ahead there. It may be a big fish or a seal, but it looks different to me."

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"That's no fish," cried Harvey, springing to his feet. "It's some one swimming. I'll bet it's one of the crew. Little Tim Reardon, most likely. Just like the little chap to try to surprise us. He's the best swimmer I ever saw. Learned it around the docks up the river before he was seven years old."

If there was any doubt in their minds it was dispelled by a faint halloo from the swimmer, accompanied by a warning cry for them to make no noise.

"That's queer," said Harvey. "Something's up when Tim doesn't want a noise. I wonder if anything has gone wrong."

Little Tim, climbing aboard a few moments later, and telling his story in excited tones, quickly apprised them that things were decidedly wrong up the Thoroughfare. Wrong indeed! The yachtsmen were thunderstruck.

Jack Harvey brought the *Viking* into the wind as near shore as he dared.

"Bully for you, Tim!" he exclaimed. "Now take the dory and get ashore quick, and bring the rest of the crew down here."

Tim was away for shore in a twinkling. A few minutes later the four could be seen coming down on the run. They piled aboard the *Viking* in a heap, and the yacht stood along up the Thoroughfare once more.

"Well, what are we going to do, Jack?" inquired Henry Burns, as they turned a bend of the shore and came in sight of the mast of the *Seagull*.

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"I'm going to fight for that boat!" cried Harvey, angrily. "I'll die for it, but they sha'n't get it away from me."

"Of course we'll fight for it if we need to," said Henry Burns, calmly. "We will all stand by you, eh, fellows?"

"Yes, sir," exclaimed Tom and Bob together, feeling of their muscles, developed by canoeing and gymnastics.

The crew also assented, less warmly. They had had their taste of it already.

"All the same," said Henry Burns, "it would be a huge joke on them, after they have gone to work and patched her up and floated her for us, to sail in and tow her out without their knowing it. Just imagine them waking up in the morning and finding the boat and the crew both gone."

"Yes, and we'll catch it for that, too, I suppose," groaned George Baker.

"No, we'll stand by you," said Henry Burns. And he added, "Let's try the easiest way first, Jack. We'll run in as quietly as we can, come up alongside the *Surprise* and take her in tow. If they wake, we'll stand by you and fight for the boat. But I think we may get away with her. They're bound to be sound sleepers."

Carefully stowing away every pail or oar or stick that could be in the way at the wrong time and make a noise, the yachtsmen brought the Viking close in upon the dismasted *Surprise*. Then, as Harvey made a wide sweep to bring the *Viking* about into the wind, Henry Burns and Tom Harris dropped astern in the dory and picked up the line with which the *Surprise* had been moored. They were ready for Harvey when he had come about. Throwing the line aboard as the *Viking* rounded to, close in, they rowed quickly alongside and sprang over the rail. The line had been caught by Bob, who made it fast astern.

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The *Viking* had not even lost headway, so skilfully had the manœuvre been carried out. Standing away on the starboard tack, the *Viking's* sails filled and the line brought up. The wind was fairly fresh and the weight of the unballasted *Surprise* did not stop the *Viking*. The *Surprise*, its long, lonely stay down in the Thoroughfare ended, had at last begun its homeward journey toward Southport.

"I don't see but what your friends on the *Seagull* did us a good turn in trying to rob you of the *Surprise*," said Henry Burns, smiling. "They seem to have made the old boat pretty fairly tight. They've saved us time."

"Oh, yes, we owe 'em something for that," exclaimed Little Tim, feeling around for a sore spot, "but I hope they don't try to collect any more of the debt from me."

"Tim, you were a brick to do what you did!" cried Harvey. "And the rest of you, too. You had the real pluck. But Tim suggested it, and he's first mate of the *Surprise* after this, and next to Skipper Joe. That's fair, isn't it?"

George Baker and Allan Harding agreed.

"What do you think," asked Harvey, as they

sailed on up the bay, "will they keep up the fight for the boat? Will the squire take it to court, or will they quit, now they find themselves outwitted?"

"They'll give it up," said Henry Burns. "They would have tried to lie it through if they could have got the boat away from here. But now that we have it, they will look at it differently. They'll find, when they get back to the village, too, that the Warren boys were down here, and that will settle it." Henry Burns was right.

John Hart and his comrades, astounded, on awakening, to find the *Surprise* nowhere to be seen, had jumped to the conclusion that the crew had stolen down and cut her loose.

"We'll take it out of them!" he had cried, fiercely; and, followed by his no less irate comrades, had dashed up to the old cabin. Another disappointment. And still another, when they had searched all the shores of the Thoroughfare and examined its waters, and realized that the boat was gone.

"Well, we'll get it yet, if they have carried it off," young Brackett ventured to suggest.

"We'll do nothing of the kind," cried John Hart, angrily. "You idiot! Can't you see we're beaten? Some one has been down in the night and helped them. That must have been true, what they said about the other chaps. The best thing we can do is to keep quiet about what we have done, or we'll have the whole town laughing at us for working on their boat."

Young Harry Brackett looked pained.

CHAPTER IX.

HARRY BRACKETT PLAYS A JOKE

Southport, albeit not a place of great hilarity, took a night off once a fortnight or so, and enjoyed itself in rollicking fashion. Up the island, about a mile and a half from the harbour, there was a small settlement, consisting of a half-dozen houses clustered together, overlooking a pretty cove that made in from the western shore. They were a part of the town of Southport, though separated from the rest. It had been, in fact, the original place of settlement, and there was a church and town hall there.

This town hall, bare and uninviting in appearance for the most of its existence, brightened up smartly on these fortnightly occasions, putting on usually some vestments of running pine and other festoons of trailing vines, and adorned with wild flowers in their season.

A glittering array of lamps, some loaned for the occasion, made the hall brilliant; while a smooth birch floor, polished and waxed as shining as any man-o'-warsman's deck, reflected the illumination and offered an inviting surface for dancing.

Overhead, on the floor above, it was often customary to serve a baked bean supper before

the dancing, with its inevitable accompaniment of pie of many varieties.

Everybody took part in the dances, from Benny Jones, who had one wooden leg, but who could hop through the Boston Fancy with amazing nimbleness, to old Billy Cook, who arrayed his feet, usually bare, in a pair of heavy boots that reached to his knees, and in which he clattered about the hall with a noise like a flock of sheep. Even the squire consented to unbend from his dignity on some of these occasions, stalking through a few dances stiffly, as a man carved out of wood.

As for young Harry Brackett, he would have been welcomed, also, and indeed had formerly taken part in the festivities. But, since his return from Boston and from some of the livelier summer resorts, he had referred to the island dances contemptuously as "slow."

The campers usually went up to see the fun; and Henry Burns, who was a favourite about the island, and George Warren were usually to be seen among the dancers.

By far the most important functionary of all, however, was a quaint, little, grizzled old man, who was not a resident of the island, but lived six miles away, over across on the cape. "Uncle Bill" Peters, with his squeaking fiddle and well-resined bow, was, in fact, the whole orchestra. He was the one indispensable man of all. He had a tireless arm that had been known to scrape the wailing fiddle-strings from twilight to early morning on more than one occasion, inspiring the muse now and then with a little tobacco, which did not hinder him from calling off the numbers in a singsong, penetrating voice.

Early in the day, when a dance was arranged, it was the duty of some one to sail across to the cape and fetch "Uncle Billy" over, his arrival being the occasion for an ovation on the part of a selected committee.

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"You're goin' up to the dance, I see," remarked Rob Dakin to Billy Cook, one evening shortly following the adventures down in the Thoroughfare, just narrated.

"Well, I reckon," answered Billy, reaching into a cracker-barrel and abstracting some odds and ends of hardtack.

It was easy enough for anybody to see, for Billy's boots occupied a large part of the store doorway, as he seated himself in a chair, and crossed one leg over the other.

"I just saw Uncle Bill Peters go by," continued Billy Cook. "I should think he'd be scared to fetch that 'ere fiddle clear across the bay here. Jeff Hackett says it's one of the best fiddles this side er Portland. Cost seven dollars, I hear."

Just then a crowd of boys, including Henry Burns and Harvey, Tom and Bob and the Warrens, went by the door, coming up from shore, where they had been at work on the hull of the yacht *Surprise*.

"Hello, Billy!" cried young Joe, spying the biggest pair of boots of which the island boasted, filling up the doorway. "Are you going

up to the dance, Billy?"

"Yes, I be," responded Billy, rather abruptly.

"Hooray!" cried young Joe. "So am I."

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"Well, I don't know as I'm so overpowering anxious to have yer go," asserted Billy; "at least, unless you mend your ways. You boys have got ter quit your cutting up dance nights, or there'll be trouble."

Young Joe grinned.

"I didn't fill up your boots, Billy," he said. "Honour bright, I didn't."

He might have added that the reason why was because somebody else thought of it first.

Billy Cook's memory of the preceding dance was clouded by one sad incident. It seems that, by reason of his habit of going barefoot at other times except funerals and dances, and of dispensing with the conventionality of socks when he did wear boots, it was a relief to Billy to step out-of-doors, once or twice during the evening, remove the cumbersome boots, and walk about for a few moments barefoot.

It fell out that, at the previous dance, after one of these moments of respite, Billy had returned to find his boots filled with water, and that young Joe's deep sympathy had directed suspicion against him.

"No, sirree," said young Joe now, in response to Billy's rejoinder. "We didn't have anything to do with that. And we didn't put the lobster in the squire's tall hat, either. 'Twas some chaps from down the island that did that. You know how they like the squire down there, Billy."

"Guess I know how some folks up here like him, too," muttered Billy.

Early that evening, the lights glimmering from the well-cleaned windows of the town hall shone out as so many beacons to guide the islanders from far and near. They came from up and down the island, rattling along the stony road in wagons that must have been built at some time or other—though nobody could remember when they were new. Moreover, whereas a boat must be painted often to keep it sound and at its best, the same does not apply to farm wagons. Hence, the conveyances that came bumping along up to the town hall shed were certainly not things of beauty.

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But each carried, nevertheless, its load of human happiness and merriment. There sprang out rosy-cheeked, buxom island girls and sturdy young fishermen, healthy, hearty, and full of life, eager for the first weird strains of Uncle Billy's seven-dollar fiddle.

He was soon in action, too. Seated on a high platform at the end of the hall, resining his bow, was Uncle Billy, smiling like a new moon upon the company. For the hall was used, likewise, by troupes of wandering theatrical companies; and, on this very stage where Uncle Billy was now seated, the villagers had gazed upon the woes of Little Eva and Uncle Tom, and had beheld Eliza Harris flee in terror, with a lumbering mastiff (supposed to be a bloodhound) tagging after her,

crossing the little stage at two heavy bounds, and yelping behind the scenes, either from innate ferocity or at the sight of a long-withheld bone.

Uncle Billy was off now in earnest, with a squeaking and a shrieking of the catgut. Captain Sam Curtis, his hair nicely "slicked," and wearing a gorgeous new blue and red necktie, led the grand march as master of ceremonies, with Rob Dakin's wife on his arm. Rob Dakin, escorting Mrs. Curtis, followed next. The squire was somewhere in line, leading a stately maiden sister of his wife. Billy Cook clattered along, with a laughing damsel from down the island. Henry Burns and George Warren, with comely partners, were also to be seen, entering heartily in the fun.

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At the end of the hall nearest the doorway stood a group of islanders who didn't dance, or hadn't partners at present. Included in these were the other two Warren boys and the most of the campers. Included, also, was young Harry Brackett, scowling enviously at a youth from the foot of the island, who led to the dance a certain black-haired, bright-eyed, trim little miss, who smiled at her escort sweetly as they promenaded past the entrance where Harry Brackett stood.

It had happened that this same young lady had been invited by Harry Brackett to accompany him to the dance as his partner; but that she had coolly snubbed him, with the remark that he was "stuck-up,"—an unpardonable offence in the eyes of a resident of Southport, as elsewhere.

So it came about that Harry Brackett, after glaring malevolently upon the general merriment for a few minutes, took his departure.

If any one had followed this young man, they would have observed him footing it up the main road of the island for about half a mile, at a surprising pace for one no more energetically inclined than he. Then, at a certain point, Harry Brackett left the road, crawled through some bars that led into a pasture, and made his way by a winding cow-path into a clump of bushes and small trees, some distance farther.

Harry Brackett evidently was not travelling at random, but had some fixed destination. This destination, shortly arrived at, proved to be a large, cone-shaped, grayish object, hanging from the branch of a tree, near to the ground. The boy approached it cautiously, pulled a cap that he wore down about his ears, tied a handkerchief about his neck, turned up his coat-collar, and put on a pair of thick gloves.

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If any one had been near, they might have heard a subdued humming, or droning sound coming from the object on the branch. It was a wasp's nest of enormous size.

Harry Brackett next proceeded to take from his pocket a small scrap of cotton cloth and a bottle, from which, as he uncorked and inverted it, there issued a thick stream of tar and pitch, used for boat caulking. Having smeared the cloth with this, he was ready for business.

He stole quietly up to the nest, clapped the sticky cloth over the orifice at the base of it, dodged back, and awaited results.

A sound as of a tiny windmill arose within the nest—an angry sound, which indicated that the fiery-tempered inmates were aware of their imprisonment and were prepared for warfare. But Harry Brackett had accomplished his design, unscathed. A few tiny objects, darting angrily about in the vicinity, showed that some of the insects still remained without the nest, and were surprised and indignant at finding their doorway thus unexpectedly barred.

Somewhat uncertain as to how these might receive him, Harry Brackett screwed up his courage and dashed up to the nest, which he severed from the tree by cutting off the branch with his clasp-knife. His venture proved successful, and, swinging his hat about his head to ward off any chance wasp that might come to close quarters with him, he emerged triumphantly from the thicket, bearing his prize, and without paying the penalty of a single sting.

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“My! but that’s a mad crowd inside there,” he exclaimed. “Sounds like the buzz-saw over at Lem Barton’s tide-mill. Guess they’ll liven things up a bit at the dance. Perhaps some other folks will be stuck-up to-morrow.”

The furious buzzing quieted, however, after he had gone about a quarter of a mile, and he reflected that perhaps the wasps, cut off from a fresh supply of air, might die on the way. So he took out his knife again and stabbed several holes in the nest, with the thick blade; whereupon the angry remonstrances of the prisoners was resumed, to his satisfaction.

This time, however, he did not venture along the highway, but made his way slowly back to the town hall through the woods and pastures. After a time he came to where the lights of the hall gleamed through the bushes, and the thin but vigorous scraping of Uncle Billy’s fiddle sounded from the stage. He put down his burden and made a stealthy reconnaissance as far as the rear sheds of the hall. Some men were about there, so he waited for a favourable opportunity.

This opportunity did not present itself for some time, as now and again some one would come out to see if his horse was standing all right, and possibly suspicious that some prank might be played with the wagons; for the young fishermen of Southport were not above playing practical jokes of their own on these occasions. So it was not until Harry Brackett had waited fully a half-hour that he fancied the coast clear.

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It was then half-past nine o’clock, or when the dancing had been in progress about an hour, that Harry Brackett, bearing his burden of pent-up mischief, stole slyly up to the rear of the hall, where a window, opened to give a circulation of air through the place, afforded him an entrance back of the stage.

It happened, not all opportunely for the young man, however, that some of the islanders came to these dances, not for the dancing itself, but because of the opportunity it offered to meet socially and discuss matters. Of this number, long Dave Benson, who lived on the western shore, and Eben Slade, commonly called Old Slade, who lived across from the harbour settlement on the bluff, had withdrawn from the hall to talk over a dicker about a boat.

After a friendly proffer of tobacco on Dave Benson's part, the two had adjourned to one of the sheds at the rear of the hall, to get away from the noise of the music and the dancers, and had seated themselves in an old covered carryall, from which the horse had been unharnessed.

From this point of vantage, they presently espied a solitary figure emerge from the dark background and go cautiously on to the rear window.

"S-h-h!" whispered Dave Benson to his companion, "what's going on there? Some more skylarking, I reckon. Well, there won't be any wheels taken off from my wagon to-night."

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"Why, it looks like that 'ere young good-for-nothing of the squire's," said Old Slade. "Thinks he's a leetle too good for dancing, perhaps, but don't mind takin' a peek at the fun from the outside. Seems to be carrying something or other, though. What do you make that out to be?"

"Looks like a big bunch of paper to me," replied Dave Benson. "But I allow I can't see in the dark like I used to—however, it don't matter, I guess. Now as to that 'ere boat of mine, she's a bit old, I'll allow, but you can't do better for the money."

Harry Brackett, all unconscious of his observers, vanished through the open window. When he reappeared, a few moments later, he was minus the object he had carried. Moreover, that object no longer bore upon its base the piece of tarred cloth. Harry Brackett had snatched that away as he made his hasty departure, after depositing the nest among the faded scenery stored behind the stage. Then, from a side window, he watched the effect of his plan.

The dancing was in full swing. Uncle Billy, warmed to his task, and keeping time with his foot, was calling off the numbers.

"Balance your partners! Gentlemen swing! All hands around!" sang out Uncle Billy.

The dancers were in great fettle. Billy Cook, boots and all, was doing gallantly. Captain Sam's laugh could be heard clear to the woods beyond the pasture. Squire Brackett was actually breaking out in a smile. Henry Burns and his friends were gathered near the doorway, watching the surprising play of Billy Cook's boots.

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But at this happy moment something happened to Uncle Billy Peters. His fiddle-bow, scraping across the strings in one wild, discordant shriek, dropped from his hand. His half-articulated call for a position of the dance blended into a startled yell, that brought the dancing to an abrupt stop; while Uncle Billy, his fiddle discarded, had leaped from his seat and was now dancing about the stage and describing the most extraordinary gyrations, waving his arms in the air and slapping at his face and the back of his neck, as though his own music had driven him stark, staring mad.

"What on earth!"—ejaculated Billy Cook. He got no further. Something that felt like a fish-hook, half-way down his boot-leg, occupied his

attention; and the next moment a dozen or more of the same animated fish-hooks were buzzing about his head.

Billy Cook made one frantic clutch at his boot-leg; and, failing to find relief, yanked the boot off. Swinging this wildly about his head, one foot bared and the other clattering, poor Billy fled from the hall.

The squire's expansive smile faded away in an expression of anguish and wrathful indignation. Slapping madly at the bald patch at the crown of his head, and uttering fierce denunciations upon the author of the mischief, he ignominiously deserted his partner of the dance and likewise fled precipitately.

The campers had already scuttled before the storm, and in a twinkling the hall was cleared. The angry, buzzing swarm was in complete and undisputed possession.

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"I'll give five dollars to any one that will discover who did this outrage!" cried Squire Brackett, dashing across the road to where a group of dancers had gathered. "Where's that Burns boy and that Harvey—and that little Warren imp? He had a hand in it, I'll take my oath. Whoever they are, they'll get one horsewhipping that they'll remember for the rest of their lives. Get those horsewhips out of the wagons! We'll teach the young rascals a lesson."

The squire had not observed that still another group of stalwart fishermen had had a word with Dave Benson and Old Slade and had already, of their own accord, provided themselves with horsewhips.

The squire only knew, at this time, that a party of the men were off down the road, with a hue and cry. He did not know that his own son was fleeing before them on the wings of fear, and being fast overtaken by his pursuers, themselves borne onward on the wings of pain and wrath.

What the campers, joining in the pursuit, saw shortly, was the figure of young Harry Brackett, fleeing down the highway toward the harbour, bawling loudly for mercy, as first one whip-lash and then another cut about his legs; and receiving no mercy, but, instead, as sound and thorough a horsewhipping as the squire himself had recommended for the guilty wretch.

Some time later, there limped into Southport village a sadder, if not wiser youth, stinging as though the whole nest of wasps had broken loose and settled upon him.

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On the following morning, this same saddened youth, walking painfully, and somewhat dejected in mind, resulting from an interview with the elder Brackett, turned the corner where the main street was intersected by the road leading up to the Warrens' cottage, and came most unexpectedly upon Jack Harvey. It was his first face-to-face meeting with Harvey since the episode out in the bay, and the subsequent accusation he had made against Harvey and Henry Burns.

It was disconcerting, but Harry Brackett resolved to put on a bold face.

"Hello there, Harvey," he said, eying the other somewhat sheepishly despite his resolution.

"Hello, yourself," replied Harvey, grinning at the doleful appearance presented by the other. Secretly, Jack Harvey had promised himself that he would thrash him at the first opportunity; but he had seen that done so effectively, only the night previous, that he was fully satisfied. He couldn't have done it half so well himself.

"Say, you had a lot of fun last night, didn't you?" said Harvey. "You did that in fine style. But say, what did you want to keep all the fun to yourself for? Why didn't you let us in on it?"

Harry Brackett flushed angrily at the bantering, but, realizing he could not resent it, made no reply.

"How'd the squire like it?" continued Harvey.

"Look here, you wouldn't think it any fun if you got what I did," exclaimed Harry Brackett.

"No, but I think it good fun that you got it," said Harvey; "and I'll tell you right now that it saved you one from me."

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Harry Brackett eyed Harvey maliciously; but he had a mission to perform, and he was bound to go through with it.

"Say, I know it wasn't the square thing to lay that upset out there in the bay to you fellows," he said, with an effort. "But, you see, I knew father would be furious about the boat—and, well, I told him the first thing that came into my head about it. I didn't think he would try to make trouble for you, though."

"No?" replied Harvey, skeptically. "Probably you don't know him as well as some of the rest of us do."

"Well, here, don't go yet," said Harry Brackett, as Harvey started to brush past him. "I've got something I want to talk to you about."

Harvey paused in surprise.

"It's about the boat," explained Harry Brackett. "You fellows don't need two boats—and two such good ones as the *Viking* and the *Surprise*—"

Harvey's wrath broke forth again at the mention of the *Surprise*.

"That was a fine trick you tried to play on us, stealing the *Surprise* after we had her up," he said.

"I didn't want to do it," said Harry Brackett. "I told John Hart you fellows must have floated her in there, but he wouldn't believe it."

"Any more than I believe you," sneered Harvey.

Harry Brackett twisted uneasily. He was making poor progress.

"Say, Harvey," he said, abruptly, "I want to buy that new yacht of yours, the *Viking*."

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"You mean you want to steal her if you get a chance, don't you?" retorted Harvey.

"No, I don't," cried Harry Brackett, the

perspiration standing out on his forehead. "I mean just what I say. I want to buy her, in dead earnest. You've got the *Surprise* back, and you don't need the other one. I'll pay you fifteen hundred dollars for the *Viking*. Come, will you sell her?"

"Who wants to buy her?" asked Harvey.

"I do, myself," replied Harry Brackett. "I tell you I'll pay you fifteen hundred dollars in cash for her."

Harvey winked an eye, incredulously.

"You must be a millionaire," he said.

"Well, I can afford to pay that much for a good boat," said Harry Brackett, with a well-feigned air of indifference as to money matters.

"And have you talked it over with the squire since last night?" inquired Harvey, whose curiosity was now aroused.

"I haven't talked it over with anybody," replied Harry Brackett, impatiently. "I don't have to. It's my money."

Harvey gave a whistle denoting surprise. "Well," he said, "the *Viking* is not for sale. Besides, Henry Burns owns half of her. You'll have to talk with him. He won't sell, though, I know, because the boat was a gift to us."

"Perhaps he would, if you urged him to," suggested young Brackett.

"Well, I won't urge him," said Harvey, abruptly. "But I tell you what I will do," he added, "I'll sell you the *Surprise*. She's a grand good boat, too; and she'll be as good as ever when she is put in shape.—No, I won't do that, either," he exclaimed, after a moment's thought. "That is, not this summer. I've promised her to the crew, and I won't go back on it. No, I won't sell you the *Surprise*, either."

"Would you let me hire either of them for the season?" ventured Harry Brackett.

Harvey hesitated for a moment, with visions of the money it would bring temptingly before his mind's eye. But the remembrance of the loyalty of his crew was still fresh in his mind.

"No," he said, determinedly. "I won't do it."

Which was a lucky determination, if he had but known it.

"See here," said young Harry Brackett, lowering his tone, and making one final desperate effort to shake Harvey's resolution, "I'll make you a better offer than that. I'll pay you and Henry fifteen hundred dollars for the boat between you. You can get him to do it if you only try. And I'll give you seventy-five dollars for yourself, and you needn't say anything about it."

A moment later, Harry Brackett was picking himself up off the ground and rubbing one more sore spot.

"Hang it all!" exclaimed Jack Harvey, as he strode away, "I needn't have hit him—but he made me mad clear through. I owed it to him,

anyway."

And so Harry Brackett, eying the other angrily, swore a new resolve of revenge on Harvey and all the crowd of campers and cottagers.

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"Why, Jack," said Henry Burns later that day, when he and Harvey were talking it over, "don't you suppose it was some kind of a queer joke on Harry Brackett's part? What does he want of the *Viking*? He couldn't sail her if he had her, and in the second place, I don't believe he ever had so much money in all his life."

"That's just the queerest thing about it," replied Harvey. "He wasn't joking and he was in dead earnest. He either wants the boat, or knows somebody else who does. It is queer, but he meant it."

"Well, I can't guess it," said Henry Burns. "Let's go and catch a mess of flounders for supper."

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CHAPTER X. MR. CARLETON ARRIVES

"How d'ye do, squire," bawled Captain Sam Curtis to Squire Brackett, a morning or two later, as the squire stopped for a moment at the door of the captain's shop, where he was busily engaged sewing on a sail which he was refitting for the yacht *Surprise*, for the boys.

"Good morning, Captain Sam," replied the squire. "You're busy as usual, I see."

"Yes," said Captain Sam, "just helping the boys out a little. Smart chaps, those youngsters. Why, they went to work and raised that 'ere yacht down there in the Thoroughfare, and they're cleaning her up in great shape; and I vow, when they get her painted and these good sails on her, she'll be every bit as good as new. And she was always a right smart boat."

The squire scowled at Captain Sam, who kept on with his work; but the squire made no reply.

"I should er thought some of you vessel-owners that have got the rigging handy would have dragged her out for yourselves," continued Captain Sam. "I had a mind to do it myself this spring, but I was too busy."

The squire sniffed as though exasperated at something. But Captain Sam, stitching away, with an enormous sailmaker's needle strapped to his palm, was apparently unmindful. No one would have thought, to look at his serious face, that he had heard the whole history of the squire's venture down in the Thoroughfare, through the expedition of Harry Brackett, and that he was indulging in a little quiet fun at the squire's expense.

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"Why, what on earth should I do with another boat?" inquired the squire. "The one I own is one too many for me now. I'd like to sell her if I got a good offer."

"Would yer?" queried Captain Sam. "Well, you'll

get a good boat in her place if you get the *Viking*. I hear you are trying to buy her."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the squire. "Who told you that?"

"Why, Jack Harvey; he was in here a little while ago. He said as how your son, Harry, offered him fifteen hundred dollars for the boat."

"Fifteen hundred fiddlesticks!" roared the squire. "If he's got fifteen hundred cents left out of his allowance, he's got more than I think he has. That's a likely story. Well, you can just put it down in black and white that I don't pay any fifteen hundred dollars for a boat for a lot of boys to play monkey-shines with. I'll see about that."

"Perhaps it's one of Harry's little jokes, squire," suggested Captain Sam. "Boys will have their fun, you know."

Captain Sam threw his head back and gave a loud haw-haw. His recollection of Harry Brackett's most recent fun was of seeing that youth tearing along the highway at night, with a dozen fishermen after him, armed with horsewhips.

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The squire's conception of it was not so pleasant, however, and he took his departure.

"Harry," he said, at the dinner-table that day, "what's this I hear about your trying to buy that boat of Jack Harvey?"

Harry Brackett, taken somewhat by surprise, hesitated for a moment. "Why—why—that was a sort of a joke," he answered, finally, forcing himself to smile, as though he thought it funny.

"A joke, eh?" retorted the squire, sharply. "Well, don't you think you have had joking enough to last you one spell? Here it is getting so I can't go down the road without folks looking at me and grinning. Haven't you any respect for your father's dignity? Don't you know I'm of some consequence in this town?"

"Yes, sir," replied the son, dutifully. "But I didn't bring your name into it. I didn't say you wanted it."

"Well, what did you do it for?" repeated the squire.

"Just for fun," insisted Harry Brackett.

"May be so," said the squire, eyeing his son with some suspicion; "but I'm not so sure of that, either. Now don't you go getting into any mischief. You've had just about fun enough lately."

"All right, sir," answered Harry Brackett.

Nevertheless, it was not exactly all right, from the squire's standpoint. Not altogether above taking an unfair advantage of others, he was naturally suspicious of everybody else; and this lack of faith in humanity extended to his son. So he said no more, but kept his eyes open.

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Chance favoured him the very day following, when young Harry Brackett, having some work to do about the garden, threw off his jacket and

waistcoat and left them carelessly over the back of a chair in the kitchen. The squire, passing through the room, espied a letter exposed from an inner pocket of the waistcoat. With no compunctions, he took it out, opened it and read it. The letter was addressed to "Mr. Harry Brackett, Southport, Grand Island, Me.," and read as follows:

"If you have not already made the offer for the *Viking*, don't bother about it; for I am planning a visit to Southport, myself. Much obliged to you for your trouble, in any case. Please don't mention the matter, however.

"Hoping I may be of service to you at some time,

"Very truly yours,
"CHARLES CARLETON."

"So, ho!" exclaimed the squire, softly. "Been lying to me again, has he? I am not so surprised at that. But what did he do it for?"

The squire's first impulse was to call Harry into the house and demand an explanation. Then his curiosity led him to alter that determination. Who was this Mr. Carleton? Why was he trying to buy a boat through his son? Why didn't he want the matter mentioned? What were the relations between this Mr. Carleton and his son? Well, Mr. Carleton, whoever he was, was coming to Southport. The squire would wait and see him for himself.

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He did not have long to wait, either, for the very next day he met Mr. Carleton face to face. The squire was waiting in the post-office for the evening mail when there came in with Jeff Hackett, in whose packet he had sailed across from Bellport, a tall, gentlemanly appearing man, dressed in a natty yachting-suit of blue, his face chiefly characterized by a pair of cold, penetrating blue eyes and a heavy blond moustache.

"Good evening, sir," he said, with the easy air of a man of the world, and, withal the least deference to the pompous individual whom he addressed, which was not lost on a man of the squire's vanity. "Beautiful place, this island. You should be proud of it, sir."

"Good evening," replied the squire, formally, but warming a little. "Yes, sir, we are proud of Southport."

"True," he continued, swelling out his waistband, "it does not afford all the opportunities for a man of capital to exert his activities; but it has its advantages."

"Which I judge you have made some use of, sir," remarked the stranger, in an offhand, easy way, smiling.

The squire beamed affably.

"Are you going over to the harbour?" he inquired. "If so, I should be pleased to take you over in my carriage."

"Why, you are very kind; I should like to ride," responded the stranger. "I'll just leave word to have my valises sent over, and I'll go along with

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you.”

He presently reappeared, sprang lightly into the wagon, and the squire drove down the road.

The stranger proved most agreeable to Squire Brackett. He was an easy, fluent talker, though, to one of finer discernment than the squire, it might have been apparent that he was not a man of education, but rather of quick observation and who had seen something of the world. He pleased the squire by an apparent recognition of him as the great man of the place, without ever saying so bluntly. He spoke of business matters as of one who was possessed of some means, and finally, intimating that the squire should know the name of one to whom he was showing a courtesy, handed him his card.

To say that the squire was surprised, would be putting it mildly, for he had not thought of Mr. Carleton arriving by other than the boat from Mayville. Yet, so it was engraved upon the card, “Mr. Charles Carleton,” with the address below of a Boston hotel.

The squire was, however, somewhat relieved. It flashed through his mind now, quickly, just what it all meant. Harry had met this man at Bellport and had been commissioned by him to purchase the boat. He had seen fit to pose as the real purchaser to create an impression on the minds of the other boys that he had that amount of money. As for this gentleman, Mr. Carleton, he evidently had the means to buy as good a boat as the *Viking* if he chose.

“I wish you would tell me the best boarding-house in the village,” said Mr. Carleton. “I hear the hotel is burned down.”

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“Indeed it is!” cried the squire, warmly. “And a plague on the rascal that set it, and all his kind! It’s a terrible loss to the place; and I say it, though I opposed its being built.”

“What a shame!” responded Mr. Carleton from behind his heavy moustache. But his eyes were coldly unsympathetic.

“There isn’t any regular out-and-out boarding-place this summer,” said the squire; “but I guess Captain Sam Curtis will put you up. He takes a boarder occasionally, and feeds ’em right well, too, I’m told.”

So, at length, arriving at the harbour and alighting at the house of Captain Sam, Mr. Carleton bade the squire good evening. He went in at once, engaged a room, cultivated the captain and his wife studiously for a time, and was soon at home, after the manner he had of getting on familiar terms with whomsoever he desired. A curious trait in Mr. Carleton, too; for, at first approach to strangers, he seemed cold and almost reserved, whom one might set down as a man of nerve, that would not be likely to lose his head under any conditions.

If Mr. Carleton had made up his mind to put himself on friendly terms with the youngsters of Southport, despite his natural inclinations, he certainly knew how to go about it. Witness his appearance, the following day, in the course of the forenoon, at the camp of Joe Hinman and the rest of Harvey’s crew, as they were making their

preparations for dinner.

"Well, you boys certainly have it nice and comfortable down here," he said, cheerily, advancing to where Joe Hinman was stirring a bed of coals, ready for the fry-pan, while two of the boys were finishing the cleaning of a mess of fish down by the water's edge. "I've done this sort of thing myself, and I declare I believe I'd like a week of it now better than living at a hotel or a boarding-house. Good camp you've got there.

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"That makes me hungrier than I've been for a long time," he added, as Joe proceeded to cut several slivers of fat pork and put them into the fry-pan, where they sizzled appetizingly.

"Better stop and take dinner with us," suggested Joe. "We've got plenty to eat, such as it is. We'll give you some of the best fish you ever tasted, and a good cup of coffee, and a mess of fritters."

"Fine!" exclaimed Mr. Carleton. "You're lads after my own heart. I'll watch you do the work and then I'll help you eat up the food." And Mr. Carleton, smiling, seated himself on the ground, with his back against a tree, lighted a cigar, and watched operations comfortably.

He proved very good company, too, at dinner. For he had a fund of stories to amuse the campers; and he was heartily interested in their own exploits—and particularly in their account of recent adventures down in the Thoroughfare, where Harry Brackett and his companions had been defeated.

"Now I'll tell you what we'll do," he exclaimed, enthusiastically, as they were finishing their camp-fire meal, "I'm in for some fun, just as much as you are. If you will go ahead and dig some clams this afternoon, I'll go up to the store and order a lot of fruit and nuts and that sort of stuff, and anything else that I see that looks good.

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"I saw some chickens hanging up there, too, that will do to broil. I'll get enough for a crowd. You tell the fellows up above in that camp there,—you know them, I suppose,—well, you get them and anybody else you like. And we'll build a big fire down here this evening and have the time of our lives."

"Hooray!" cried young Tim Reardon. "Joe Warren and the others would like to come in on that. How about two more, besides—two fellows that own that yacht, the *Viking*?"

"Just the thing," replied Mr. Carleton. "As many as you like."

There was no more work on the *Surprise* for the rest of that day. A man who was willing to buy good things for the boys with that recklessness didn't come to town every day, nor once in a summer.

"He says his name is Carleton," explained young Tim to Henry Burns and Jack Harvey, some time later. "He says he's in for a good time, and I guess he is by the looks of things."

"We know him," replied Harvey. "He's an old friend of ours, eh, Henry?"

"Yes, indeed," said Henry Burns; "he was the *Viking's* first invited—no, uninvited—guest."

Mr. Carleton was as good as his word, and more. The canoe, manned by Tom and Bob, went down alongshore that afternoon loaded with a conglomerate mixture of oranges, bananas, bottled soda, pies, other sweet stuff, and extra dishes from the campers' stores. And Mr. Carleton, arriving on the scene in the course of the afternoon, brought a lot more. He paid for everything.

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"My!" exclaimed young Joe, eyeing the stuff as the Warren boys put in an appearance about five o'clock. "I hope he stays all summer, don't you, Arthur?"

"Hello, I'm glad to meet you once more," cried Mr. Carleton, heartily, advancing to greet Henry Burns and Harvey as their dory landed at the shore. "I thought I might get down this way. How's that fine boat of yours?"

"Fine as ever," answered Harvey.

"Good! I'll go out for a sail with you to-morrow," cried Mr. Carleton, clapping a hand on Harvey's shoulder. "Say the word, and I'll have the soda and ginger ale and a new pail for some lemonade. We've got to make the time pass somehow, eh?"

"Suits me all right," assented Harvey. "What do you say, Henry?"

"Bully!" said Henry Burns.

The fire of driftwood, which was plentiful everywhere along the shores of Grand Island, roared up cheerily against the evening sky. When it had burned for an hour or more, Jack Harvey deftly raked an enormous bed of the coals out from it, on which to set fry-pans and broilers and coffee-pot, still keeping the great fire going at a little distance, for the sake of its cheer.

They feasted, then, by the light of blazing timbers and junks of logs, borne down from the river, as only hungry campers can. Young Joe ceased laughing uproariously at Mr. Carleton's stories only when his sixth banana and fourth piece of pie precluded loud utterance. And when it was over, and they went their several ways by woods and alongshore, they voted Mr. Carleton a generous provider.

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He was ready again, was Mr. Carleton, the following afternoon, with the promised luxuries, alongside the *Viking*; and he was as much a boy as any of them when he and the owners of the yacht and Tom and Bob set out on a sail up the bay.

The wind was fresh and fair from the southward, the bay furrowed everywhere with billows breaking white, with just enough sea running to make it good sport. The *Viking*, with sheets well off, made a fine run to Springton, and bowled into that harbour with the spray flying.

They cast anchor and went up into the old town, which was quite a little settlement clustered on a steep bank overhanging the harbour, and which boasted of a fine summer hotel and

several smaller ones. And when it got to be late afternoon, Mr. Carleton wouldn't hear of their departing; but they should all stay to supper at the hotel. If the wind died down with the sun, why, they could stay all night. What did it matter, when they were out for a good time?

So they ate supper in style in the big hotel dining-room, and came forth from there an hour later to see the waters calm and the wind fallen.

"Never mind, we'll sleep aboard the *Viking*," said Henry Burns. "There's room enough, though we have taken out some of the mattresses so as to put in the fishing-truck."

But Mr. Carleton would not hear of this. Not for a moment. He liked roughing it, to be sure, as well as any of them. But they were his guests now for the night. They must remain right there at the hotel, and he would see about the rooms. And they should breakfast at the hotel and then sail back the next day at their ease.

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They were not unwilling. It was an unusual sort of a lark, but so long as Mr. Carleton was enjoying it and was ready to pay the bills, they were satisfied.

So they sat on the veranda for several hours, enjoying the music of the orchestra in the parlour and watching the dancing through the windows. Then, when Mr. Carleton had bade them good night and had gone up to his room, they followed shortly, Tom and Bob occupying one room together and Harvey and Henry Burns, likewise, one adjoining.

"Jack," said Henry Burns, suddenly, pausing in the act of divesting himself of his blue yachting-shirt, "hang it! but I've forgotten to lock the cabin."

"Oh, let it go," said Harvey, who was already in bed and was drowsy with the sea air and good feeding.

"No, I don't like to," said Henry Burns. "There's a lot of boats lying close by; and you know how easy it is for one of those fishermen to slip aboard, and sail out at four o'clock in the morning, with one of our new lines and that compass that cost more than we could afford to pay just now; and there's a lot of things that we couldn't afford to lose just at this time. No, I'm going to run down and lock up."

"It's a good half-mile," muttered Harvey. "Better take the chance and let it go."

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"Yes, but you wouldn't say so if you had forgotten it," said Henry Burns. "I'm to blame. And if you don't see me again, why, you'll know I've stayed aboard."

Henry Burns said this last half in fun, as he departed. As for Harvey, it mattered naught to him whether Henry Burns returned or stayed away. He was asleep before his comrade had closed the hotel door behind him.

If it had chanced that Mr. Carleton, too, being a man of shrewd observation, had noticed the omission on the part of Henry Burns, who was the last one overboard, to slip the padlock that made the hatch and doors of the companionway

fast, he had not seen fit to mention the fact. Instead, he had been most talkative as they rowed away, pointing out various objects of interest up in the town.

And now that the yachtsmen had retired for the night and Mr. Carleton had withdrawn to his room, it is just barely possible that he may have recalled that fact. At all events, he did not make ready to retire, but sat for a half-hour smoking. Then he arose, turned down the light, and went quietly down the stairs.

It was about eleven o'clock, and the hotel was beginning to grow quiet. Few guests remained in the parlour, and most of the lights were out about the hotel and the grounds. Down in the town, as Mr. Carleton strolled leisurely along the streets, there were few persons stirring. Yachtsmen aboard their craft in the harbour had ceased bawling out across the water to one another, and no songs issued forth from any cabin. Only the harbour lights for the most part gleamed from the little fleet.

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The yacht *Viking* lay some half-mile down below the village, toward the entrance to the harbour, and was hidden now from Mr. Carleton's view by a little strip of land that made out in one place, and on which some tumble-down sheds stood leaning toward the water.

Mr. Carleton went down confidently to the shore; but when he had arrived at the place where they had drawn the dory out, he met with a surprise, for there was no dory there.

He looked about him, thinking he might have happened upon the wrong place; but there could be no mistaking it. There were the same sheds, with nets hung out, and the same boats in different stages of repair that he had observed with a careful eye when they had come ashore.

He went along the beach for a little distance, to where a lamp gleamed in one of the sheds, and knocked at the door.

"Some one seems to have taken our tender," he said to a man that opened to his knock. "Do you know where I can borrow one or hire one for an hour so I can go out aboard? My yacht lies down there below that point. Anything you say for pay, you know."

"I've got a skiff you're welcome to use, if you only fetch it back before morning," replied the man, good-naturedly. "I don't want pay for it, though. Just drag it up out of the reach of the tide when you come in."

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He pointed to the boat, and Mr. Carleton, dragging it into the water, stepped in and sculled away.

He was alert enough now, and he worked the little boat with a skilled stroke and a practised arm. There were a pair of oars aboard, but it sufficed him to use the scull-hole at the stern, with a single oar, which gave him the advantage of being able to look ahead. He put his strength into it, and the skiff worked its way rapidly through the fleet of yachts. The evening was warm, and Mr. Carleton threw off jacket and waistcoat and unbuttoned his collar. He was a strong, athletic figure as he stood up to his

work, peering eagerly ahead.

Something gave him a sudden start, however, just as he cleared the point that had lain between him and the *Viking*. Watching out for a glimpse of the yacht, there seemed to be—or was it a trick of the eyes, or some reflection from across the water—there seemed to be a momentary flash of light from the cabin windows. Just a gleam, or an apparent gleam, and then all was dark.

Mr. Carleton had stopped abruptly, straining his eyes at the yacht ahead.

“Strange,” he muttered softly, resuming his sculling and watching the yacht more eagerly, “I could have sworn that was a light in the cabin. If ’twas a light, though, it must have been in one of the other boats.”

He proceeded vigorously on his way.

At this very moment, however, there came another surprise to Mr. Carleton, greater than the other.

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Henry Burns, going down to the shore and sculling out to the *Viking*, had found the cabin unlocked, as he had recalled; but everything was safe. It was comfortable aboard the yacht, and he decided to remain, planning to go ashore early in the morning in time for breakfast at the hotel. He sat up for some little time, however, and it was, indeed, his cabin light that Mr. Carleton had seen, the moment before he had extinguished it, to turn in for the night.

Mr. Carleton, sculling on now cautiously toward the *Viking*, suddenly heard a noise aboard the yacht. He paused again, then seated himself quickly at the stern of the skiff, as a boyish figure emerged from the companionway of the *Viking* and came out on deck. It was Henry Burns, taking one last look at the anchor-line, and a general look around, before he went off to sleep.

There was nothing within sight to excite Henry Burns’s interest. Everything was all right aboard the *Viking*. There were the few lights still left, up in the village streets. There were a few yachts anchored at a little distance. There was the dark shore-line, with its tumbling sheds huddled together here and there. And, also, there was the lone figure of a man, seated at the stern of a small skiff, sculling slowly down past, some distance away. It was all clear and serene in Henry Burns’s eyes, and he went below, rolled in on his berth, and went to sleep.

The lone figure that Henry Burns had seen in the skiff had ceased sculling now. He seemed to have no destination in view. The oar was drawn aboard and the skiff drifted with the tide. What the man in the skiff was thinking of—what he contemplated—no one could know but he.

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But he resumed his sculling, very softly and slowly, after the lapse of a full half-hour. Noiselessly he described a circle about the yacht, drawing in nearer and nearer. Then he paused irresolutely, once more, and waited. Only he could know what would happen next. Perhaps he, too, was racked with uncertainty and irresolution. For once he seized the oar and

worked the skiff up to within twenty feet of the gently swinging yacht. Then he paused again and waited.

Henry Burns's sleep might, perchance, have been troubled could he have dreamed of the man now, waiting and watching just off the starboard bow of the *Viking*, while he slept within. But no dreams disturbed his sound slumbers.

Nor did aught else disturb them. For, presently, there came out from shore another boat, a rowboat with three men in it. They were laughing and joking about something that had happened ashore.

Mr. Carleton, resuming his oar, sculled gently away from the *Viking*, worked his way back again through the fleet of yachts whence he had come, drew the skiff out of water where he had embarked, dragged it up on the beach, and cast it from him roughly. Then he strode away up the bank to the hotel, muttering under his breath, and looking back out over the water once or twice as he ascended the hill, like a man that has suffered an unexpected defeat.

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CHAPTER XI. SQUIRE BRACKETT IS PUZZLED

Henry Burns was up early the next morning, as he had planned. He rowed the dory quickly in to the landing-place, and was in Harvey's room before that young gentleman was out of bed.

"Why, I didn't hear you get up," said Harvey.

"That's not so surprising," replied Henry Burns, "seeing as I got up aboard the *Viking*. I slept there."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Harvey. "I wonder how Mr. Carleton would like that if he knew it. He needn't have hired so big a room just for me. Say, but he's a jolly good fellow, though, isn't he?"

"He is certainly a generous one," answered Henry Burns.

Harvey smiled at his companion.

"What is it you don't like about him, Henry?" he asked.

"Why, nothing," replied Henry Burns. "Who said I didn't like him? I never did."

"No, you didn't," admitted Harvey. "But I know you well enough by this time to tell when you really like a person. Now, if I asked you if you like George Warren, you'd come out plump and flat and swear he is a fine chap, and all that. But you don't seem quite sure about Mr. Carleton. I think he's the best man that ever came down here. He likes to have a good time with us boys—which is more than most men do; he enters into things; he buys everything, and he tells good stories. What fault do you find with him?"

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"Not any," laughed Henry Burns. "He's

everything you say he is, and I think he is one of the most generous men I ever met. There, don't that satisfy you? But I'll tell you one thing, Jack. I was just thinking I shouldn't want to be in Mr. Carleton's way if he had made up his mind to do a certain thing. He's the kind of a man that wouldn't be interfered with when once he was decided."

"How do you make that out?" asked Harvey.

"Oh, just by a lot of little things," answered Henry Burns, "not any of them of any particular consequence of themselves. By the way, do you remember inviting him to sail down the river?"

"Why, not exactly," replied Harvey, somewhat puzzled.

"Well, you didn't," said Henry Burns, laughing quietly. "He invited himself. He said, 'I'll sail down with you,' or 'I'll go along with you,' or something of that sort.

"And do you remember inviting him to go out sailing on this trip?" continued Henry Burns.

"No," replied Harvey, a little impatiently.

"That's because he invited himself," said Henry Burns, still smiling. "I remember that he said, 'I'll go out sailing with you to-morrow.' That settled it in his mind."

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"Well, what of it?" asked Harvey.

"Nothing," replied Henry Burns. "I'm just as glad as you are that he proposed it. I've enjoyed his company and his generosity. I only say he is a man that I'd rather have for a friend than an enemy."

Jack Harvey laughed.

"Well, you may be right," he said. "I never think of looking at anybody as deep as that. If a man comes along and wants a sail and wants some fun, and is willing to do his share, why, that's enough for me. And if he's up to any tricks, why, he and I'll fight and have it over with. I don't worry about what might happen."

"Did you ever see me worry about anything?" asked Henry Burns.

"Why, no," said Harvey, emphatically, "I never did. I meant that I don't think about things just as you do."

Which was certainly true.

If Mr. Carleton had any notion in his head that he had, as Harvey had suggested, hired a larger room for him and Henry Burns than was really needed—or if he had any notion in his head that he had wasted his money in hiring any rooms at all at the hotel—he showed no sign of it when he appeared in the office and they went into the dining-room. Indeed, he thought it a good joke on Henry Burns that he should have had to go off to the yacht for the night, and he laughed very heartily over it, behind his big moustache.

The wind was blowing fresh from the south as the party went out on the hotel piazza. It had started up early in the morning, along with the beginning of the flood-tide, which meant, in all

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likelihood, that it would blow fresher from now on until sundown. There were already whitecaps to be seen over all the bay, and the yachts that were out under sail were lying over to it and throwing the spray smartly. It was a good morning to show the fine sailing qualities of a boat, and they were eager to be off.

They went down through the town, then, to where the dory was tied.

As they took hold to drag it down the beach, a fisherman, weather-beaten, and smoking a short stub of a clay pipe, approached them. Addressing Mr. Carleton, he said, good-naturedly, "Well, you got out and back safe, I see. Found your own boat again all right, eh?"

Mr. Carleton, glancing coolly at the man that had accommodated him the night before, said, carelessly, "Guess you've got the advantage of me, captain. I'm afraid I haven't the pleasure of your acquaintance."

The man slowly removed his pipe and stared at Mr. Carleton in amazement.

"Wall, I swear!" he ejaculated. "D'yer mean to say it wasn't you that borrowed my skiff last night to go out to your yacht?"

Mr. Carleton laughed heartily.

"Well," he replied, "seeing as I haven't any yacht to go out to, in the first place, and seeing as I was up at the hotel all last night, I think you must indeed have me mixed up in your mind with somebody else. However, if anybody has been using my name around here to hire a boat, I'm willing to pay, if you're a loser."

"Oh, no, sir," said the man, apologetically. "I don't want no pay. I just accommodated somebody, and it looked surprisingly like you. Excuse me. Guess I must have made a mistake."

"Ho! that's all right, no excuse needed," said Mr. Carleton, lightly. "You're going to row us out, are you, Harvey? Well, I'll push her off and sit down astern. I'm the heaviest."

They rowed out to where the *Viking* was tossing uneasily at her line, as though eager to be free and away from the lee of the land, amid the tumbling waves.

It was quite rough outside, and the wind increasing every minute; so they put a reef in the mainsail and set only the forestaysail and a single jib. Then, with anchor fished, they were quickly in the midst of rough weather, with the spume flying aboard in a way that sent them scuttling below for their oilskins.

The harbour out of which they were now beating made inland for a mile or two. The waters ran back thence in a salt river for several miles more, before they grew brackish, and then were merged into a stream of fresh water that had its origin in a pond back in the country. It followed, that the waters of the harbour flowed in and out with much swiftness and strength; and now, the flood-tide and the south wind being coincident, coming in together strongly, it was slow working out, even with as good a boat as the *Viking*. There was a heavy sea running, too, which

served to beat them back. They tacked to and fro, but they drew ahead of the landmarks ashore very slowly.

"I say, my lad," cried Mr. Carleton all at once, stepping aft to where Harvey held the wheel, "let me take her a few minutes and see what I can do, will you? Oh, you needn't be afraid that I'll upset you," he added, as Harvey somewhat reluctantly complied. "I've owned boats and sailed them, too,—as good as this one, if I do say it."

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It was clearly evident, as he seated himself astride the helmsman's seat, that he was no novice. He held the yacht with a practised hand, and, moreover, asserted himself with the rights of skipper.

"Haul in on that main-sheet a little more," he said to Harvey.

"She won't do as well with the boom so close aft in a heavy sea," replied Harvey.

"Oh, yes, she will," answered Mr. Carleton, coolly. "You are right as a general proposition, but I'll show you something. I've been watching the run of the tide."

Harvey, not agreeing, still acquiesced in the order, and hauled the boom aft.

"A little more," insisted Mr. Carleton. "There, that will do. Now you will see us fetch out of the harbour."

To Harvey's surprise, and that of the other boys, the yacht certainly was doing better. Mr. Carleton held her so close into the wind that the sail almost shook. Every now and then it quivered slightly. But they surely were making better progress.

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"Well," admitted Harvey at length, "that goes against what I've been taught about sailing. The sheet a little off in a heavy sea and keep her under good headway is Captain Sam's rule."

"Quite correct," said Mr. Carleton, smiling. "But, if you notice, the tide sets swift around that point ahead and we get the full force of it. Now, with the boat heading off as you had it, don't you see we were getting the head wind and head tide both on the same side—both hitting the port bow and throwing her back? Now, do you see what we are doing? She's heading up into the wind so far that the force of the tide hits the starboard bow. So we've got the wind on one side and the tide on the other; and, between the two forces, we go ahead."

Harvey's respect rose for Mr. Carleton.

"That's right," he said. "I've heard something of that kind, too. But I never thought much about it."

"Well, the tide is three-fourths of sailing," responded Mr. Carleton. "Now as we clear this point we'll start the sheet off once more a little. It's rougher, and we'll need all the headway we can make."

It was evident Mr. Carleton was no hotel piazza sailor. He was as happy as a boy out of school, as he held the wheel with a firm, strong hand,

heading up for the deep rollers and pointing off again quickly, keeping the yacht under good headway, and watching the water ahead, and the drawing of the jib, with a practised eye. They had never seen him so enthusiastic.

He was, somehow, a picture of particular interest to Henry Burns, who had a way of observing how persons did things, and who conceived some impression of them accordingly, beyond a mere surface one.

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It being a fact, to a degree, that a boat has as many peculiarities—one might almost say individualities—all its own as a human being, or a horse, it was interesting to see how quickly Mr. Carleton took note of them and handled his boat accordingly. He seemed to realize at once just how she would take the wind; how stiffly she would stand up in a flaw; just how much the jib and forestaysail needed trimming to be at their best; just how to humour the boat in several little ways to get the most out of her. And he did it all very confidently.

That he was a man of sharp discernment, and quick to learn things, was the impression he made on Henry Burns. And if there should come a time when Henry Burns, remembering many things which he now observed, but attached no particular importance to, should put them all together and form a conclusion regarding them and of Mr. Carleton, why certainly there was nought of that in his mind now.

He did observe one thing, however, in particular, and it was in accord with what he had told Harvey concerning Mr. Carleton. The man had aggressiveness and determination. Mr. Carleton surely believed in holding a boat down to its work. There was no timidity, even to a point that bordered on recklessness, in the way he met the heavier buffetings of the wind. Where a more cautious man would have luffed and spilled a little of the wind, Mr. Carleton held the wheel firm and let the *Viking* heel over and take it, seeming to know she would go through all right; as though he should say, "You can stand it. Now let's see you do it. I'll not indulge you. I know what you can stand. You can't fool me."

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Henry Burns rather liked him for this. There was something that he admired in his skill and courage.

The yacht *Viking* was weathering the seas grandly. She was a boat that did not bury deep in a smother, and flounder about and pound hard and lose headway, but rode the waves lightly and went easily to windward.

"Works well, doesn't she?" cried Harvey, enthusiastically.

"Splendid, better than ever—better than she did coming down the river, and yesterday," responded Mr. Carleton. "She'd almost stand a gaff-topsail even with this breeze. That's a good clean stick, that topmast. However, I guess we're doing well enough. We won't set it, eh?"

"Here, you take the wheel," he said the next moment to Henry Burns, whom he had observed eying him sharply. "Let's see what kind of a sailor you are."

One might have thought it was Mr. Carleton's own boat. He said it with such an air.

Henry Burns acquiesced calmly and with that confidence he had when he knew he could do a thing right. Here was another individual who could learn things quickly, too; and if Harvey had had more experience than he in actual sailing and handling a boat, Henry Burns more than matched him in coolness and resource.

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"You'll do," said Mr. Carleton at length. "I'll risk my life with you and Harvey any day. How's the crew—are they pretty good sailors, too?"

"First class," said Henry Burns. "We'll show you there isn't a lubber aboard." And he turned the wheel over first to Tom and then to Bob, who acquitted themselves very creditably, showing they had picked up the knowledge of sailing wonderfully well.

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Carleton. "That's the way to run a boat. Give every man a chance to get the hang of it. One never knows what's going to happen to a sailboat and who's going overboard, or get tangled up in a sheet, or something the matter; and then it pays to have a crew any one of whom can take hold at a moment's notice and lend a hand."

So, having established himself in their confidence, and with mutual good feeling aboard, Mr. Carleton declared himself well pleased with their trip, as they beat up to Southport harbour. He hadn't enjoyed himself so much in years, he said. And he thanked them cordially for his good time, as they rowed him ashore.

"We're much obliged to you, too," replied Harvey, "for the fun you've given us."

"Oh, that don't amount to anything," said Mr. Carleton.

Mr. Carleton, oddly enough, had occasion to make Henry Burns and Jack Harvey an apology not many hours afterward.

The afternoon and evening had passed, and the two yachtsmen, leaving Tom and Bob to spend the night ashore in their tent, had gone out aboard the *Viking*. They had sat up reading until about half-past ten o'clock,—rather later than usual,—when a most unexpected visitor appeared. It was none other than Mr. Carleton, rowing alongside in a small rowboat belonging to Captain Sam. He made this fast now and climbed aboard.

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"Really this is imposing on your hospitality," he said, appearing at the companionway. "But the fact is, I'm in a bit of a scrape. I've left my key in another pair of trousers in Captain Curtis's house, and the door is locked there, and they're evidently all fast asleep, as it's getting on to eleven. I hated to wake them up, so I came down on the point and looked in at your friends' tent. They were sleeping like good fellows, too, and I couldn't see any extra blanket to roll up in. Then I spied your light out aboard here. Do you think you can spare me a bunk and a blanket for a night?"

"We'll be only too glad to return your favour of

last night," replied Henry Burns.

"Though you didn't make use of it yourself, eh," said Mr. Carleton, smiling.

They were off to sleep then in short order, Henry Burns and Harvey occupying the cushioned berths amidships, and their guest one of the same just forward, where Tom or Bob usually slept.

There was really nothing of consequence occurring in the night, to be recorded, except a slight incident that showed Mr. Carleton to be a bad sleeper.

Perhaps it was the strange quarters he was in that made him restless, so that he lay for an hour or two listening to the deep breathing of the boys, himself wide awake. Yet he was considerate, was Mr. Carleton, and made no move to arouse them.

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Even when he sat up, after a time, and threw the blanket off, and lit a match under the cover of the blanket to read the face of his watch by, he did it very softly. Perhaps, even then, he was solicitous lest their sleep be disturbed; for he stole quietly along to where they lay, and made sure he had not aroused them.

By and by, Mr. Carleton made another move. Taking the blanket that had covered him, he pinned it up so that it hung from the roof of the cabin as a sort of curtain. Then he lighted one of the cabin lamps, turning it down so that it shone only very dimly.

"Hang it, I don't know what makes me so wakeful," he said, in a low voice. "That light doesn't disturb either of you boys, does it?"

There was no answer. But Mr. Carleton, apparently to make certain, repeated the question two or three times, very softly, so as not to arouse them if they were sleeping, but to be overheard in case one of them should be awake. And he repeated also the remark several times about his sleeplessness.

And also did he mutter to himself, so that none other could by any possibility have overheard, "Perhaps a light will show. I couldn't make anything out by daylight."

A moment or two after that, Henry Burns, opening one sleepy eye to an unusual though faint ray of light, escaping from behind the blanket, beheld the figure of Mr. Carleton moving about the forward part of the cabin. He lay still for a moment wondering, drowsily, what was the matter. Perhaps he might have observed the figure for some time in silence, but of a sudden he was seized of an overpowering impulse to sneeze, and did so lustily.

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The figure with the lantern jumped as though it had received a blow. Then, by the light of the lantern, the blanket being whisked aside, Mr. Carleton was revealed, with a paper-covered novel in one hand, seating himself in the attitude of one reading.

"That's too bad," he said, softly. "I thought the blanket would hide my light. I got restless, you see, and have been reading a bit. I'm all right

now though, I think. I'll douse the light and try again. Sorry I disturbed you."

The light went out. Hence neither Henry Burns nor any one else could by any possibility have seen the look of anger and disappointment on the face of Mr. Carleton as he turned in and lay down to sleep—this time in earnest.

While thus living his boyhood over again with his new youthful acquaintances, Mr. Carleton did not neglect to establish friendly relations with older persons. Squire Brackett admired him greatly. As matter of fact, to a designing person, the squire was the easiest man in the world to win admiration from.

He had an inordinate vanity and love of flattery, which, united with a pompous manner, made him unbearable to those of discrimination; and this entrance to his good graces was quickly espied by Mr. Carleton. The squire liked that quiet, but perceptible, deference that came to him from a person of such apparent means.

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There was, however, another reason that appealed even more strongly to the squire why he should cultivate Mr. Carleton, and that was a hint the squire had gained that his new acquaintance might prove profitable to him.

"Squire Brackett," said Mr. Carleton, seated for the evening on the squire's front porch, "that's a pretty little island just below here, close to shore, between here and where those four boys are camping. Do you know, I'd like to own that. I have an idea a man could throw out a neat, rustic bridge from shore, just big enough to take a horse and carriage across, build a cottage out there, and have the most beautiful place about here."

"Well, why don't you buy it?" replied the squire. "It would, indeed, be a rare cottage site—prettiest spot around here, I say."

"I think perhaps I will," said Mr. Carleton; "that is, if it is for sale. Do you know anything about that?"

"Why," answered the squire, "I guess I come about as near as anybody to owning it. You see, I hold a mortgage on it."

"How much do you value it at?" asked Mr. Carleton.

"Why, let me see," said the squire; "about twenty-five hundred dollars, I should say."

"Cheap enough!" exclaimed Mr. Carleton. "I'll just write up to my lawyers and see how some investments I have are turning-out. I think we can make a trade later on."

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He said it as though it was a trifling matter, and the squire, who had named an exorbitant figure, was sorry he had not put it higher. He also had neglected to explain that his hold on the land was of the slightest, consisting, as it did, of a mortgage of eight hundred dollars against Billy Cook, the owner, who had paid off all but two hundred dollars of the incumbrance. However, he had no doubt he could easily buy it of Billy Cook—indeed, he had had it offered to him for only four hundred dollars above the entire

mortgage the year before.

"You ought to have a good boat to cruise around here with," said the squire. "You're fond of sailing, I see. Reckon you know how to handle a boat pretty well yourself."

The squire knew he hadn't any boat to sell that would suit Mr. Carleton, calling to mind his son's letter from him about the *Viking*; but he had a purpose in suggesting the buying of one. He considered that if Mr. Carleton should make such a purchase, and become fascinated with the sailing about Southport, he would be more likely to want the land to build a cottage on.

"Yes, I am very fond of sailing," responded Mr. Carleton, "but I haven't got so far as to think about buying a boat just yet."

"Oh, ho! you haven't, eh?" said the squire to himself. "Reckon I know something about that."

The squire was vastly tickled. Here was a position that just suited his crafty nature. It didn't signify anything, to be sure, Mr. Carleton's dissembling,—probably that he might get a better bargain by keeping quiet and not seeming anxious to buy,—but it pleased the squire to have this little advantage in the situation.

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"I think you might buy the *Viking*," he suggested.

Mr. Carleton had his own doubts about this, having been informed by Harry Brackett of the failure of his attempt, but he merely said, "That so? Well, she might do. Ever hear of anything queer about her—any outs about her?"

"No," replied the squire, "nothing queer about her, except the way they got her. I don't know of any faults that she has."

"Well, I might buy her if they didn't hold her too high," said Mr. Carleton, meditatively. "I suppose she's worth fifteen hundred dollars easy enough."

"Yes, and more if you had her up Boston way," answered the squire. "You haven't had any idea of buying her, then?"

"No," responded Mr. Carleton. "Still, I might like to. But please don't say anything about it."

"Oh, no," replied the squire, chuckling to himself. Mr. Carleton, bidding him good night and taking his departure, was more than ever an object of interest to the squire. Here was a man that spoke in the most casual and nonchalant way of investing twenty-five hundred dollars in a piece of land that he liked, and of buying a fifteen-hundred-dollar boat. The squire's curiosity, always keen in other persons' affairs, was aroused. He wondered—in the usual trend of such personal curiosity—how the other man had made his money.

This curiosity was not abated, to say the least, by a comparatively trifling incident that occurred a day or two following. The squire had, in the cupola of his house, which he used as a vantage-point for surveying the bay far out to sea, and the surrounding country up and down the island, a large telescope. It was a powerful

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glass, with which he could "pick up" a vessel away down among the islands, and read the name on the stern of one a mile away. The squire had some interests in several small schooners plying between the coast cities and Benton, and was in the habit of going up to his lookout two or three times each day.

On this particular occasion, the squire, after sweeping the bay with the glass, turned it inland and took a look down the island. He could distinguish several familiar wagons passing along the main road, but nothing unusual. But, when he happened to turn the glass almost directly back inland from the direction of the town, he caught an object in its sweep that arrested his attention. It was the figure of his new acquaintance, Mr. Carleton, leaning against some pasture bars about a quarter of a mile away, intently reading a letter.

There was surely nothing unusual nor exciting about this, and yet the squire was interested. Perhaps it was due just to the novelty of observing a man a quarter of a mile away, reading a letter, when he could by no possibility be aware that he was being observed.

But if the squire's attention was drawn to Mr. Carleton in the act of reading the letter, it was certainly doubled and trebled when the latter, having finished his perusal of it, waved the letter in a seemingly triumphant manner about his head and then tore it into many little pieces and dropped the pieces at his feet. Squire Brackett, through the spy-glass, watched Mr. Carleton come down through the fields toward the village.

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He knew the exact spot to the inch where Mr. Carleton had stood. It was at the bars that divided a pasture belonging to the postmaster and a piece of town property. The squire shut the sliding glass windows that protected his lookout, hurried out-of-doors, walked briskly up through the fields, making a detour to avoid meeting Mr. Carleton, and arrived, somewhat short of breath, at the bars. He gathered up the pieces of the letter carefully. He put them into his coat-pocket, and walked briskly back to his house.

He hadn't got them all, for the wind had carried some away. But the letter had evidently been a brief one. When the squire took the pieces out that afternoon at his desk in a little room that he called his office, there were only eleven scraps that he could assemble. Mr. Carleton had torn the letter into small bits.

The squire was disappointed. He had hoped to gratify his curiosity and be able to pry into Mr. Carleton's private affairs a little. And withal, there were two words that interested him greatly and made his disappointment all the more keen. These were two words that followed, one the other, in the sequence in which they had been written. They were the words, "aboard yacht." All the others had been so separated in the destruction of the letter that the squire despaired of ever being able to make anything out of them, or to restore them to anything like their original consecutive form.

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However, he arranged the words and scraps of words by pasting them on a sheet of paper, as follows:

lock
ey
must be
sound
mbers
aboard yacht
starboa
still
under
ays
third

"Well, there's a puzzle for you!" he exclaimed, dubiously. "How in the world shall I ever be able to make anything out of that?" But the next moment he gave a chuckle of exultation. "I've got part of it already!" he cried. "Lucky I happened to set them down just this way. Those letters, 'mbers' must have been part of the word 'timbers.' So that, after the first three scraps that I have put down, it reads, 'sound timbers aboard yacht.' I'll get something out of this yet. There's 'starboa,' too. That's 'starboard,' of course. And 'ays' below may be 'stays.' That might make 'starboard stays.'"

A look of perplexity came over the squire's face the next moment.

"The queer thing about this," he said, reflectively, "is that somebody away from here is writing him about this yacht. Perhaps they don't mean the *Viking*. However, I believe that is the boat referred to. Well, he may be only getting advice from some one as to how to examine the yacht—how to look her over. The remark about 'sound timbers' sounds like that, anyway. So ho! he isn't thinking about buying a yacht, eh?"

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The squire chuckled.

"I'll study this over at my leisure," he said, as he placed the paper with the letters pasted on it carefully away in a drawer. "I'll figure it out."

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CHAPTER XII. THE SURPRISE SETS SAIL AGAIN

The work on the *Surprise* had gone on famously, though it had been a hard task. The labour of cleaning her, inside and out, had been well begun down in the Thoroughfare, but there remained still much to be done after she had been floated up into the harbour of Southport.

First, the boys had brought her in on the beach, at a point a little way up the cove from the Warren cottage, where there was a break in the rocky shore, and a clean strip of sand extended back from the water's edge. There they had raised her on blocks and shored her up so they could work to advantage.

They swarmed over and in and out of her then like ants in an ant-hill, every boy lending a hand, from the Warren brothers to the campers down below. They scrubbed and scraped her, inside and out, and washed her insides with soap and hot water.

Then, following Captain Sam's advice, they built a fire on the shore and melted a kettle full of pitch and tar. When they had gone over the entire planking of the boat, setting up the nails that had slackened with the straining it had undergone, and had driven many new ones in between, Harvey, equipped with an enormous brush, and having taken up the cabin flooring, smeared the inner part of the boat's planking with the tar and pitch, filling all the seams with it.

Then they went over the entire hull on the exterior, tightening it up, scraping, sandpapering, and rubbing until their hands were blistered and their arms ached. Then came the painting of the cabin and outer hull, and the scraping and varnishing of the decks. The mast and ballast they had brought up from the *Thoroughfare*. The latter, cleansed of its rust and given a coating of hot coal-tar, was ready to be stowed aboard. The mast, scraped and varnished till it glistened once more, had been carefully stepped and fastened above and below. The yacht *Surprise*, with clean, shining spars, with polished, glistening decks, and with hull spotless white, was ready once more for the water. Long before they had tested their work with innumerable buckets of water thrown aboard, and had found her tight and not a leak remaining.

Jack Harvey eyed the yacht admiringly, as he paused, half-way up the bank from where she stood. His companions in the day's work had gone on ahead.

"She's a fine old boat," he said, "and she's just as good as new. I've had a lot of fun in her, too. I'll never have any more fun in the *Viking* than I've had in her, though the *Viking* is bigger and handsomer. I'd be satisfied with the *Surprise* if I hadn't got the other one."

The moment seemed almost opportune for the offer that followed.

"That's a fine craft there," cried a voice so close in Harvey's ear that it made him jump, for he had been so lost in the admiration of the *Surprise* that he had not heard the sound of any one approaching. He turned quickly, and there was Mr. Carleton.

"Doesn't look much as though she had been under water all winter, does she?" asked Harvey.

"I should say not," replied Mr. Carleton. "Looks as though she was just out of the shipyard. I don't see what you need of the *Viking* when you've got such a boat as this. You'd better let me hire the *Viking* from you for the rest of the summer."

"Sorry," replied Harvey, "but I can't do it. You see, I've promised to let the crew have this boat, and they have set their hearts on it. I wouldn't disappoint them now for a hundred dollars."

"How about two hundred dollars?" suggested Mr. Carleton.

Harvey hesitated for a moment.

"No!" he cried, determinedly, "not for a

thousand dollars. There! I've said it, and I mean it. I want the money bad enough, too. But the crew are going to have this boat. We've made all the arrangements, and we are using the *Viking* for fishing, and we've got to be off for another trip, too, for we have been about here, earning nothing, for quite awhile now."

"I'll give you eighteen hundred dollars if you will sell the *Viking*," said Mr. Carleton.

Harvey shook his head stubbornly.

"No use," he said. "But," he added, "you can arrange with the crew to take you sailing easy enough when we aren't around here. They'll be glad to have you go."

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"Hm!" exclaimed Mr. Carleton. "Well, all right; but if you change your mind, let me know."

"When are you going to launch this one?" he added.

"Why, I think we'll put her into the water this evening," replied Harvey. "That is, if we don't get a shower. The moon will be up and the tide right. That's why we are coming away so early now. We're going up to the Warren cottage to get out some Japanese lanterns, and get the cannon ready. When we launch her, we are going to run a line from the masthead to the stern, and hang a chain of the lanterns, light them, and tow the *Surprise* around to the wharf in style, and fire a salute. Then she'll be ready for Captain Sam to fit the sails in the morning. Better come around and see the fun."

"Will you all be over here?" inquired Mr. Carleton.

"The whole crowd," answered Harvey.

"Then I'll be on hand sure," said Mr. Carleton—but added to himself, "if I don't have something else to do."

There seemed to be no prospect of anybody taking part in a launching on this particular evening, however, for the dark clouds that had warned Harvey spread over the sky, and a quickly gathering summer shower was soon upon them. Harvey hurried up to the Warren cottage for shelter, and Mr. Carleton started back on the run toward Captain Sam's.

A rowboat or two out in the harbour put hurriedly in to shore. The occupant of one of these latter craft, scurrying in and dashing homeward, had, it seems, been noticed by Squire Brackett through his glass from his observation-tower.

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"Harry," he said, as that young man came into the house, somewhat red in the face and out of breath, "what were you doing just now out around the *Viking*? I saw you row out behind her, and it took you at least three minutes or more to come in sight again. You didn't go aboard her, did you?"

"No, I didn't go aboard," replied Harry Brackett, sulkily.

"Well, see that you don't," said Squire Brackett, emphatically. "You might not mean any harm by it, but you've had some trouble with those boys

already this summer, and they wouldn't like having you aboard unless they invited you."

"Hm! well, if I wait for that I'll never step aboard that boat," exclaimed Harry Brackett. "And what's more, I don't want to go aboard. I wouldn't go if they asked me."

Having thus declared himself, Harry Brackett bolted his supper and vanished.

The shower, of rapid approach, was of equally brief duration. It had begun raining big, splashing drops about half-past four o'clock. Now, an hour later, it was brightening again, the sun darting its rays forth from the breaking cloud-banks, and the rain-drops dripping only from eaves and tree-branches.

Henry Burns and Harvey were vastly elated. The launching need not be put off, for the evening would be fair. They left the Warren cottage and hurried down alongshore to where they had left their tender, rowed out to the *Viking*, and began their preparations for supper.

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"Henry," said Harvey, "there's some sunlight left yet, and just enough breeze to dry the sails nicely before we leave. The sooner they are dried the less likely they are to mildew. Shall we run them up?"

"Yes, let's be quick about it," replied Henry Burns. "The fire's ready for the biscuit."

They seized the halyards, one the throat and the other the peak, and began hauling. The sail went up smartly—when, all at once, there was an ominous, ripping sound.

"Hold on!" cried Harvey, "something is caught."

"Well, I should say there was!" exclaimed Henry Burns, when he had made his halyard fast, and started to examine. "Cracky! but there are two big tears in the sail."

"I don't see how that can be," said Harvey, joining him. "It's a stout, new mainsail."

"Why, I see what did the mischief," he exclaimed, the next moment. "The reefing-points are caught in two places. That's funny. We shook all the reefs out the last time we brought her in."

"Look and see if it's funny," said Henry Burns, quietly. "I suppose somebody thought it was funny. Those knots didn't tie themselves."

Harvey examined them, while his face reddened with anger.

"I'll bet I could guess who did that!" he cried.

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"We'll attend to his case if you guess right," responded Henry Burns.

The knots certainly could not have caught themselves. There had been design in the act. In two places along the sail, one of the points for the fourth reef had been tied with one of the first. The consequence of this was, that when the united strength of the boys had come to bear directly on these two places, instead of being exerted evenly along the entire sail, the canvas had given away.

Harvey clinched his fist for a moment, opened his lips, as though about to give vent to his anger, and then suddenly subsided, with an expression on his face that half-amused Henry Burns.

"Say, Henry," he said, "I've played the same kind of a joke myself before this, so I guess I might as well grin and bear it. But," he continued, doubling up his fist once more, "perhaps I won't take it out of that young Harry Brackett just the same, if I find out he did it."

Henry Burns smiled assent.

"Never mind," he said. "We can mend the tears so they won't show much."

They untied the knots, raised the sail, and let it dry while they ate their supper.

"Say, Tim," said Harvey, an hour later, as they stood on shore by Tom and Bob's tent, where the campers from down below had also assembled, "will you do something for me?"

"Sure," replied Little Tim. "What is it?"

"Well, we want you to stay out aboard the *Viking* while we go up the cove and get the *Surprise* off and float her around," said Harvey. "You see, Henry and I have decided not to leave the *Viking* deserted at night after this—that is, unless we have to. But what we want to-night particularly is for you to stay aboard and keep watch, and see if you notice Harry Brackett around the shore or the wharf, looking off toward the *Viking*. He's played us a fine trick, and made us tear our mainsail—that is, we think he did it. But whoever it was will probably be around to see if the trick worked. You don't mind, do you?"

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"No-o-o," answered Tim; "but don't fire the cannon till you get around the point."

"We won't," said Harvey. "Here's the key to the cabin."

Little Tim rowed out aboard.

It seemed, however, as though his vigil was to be a fruitless one. Certainly, Harry Brackett failed to put in an appearance. Little Tim stretched himself out on the seat and waited impatiently.

"I don't see what Jack wanted to make me stay here for," he remarked, when eight o'clock had come and gone and it was close upon nine, and the moon was rising.

Presently, however, he sat up and listened. Yes, there was somebody rowing out from shore. Tim strained his eyes eagerly. Then shortly he made out a somewhat familiar figure.

"Hello, Mr. Carleton," he called; "I thought they said you were going up to the launching."

The man in the boat stopped rowing abruptly, and turned in his seat. But if he was surprised to find anybody aboard the *Viking* he did not show it.

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"So I am," he replied. "Don't you want to go up with me?"

"Can't do it," replied Little Tim. "I'm on watch. You'd better hurry, though. The tide is about up. She'll be afloat soon now."

Mr. Carleton rowed away. But he was not over-impatient, it would seem, for he rowed leisurely. In fact, he did not get up to the place of the launching at all, but paused off the wharf and sat idly in the stern of his boat, smoking and enjoying the beauty of the rising moon.

The yacht *Surprise* was at last afloat in all its glory of new paint and shining spars. She came around the point presently, towed by two boats filled with the boys, the string of lanterns, with candles lighted, swaying almost dangerously in the night breeze. The rowers halted abreast the *Viking*, the report of the cannon rang out over the waters and up through the quiet town, and the *Surprise*, now at anchor, lay waiting for the morrow, when Captain Sam should stretch the sails.

"Great success, wasn't it?" cried Tom Harris to the occupant of a rowboat that had drifted up to them.

"Great!" replied Mr. Carleton. "Great! Sorry I didn't get over in time to see her go into the water."

Mr. Carleton made up for his delinquency the next day, however, for he was on hand early, and was much interested in the work of Captain Sam. He knew something of reeving rigging, too, it seemed, and lent a hand now and then. Joe Hinman and the crew liked him better than ever for it.

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He was down again after dinner, too, and ready as ever to be of assistance.

"Hello," he said, looking over toward the *Viking*, "are the other chaps going to play truant this afternoon, and leave us to rig the *Surprise*? I see they've got sail up."

"Oh, they're off for a week's fishing down among the islands," said Joe. "Jack said for us to go ahead and run the *Surprise* as soon as Captain Sam gets her ready. There they start now. They've cast off."

The *Viking* was, indeed, under way, with Henry Burns and Harvey and Tom and Bob waving farewell.

"Where are you bound?" called Mr. Carleton, springing to the rail and hailing the *Viking*.

"Down the bay, fishing," answered Harvey.

"Great!" cried Mr. Carleton. "Bring her up a minute, and I'll come aboard and make the trip with you."

Harvey looked at Henry Burns inquiringly.

Henry Burns glanced back at Mr. Carleton, but without altering the course of the yacht.

"Good-bye," he called, pleasantly. "Sorry, but we've got a full crew. Couldn't pay you high enough wages, anyway. Next trip, perhaps. Good-bye, fellows."

Mr. Carleton watched the yacht, footing it fleetly

southward; and there was a look of genuine disappointment on his face.

"Never mind," said Joe Hinman, "come along with us. We're off for a little cruise ourselves, in the morning. We'd like to have you go."

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"No, thanks," replied Mr. Carleton. "I think I will wait ashore this trip—yes, I will go, too," he said in the next breath. "I tell you where we will go. We'll sail down to Stoneland. I haven't been down that far yet. I'm with you."

"All right," said Joe. As a matter of fact, he had not contemplated so long a trip until the sails had been fully stretched and fitted under Captain Sam's eye. But there was something positive about Mr. Carleton's assertion. He said it with an assurance that seemed to take it for granted that that settled it. So Joe good-naturedly acquiesced.

"By the way," said Mr. Carleton the next morning, when they had met outside Rob Dakin's store, "have you got a chart of these waters aboard?"

"No," answered Joe. "Jack has all that stuff aboard the *Viking*. But we don't need a chart around this bay, do we, fellows? Not to go as far as Stoneland even. We know the bay all right."

"Well, I don't doubt that," responded Mr. Carleton; "but I like to see where I am sailing for my own information. I'll get one in the store."

Mr. Carleton providing not only a chart for the voyage, but a quantity of provisions as well, they set out in high feather. It certainly was a stroke of luck, now that Harvey's pocket-money was low, to have so liberal a passenger.

He was an interested and discerning sailor, too, was Mr. Carleton. He had a sailor's interest to read the depth of water on the chart as they sailed, and to note the points of land off at either hand, and the islands by name, as they went southward. And he traced it all accurately on the chart as they progressed, with a little pencilling, especially when they sailed between some small islands at the foot of Grand Island.

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"I like to know where I am, don't you?" he asked of Joe Hinman. "I may buy a yacht of my own down here some day."

He was interested in the harbour of Stoneland, too, and in the town; and he took them all up to a store there and bought them bottled soda, and bought their supper the night of their arrival there—which was the second night after their departure from Southport.

Then, at his suggestion, they cruised a little way down the channel that was the thoroughfare out to sea, on the following morning, and would have liked to go farther, but that Joe Hinman declared they must be getting back, as the crew had an idea of doing some fishing on their own account, to help Harvey out with expenses.

"There!" exclaimed Mr. Carleton, as they headed about finally, "there's our course by the chart, laid down as fine as you please. I'm going to give this chart to you—after I amuse myself with it awhile."

But be it recorded that when the trip had been ended, several days later, Mr. Carleton did not leave the chart aboard the *Surprise*, but took it ashore with him.

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CHAPTER XIII. STORMY WEATHER

"Too bad we couldn't take Carleton along with us," said Harvey, as the yacht *Viking*, with all sail spread, was beating down the bay. "He ought to have asked us sooner. We might have managed to make room for him."

"You mean, he ought to have said he was going sooner," said Henry Burns, slyly.

"Oh, I suppose so," replied Harvey, half-impatiently. "I see, you never will quite like our new friend. By the way, that reminds me, he wants to buy the *Viking*. He says he will give us eighteen hundred dollars. That's the second offer we've had this summer."

"Are you sure it isn't the same one?" suggested Henry Burns.

"Why, of course it is," cried Jack Harvey. "Sure enough, that's what Harry Brackett was up to. He was buying for Mr. Carleton—just trying to show off, and make us think he had all that money."

"That's queer, too," remarked Henry Burns, "that Mr. Carleton should try to buy the *Viking* after just that one short sail down the river."

"Oh, I don't know," returned Harvey; "he saw what the boat could do—at least, in smooth water. No, that wouldn't quite answer, either. He must have heard about her from some of the fishermen over at Bellport."

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"Well, do you want to sell?" inquired Henry Burns.

"Not much!" replied Harvey, emphatically. "I know you don't, either, although you don't say so."

"Well, that's true; I'd rather not," admitted Henry Burns.

The wind was light, and they had only reached Hawk Island by six o'clock. So, not caring to risk another experience making Loon Island Harbour in the night, they anchored, and sailed over the next morning. They had provided bait for two days' fishing before they left Southport, so they stood on past Loon Island Harbour and ran out direct to the fishing-grounds.

They had a fair afternoon's fishing, and also set two short pieces of trawl, for hake, a few fathoms off from one of the reefs. Captain Sam had provided them with these. They were long lines, each with about a hundred hooks attached at intervals by short pieces of line. At either end of the trawl-line was a sinker, and also a line extending to the surface of the water where it was attached to a buoy. This, floating

conspicuously on the water, would mark the spot where the trawl had been set.

Baiting these many hooks all along the trawl with herring, bought for the purpose at Southport, they set them at a point lying between two reefs, in about twenty-five fathoms of water, where Will Hackett had informed them there was a strip of soft, muddy bottom, a feeding-ground frequented by these fish.

Then they ran in to harbour with their catch of cod, and took them up to the trader's wharf.

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"We're going to have some hake for you, too," said Henry Burns. "That is, we expect to. What are you paying for hake these days?"

The trader, Mr. Hollis, eyed the young fisherman with an amused expression.

"Going right into the business, aren't you?" he said. "Well, I like to see you young fellows with some spunk. Don't fetch in so many that I can't handle 'em," he added, with a twinkle in his eye; "and if you underrun your trawls twice a day, so the fish will come in here good and fresh, I'll pay you half a cent a pound. You'll find it some work, though, when the sea is running strong. Got to take the fish off the hooks in the morning, and then underrun again at evening and bait up all the hooks for the night's catch."

"We'll do that all right," responded Henry Burns. "We'll bring them in fresh."

They put in hard, busy days now, rising at the first of daylight and going outside as soon as the wind would allow. They had only one dory with which to tend the trawls, so two of the boys usually tended one, and then the other two took their turn. It proved, indeed, hard work when the sea was high.

If the night's catch had been good, the trawls came up heavy; and there was ever the danger, with the pitching of the boat, of running one of the innumerable hooks into the hands. But they soon became expert at it, learning how to sit braced in the boat and hold the trawl with a firm grasp, so that it might not slip through the hands, and how to unhook the fish.

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Then, when they had underrun both trawls, they would stand off in the *Viking* for a different feeding-ground for the cod, and fish until it was time to bait up the trawls for the night.

By degrees, they came to learn other feeding-grounds than the few Will Hackett had shown them, by following the little fleet; and they went now, occasionally, clear across the bay that lay between Loon Island and South Haven Island. This was often rough water, for they were at the very entrance to the bay, at the open sea, and the waves piled in heavily, even when the wind was light, showing there had been a disturbance far out. This took them to the shoal water in about the reefs at the foot of South Haven Island, a protected spot from the north, under the lee, but open to the full sweep of the sea from the south.

It was in this place at about five of the afternoon, on the fourth day following their arrival, that they experienced a sudden and

startling change of weather.

They had gone out in the morning, with a light southerly breeze blowing, which had held steadily throughout the day. But now, near sundown, it had died away, so that they had weighed anchor and were about to beat back slowly across the bay, toward harbour.

They had scarcely got under way, however, when the wind, with extraordinary fickleness, fell off altogether, a strange and unusual calm succeeding.

"That's queer!" exclaimed Harvey, glancing about with some apprehension. "Looks as though we were hung up here for the night. It won't do to try to anchor near these reefs, and we can't fetch bottom where we are. I guess we are in for a row of a mile to get under the lee of one of those little islands where we can lie safe."

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They were about half a mile out from the nearest line of reefs, floating idly on the long swells, with the sails flapping and the boom swinging inboard in annoying fashion.

Henry Burns groaned.

"Oh my!" he exclaimed. "What a beastly stroke of luck. I'm tired enough to turn in now. Don't you suppose we'll get a little evening breeze?"

"We may," replied Harvey, "but there's something queer in the way the wind dropped all of a sudden. I'm afraid we've seen the last of the breeze for to-day."

But Jack Harvey's prophecy was refuted with startling suddenness.

"Jack," said Bob, almost the next moment, "there's something queer about the water just along the line of the reefs and the shore back of them."

He pointed, as he spoke, to a strange, white light that lay in a long, thin line just off the land, a half-mile ahead. It was almost ghostly, with a brilliant, unnatural whiteness. And, even as they gazed, its area rapidly extended and broadened.

Harvey shot a quick glance ahead. Then he sprang from the wheel and seized the throat-halyard.

"Get the peak—quick!" he cried to Bob. "Head her square as you can for the light, Henry. Tom, cast off the jib-halyards and grab the downhaul. It's a white squall, I think."

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Henry Burns seized the wheel, while the two boys at the halyards let the mainsail go on the run. There was no steerageway on the *Viking*, as they had been drifting; but Henry Burns managed, by throwing the wheel over quickly and reversing it moderately, to swing the boat's head a little.

They were not a moment too soon. Out of a clear, cloudless sky, there came suddenly rushing upon them a wind with such fury that, sweeping across the bow, it laid the yacht over; while there flew aboard, from the smother about the bow, a cloud of fine spray that nearly blinded them.

The *Viking*, its head thrown off by the squall, that struck the outer jib, which they had not been able to lower, careened alarmingly. Then Henry Burns brought her fairly before it, just as a sea began to roll aboard. The cockpit was ankle-deep with water; but they were scudding now safely out to sea, drenched to the skin, as the squall, whipping off the tops of the long rollers, filled all the air with a flying storm of spray.

The blast had fallen upon them so unexpectedly, and with such incredible quickness, that they scarce knew what had happened before they were running before it toward the open sea.

They got the hatches closed now, after Tom had dashed below and brought up the oilskins. True, they were soaked through and through, but the wind had a sharp, cold sting to it, and the oilskins would protect them from that. They got the outer jib down, too. Then, when they saw there was no immediate danger, as the *Viking* was acting well, they collected their wits and discussed, hurriedly, what they should do.

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"My! but that was a close call," said Bob. "How did you know what was coming, Jack?"

"I didn't, exactly," said Harvey. "But I've heard the fishermen tell of the white squalls, and I thought that was one."

"Don't they say they are worse when they come between tides?" asked Henry Burns, quietly.

"Seems to me they do," answered Harvey. "I guess we're in for it. Lucky we are running out to sea, instead of in on to a lee shore, though."

"They don't last long, I've heard say," said Henry Burns. "We may be able to face it by and by, and work back; though it will be a long beat, by the way we are driving."

They were, indeed, being borne onward with great force. Moreover, a quick transformation had taken place over the surface of the waters; for the fury of the squall, continuing as it did for some time from the west, had calmed the waves, and there was almost a smooth sea before them.

Then, presently, there came another strange alteration of the wind. The violence of the squall abated, and the breeze fell away again. But only for a brief length of time. As often happens, with the white squall as its forerunner, the wind now changed from the southerly of the morning and afternoon, to northeasterly; and already, as they proceeded to get sail again on the *Viking*, the water darkened away to the north and eastward, showing that a new breeze was coming from that quarter. They were fully two miles out to sea.

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"Looks downright nasty, don't it, Jack?" said Henry Burns. "Better reef, hadn't we?"

"Yes, and in a hurry, too," replied Harvey. "It's coming heavy before long."

"Here, you take the wheel," said Henry Burns. "I'm quick at tying in reef-points. Come on, Tom. Bob will set the forestaysail. How many reefs do you want, Jack?"

"Two, I think," replied Harvey. "We'll watch her

close, though. I'm afraid we shall need a third. But we'll work her back as far as we can before we tie another. It's growing dark, and we must make time."

It was true, and ominously so. With the alteration of the wind the sky had darkened, and was becoming overcast. Night would soon be upon them, and a stormy one.

Nor had they beaten back more than a half-mile, in the teeth of the wind, before Harvey luffed and hauled the main-sheet in flat.

"We've got to put in a third reef," he said, soberly. "We don't need it quite yet, but we shall very soon, and we don't want to have to reef out here in the night."

They lowered the sail a little and tied in the reef, and the *Viking* stood on again. But already the sea was beginning to roll up heavily from the northeast, having a long sweep of water to become agitated in—the stretch of bay that lay between Loon and South Haven Islands. The wind had become a storm, a black, heavy nor'easter. In another half-hour, rain began to drive upon them.

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But the good yacht *Viking* stood it well, and they had worked up to within about half a mile of the foot of Loon Island, though still a mile away from it out in the bay, when the wind and sea perceptibly increased.

"We can't make the harbour," muttered Harvey. "We'll try for the little harbour at the head of the island."

The inhabitants of Loon Island called that end the head which fronted seaward, and there was a good harbour there; that is, not what the fishermen called a "whole" harbour, protected on all quarters, but good as the wind now blew. They headed more to the eastward and stood up for that.

But when, at length, Harvey peered ahead, straining his eyes in the gathering darkness for a favourable moment to come about, he could see no apparent difference in the seas. They were all huge, and they beat over the bows of the *Viking* in one steady, dashing spray.

"She won't do it," said Harvey.

But he eased her and headed off, while the *Viking* rolled dangerously. Then he put the helm hard down.

"Ready, about," he cried.

But his fears were realized. The seas were too heavy, with the sail that they could carry.

"Well, we'll wear her about," said Harvey. "Drop the peak, Henry; and climb to windward, boys, when the boom comes over."

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There was peril in this manoeuvre, jibing a boat in such a sea and wind; but it was clearly the only thing to be done. There was scant sail on, with the peak lowered; and Harvey did the trick pluckily and sailor-fashion. The sheet was well in and the boat almost dead before the wind, before he threw the wheel over and let the wind catch the sail on the other side. The yacht came

around against a flying wall of foam and spray, with the boys clinging for one moment to the weather rail, and throwing all their weight on that side. Then Tom and Henry Burns, with united strength, raised the peak of the sail, though it filled in the gale and was almost too much for them.

They stood up again toward harbour.

"What do you think, Jack?" asked Henry Burns, finally.

"I don't think—I know!" exclaimed Harvey, doggedly. "We can't make the harbour. We've got to ride it out somehow. I don't know but what the best thing, after all, is to leave just a scrap of sail on, to steady her, and ran to sea again. We've got to decide pretty soon, though."

"Wait a minute," said Henry Burns, quietly. "I've got a scheme. If it doesn't work, we'll scud for our lives again."

Making a quick dash into the cabin, he emerged with a spare line, a heavy anchor-rope. Then he made a second trip and brought forth some smaller and shorter pieces.

"Get the sweeps and the boat-hook," he cried to Tom and Bob, "and fetch up that water-cask and the big wooden fish-box."

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The boys waited not a moment to inquire the reason, though Henry Burns's design was an enigma to them. They scrambled forward and then below, handed the sweeps aft, and tumbled the box and cask out on deck.

"Pass some lashings around the cask and the box," commanded Henry Burns.

The boys lost no time in obeying orders, while Henry Burns, himself, quickly took a hitch around either end of one of the sweeps, with one of the short pieces of rope. He then tied the spare anchor-line at the centre of this rope, so that, if the sweep were cast overboard, it would be dragged through the water horizontally, offering its full resistance.

To this sweep he then rapidly hitched the other one, and then the boat-hook; and, finally, he hitched to this the big box and the cask, by their lashings.

"What in the world are you going to do with that stuff, Henry?" inquired Bob.

But Harvey had perceived the other's purpose.

"Good for you, Henry!" he exclaimed. "Where did you ever hear about a sea-anchor?"

"Read about it in a book, once," responded Henry Burns, coolly. "What do you say—shall we try it? We lose all the stuff if it don't work. We'll have to cut it loose."

"You bet we'll try it," said Harvey, hurriedly. "We can't be in much worse shape than we're in. Get it up aft now, fellows; and Tom, you and Bob be ready to jump for the halyards and lower the sail, when it goes overboard. Then we'll tie in that fourth reef in a jiffy."

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The other end of the spare anchor-rope, to which

the stuff was tied, was yet to be made fast forward. This was a dangerous task, with the yacht pitching heavily, as it was, and the seas flying aboard. So Henry Burns passed a line about his waist, which was held by Tom and Bob, while he scrambled forward in the darkness and accomplished the feat.

Then they got the mass of stuff which they had tied together up to the stern rail, and, at the word, heaved it overboard. Harvey kept the yacht away from it for a few moments, so that the attraction that floating objects have for one another should not bring it in alongside; and then, when the line had nearly run out, brought the *Viking* as close into the wind as the seas would allow, and held her there.

The yacht lost headway, and drifted back. Lowering the mainsail, they hurriedly tied in the fourth and last reef. The forestaysail had been taken in, long before.

The line brought up; the clean-built, shapely hull of the yacht drifting back faster than the bulky mass of stuff at the other end of it; and, as the tension came on the line, the bow of the *Viking* swung around, and she was heading fairly up into the seas, which broke evenly on either side.

"It's great!" cried Harvey, exultantly. "You've got a wise head on you, Henry Burns. Now let's get the scrap of a mainsail up, and she will lie steadier."

They hoisted the shred of sail, hauled the boom inboard so that it was as nearly on a line with the keel as they could bring it, and lashed it securely. The sail, thus getting the wind alike on either side, served to steady the yacht, and she rolled less. They had given the improvised sea-anchor the full length of the line, which was a long one, so that the strain would be lessened; and the yacht was riding fairly well.

"She'll stay like a duck, if the gear only holds," said Henry Burns.

They waited, watching anxiously, till a half-hour had gone by. The yacht was standing it well. The great seas lifted her bows high and dropped her heavily into the deep, black furrows, and the rain and spray drove aboard in clouds. But the yacht held on.

"She'll stay, I think," said Henry Burns; and added, yawning wearily, "if she don't, I hope she will let us know right away, for I'll fall asleep here in the cockpit pretty soon. Oh! but this is hard work. I don't know but what I'll quit and dig clams for a living."

"Turn in and take a wink of sleep," said Harvey. "She's riding all right. We'll call you if anything goes wrong."

"Go ahead," urged Tom and Bob.

"I believe I will," said Henry Burns. "But it won't be a wink, when I get started. You'll have hard work to wake me. Let me know, though, when it's my turn to take the wheel, and give one of you fellows a chance."

With which, Henry Burns, satisfied in his mind that his scheme was working well, went below

and fell asleep, unmindful of the bufferings of the seas, the straining of the *Viking's* cabin fixtures, and the heavy pitching and tossing that shook the yacht from stem to stern.

"Go ahead, one of you," said Harvey, addressing Tom and Bob. "Two of us can watch, and if we need you we'll call you."

But they shook their heads.

"I'm dead tired," admitted Bob; "but I couldn't sleep a wink down in that cabin in this storm. We'll stick it out till morning, won't we, Tom?"

"I'd rather," replied Tom.

"So would I," said Harvey. "But that's just like Henry Burns. When he takes a notion a thing is so, he believes it out-and-out. I honestly believe he thinks he is as safe as he would be on an ocean liner."

Evidently, Henry Burns was satisfied with the situation; and clearly he was a good sleeper. For daybreak found him still wrapped in slumber. Nor did he waken when, the storm abated and the *Viking* safe at anchor in the harbour at the head of Loon Island, Jack Harvey and the others tumbled below and laid their weary bones beside him.

But, to make return for their kindness in not arousing him to help work the boat, he was up before them, and had dinner piping hot when they opened their eyes at noontime.

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CHAPTER XIV. THE MAN IN THE CABIN

The storm that had so suddenly overtaken the *Viking* had raged over all of Samoset Bay. The yacht *Surprise*, running up before the afternoon southerly, had been becalmed when near the foot of Grand Island, a mile or so out, and had felt the first force of the succeeding nor'easter. But the squall that so nearly inflicted disaster upon the *Viking* had passed over them.

They only knew that the wind changed with startling abruptness, and most capriciously, and that the sea began to roll up from the northeast in an unusually brief time.

They were in no danger, apparently, there being good anchorage in a harbour formed by the foot of Grand Island and a small island adjacent, where they could lie snug till the threatening weather had cleared.

Still, their apparent safety did not prevent their receiving a momentary shock of alarm, when they were within less than a half-mile of shelter.

The yacht *Surprise* was beating ably up to the lee of the islands, thrashing about some and throwing the spray, as the waves came spitefully chopping and tossing under the spur of the wind, when suddenly she struck, bow on. There was a mild shock from one end to the other, and an ominous grating sound along the bottom. At

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the same time, the centreboard rod, hit by some object, was forced part way upward through its box.

Joe Hinman, in great alarm, threw the yacht up into the wind, and glanced anxiously about for breakers. But none was in sight.

"We can't be in on the rocks," he gasped. "Why, we've been down here with Jack fifty times, if we have once. There aren't any reefs out here."

"I'll get that chart and take a look," said Mr. Carleton.

"Better wait and see if we've stove a hole in the bottom," said Joe.

But the next moment the mystery was explained. There was a continued grating sound along bottom, and presently a bundle of floating laths drifted out, clearing the rudder. Coincident with this, the yacht struck again very slightly at the bows. Then, as they scanned the water all about, the boys saw that they had run into a mass of drifting, half-submerged laths, tied into bundles. It was clear that, in some blow, or storm, the deck-load of a coaster had been carried overboard.

By their water-soaked appearance, the laths had been afloat for many days. The coasters that ran from Benton to the smaller towns down the bay often carried these for a superficial cargo; and evidently some one of them, hit by a squall, had run its deck well under and the stuff had floated off.

Joe Hinman sprang forward, seized the boat-hook, and caught one of the bundles by the rope that bound it at one end. He drew it alongside and hauled it aboard with some difficulty, as it was heavy with water. Then he took out his pocket-knife and proceeded to cut a sliver from one of the laths. Though darkened a little by its exposure, and with trails of slimy, green seaweed clinging to the bundle, the laths were sound, and the wood bright as ever beneath the surface.

"Hooray!" he cried. "They're worth several dollars a bundle. We're in luck. We'll gather them all in."

They picked up seven or eight of the bundles, stowing them in on either side of the cockpit.

"Makes us look like a cargo-carrier," said Allan Harding.

"Yes, and a good cargo, too," replied Joe Hinman. "They are worth several dollars each, to sell. But we won't sell 'em. I've got an idea. We'll earn as much money as Jack and Henry Burns."

"How's that?" asked Mr. Carleton, curiously eyeing the enthusiastic speaker.

Joe looked at him, beaming, and in reply exclaimed briefly, but triumphantly, "Lobster-pots!"

"That's so," laughed Mr. Carleton. "I guess if you can make those queer, bird-cage sort of things, you can catch all the lobsters you want around here."

"Oh, yes, there's money in it," responded Joe, "though the lobsters aren't so plenty as they used to be, the fishermen say. But we couldn't afford to buy any pots to fish with, because it costs so much to make them nowadays."

Joyfully, they put the *Surprise* on its course again and gained the shelter of the little harbour.

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Three days later, the crew might have been seen, at a point about three miles down the island from their camp, busily at work out on shore, with axe and saw and hammer and nails.

"Going to build some lath-pots, eh?" Captain Sam had queried, when they consulted him. "Yes, you can do it all right. Just go out and fetch one of mine in shore, and go by that." Then he added, with a twinkle in his eye, and a shrewd Yankee smile, "You don't need all them 'ere laths anyway. You give me one of them bundles, and I'll go to work and make three of the slickest lath-pots you ever saw, for myself; and you can see just how I do it."

"It's a bargain," replied Joe, "if you will let us take your tools after you get the pots made."

"Reckon I will," said Captain Sam, smiling.

It was a good bargain for the boys, at that; for Captain Sam was a clever workman at whatever he set his hand to do.

"One of these 'ere lath-pots," said the captain next day, as he set to work, "is just as long as the length of a lath—four feet. Now we want three strips of board, two feet long, to lay down crosswise for the bottom pieces, at equal distances apart."

He illustrated his remarks by splitting off the requisite pieces from a chunk of board. Next he took an auger and bored a hole in each end of the three pieces.

"Now," he said, "we want three pieces of spruce that will bend up like you was going to make a bow to shoot arrows with. Here they be, too, and I've had 'em soaking in water all the morning, so they'll bend better."

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Whereupon, Captain Sam, having whittled the ends of the pieces of spruce down so they would fit snugly into the holes he had made, bent them and inserted the ends in the holes of the three strips of board. The three bows stood up like the tiny beams for a miniature house, with a rounded roof, instead of a peaked one.

"Now, we'll nail on our laths, top and bottom," said Captain Sam, "and then we've got the frame-work for a lobster-pot."

He nailed them on to the three strips of board at the bottom and to the three hoops of spruce at the top, making a cage with a flat bottom and a rounded roof. Then, in the same way, he made a lath door, three laths in width, running the entire length of the pot. This was fitted with leather hinges and a wooden button to fasten on the inside, so that, when closed, the door formed part of the roof of the pot.

"That's the front door where Mr. Lobster always comes out," remarked Captain Sam. "It's more

work, though, making the end doors for him to walk in at."

These end doors, that the captain referred to, he now proceeded to fit into place. Each consisted of a funnel-shaped mesh made of knotted cord, the larger end fastened snugly all around to the end frame of the pot, and leading into a small opening, six inches in diameter, made of a wooden hoop. This hoop was held in place by Captain Sam's tying it fast with strings to the centre of the frame.

So that the entrance, for a hungry lobster seeking the bait inside, would be the entire end of the frame, or what Captain Sam called the "street entrance," and narrowing to an opening only six inches in diameter, where the lobster would enter the cage.

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"Why don't they walk out again?" inquired young Tim, whose experience in fishing had been limited mostly to catching flounders and cunners.

"Well, they would, I reckon, if they swam like fish," replied Captain Sam. "But when they have followed down the slope of the mesh, and once squeezed in through that small opening, they don't know how to get back again, because their claws spread out so. The slope of the mesh helps them to get in, and there isn't any on the inside to help them get out. But they will crawl out again sometimes, too, if you leave the pots too long and they get all out of food."

He next proceeded to set up, in the bottom of the pot, a small, upright post for a bait-holder. This was spear-shaped, with a barb whittled in it, after the style of a fish-hook, so that a fish once impaled thereon could not work off with the action of the water.

"There!" exclaimed Captain Sam, when he had driven the last nail and tied the last cord. "Reckon it's done. You boys can be chopping yourselves out some buoys, to mark your pots with, while I make the other two. You come up to the house to-night, and I'll show you how to knot that twine to make the meshes. So it won't cost you much to make your pots, only for a little twine and some nails."

The crew, having thus gained their experience and the use of Captain Sam's tools, carried their stuff some three miles down the shore the next day, and proceeded to construct their own lath-pots. The intermediate waters had been fished so much by the townsfolk that they reckoned on better success farther away. Then, too, much of the water lying between was taken up with the pots of other fishermen, as was shown by their buoys floating here and there. They constructed four of the pots the first day.

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"Let's quit for the afternoon now, and get these set," suggested Little Tim, along about half-past four in the afternoon.

"All right, if you will trot up to town and get some rope," said Joe. "That's the only thing we forgot. We'll need the boat, though, to catch some bait with. You'll have to foot it."

"I'll go," replied Tim; "but, say, who's got any money?"

"Not any of us," said Joe. "You'll have to get Rob Dakin to trust us for it. Tell him Jack will pay, if we can't. But we can pay all right, if we have any luck. Let's see, we want a lot of rope. This water is ten feet deep at low tide off those ledges, and the tide rises eight or nine feet. We'll need about twenty-five or thirty feet of line for each pot. That will allow for its snagging, too. Come on, fellows, we'll catch some bait."

There was a cove just below, with mud-flats making out into it, but covered now with water. They rowed around to this, in a small boat borrowed from Captain Sam. Baiting their hooks with clams, they dropped their lines overboard; but the fish bit slowly.

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"Guess they aren't hungry," said Joe. "Hand me up the spear, George, and the oil. I'll make a 'slick,' and we'll see what we can do."

The spear was a long, light pole of spruce, with a trident at one end—three sharp prongs, the middle blade with a clean point, the outer blades barbed.

They rowed into shallow water, but the bottom could not be seen, because of a slight ruffling of the surface by the wind. Taking the bottle of fish-oil that George Baker handed to him, Joe Hinman poured some of it out on to a rag tied to the end of a stick. With this, he scattered the oil for some distance about the boat. The oil spread out over the surface of the water, smoothing its tiny chopping, so that through it the bottom could be plainly seen.

Joe Hinman lay flat at the bow of the boat, holding the spear down in the water. Presently he gave a jab with it, into the mud, and brought to the surface a huge sculpin, wriggling, but fast on the prongs.

"They aren't exactly handsome," he remarked, as he dropped the sculpin into the bottom of the boat, "but lobsters aren't particular about looks."

The next jab brought up a big flounder that had wriggled its head into the mud, and fancied itself safe. The bottom of the boat was soon covered with them.

By the time young Tim was back with the rope, they had enough fish to bait the four pots, and more, and a mess of flounders for supper.

They cut the line into proper lengths, tied one end of each length to the end frame of a pot, and fastened a wooden buoy, previously boiled in coal-tar to prevent its becoming water-logged, to the other end. Then they took the pots, one by one, and rowed out with them to the off-lying ledges.

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They baited each pot, by impaling the fish on the wooden spear-head sticking up from the bottom, closed the door, turned the wooden button that fastened it, and dumped it overboard. The pots, weighted with stones, sank slowly to the bottom.

"Great!" exclaimed Joe, as the last of the four went overboard. "Everything complete, except we might have painted a sign, 'Walk in,' on each one. What do you think about that, Tim?"

"No, they don't need it," said Tim, emphatically. "You might want me to go to the store again for the paint."

They were down bright and early the next morning to haul the pots. In three of them, their efforts had been rewarded. In the fourth, the bait had been untouched. But one of the pots had begun as a money-maker in earnest. There were three good-sized lobsters in it. The other two had one each.

They had saved some fish from the catch of the night before, so they baited up the pots again, put them overboard, and resumed their occupation ashore of constructing more pots, delegating young Tim to sell their catch among the cottagers, who had nearly all arrived for the summer.

Young Tim was gone not a great while, either. He came back, whooping hilariously, and opened a small and rather begrimed fist, to disclose to their admiring gaze the sum of a dollar and twenty-five cents in silver money.

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"Hooray!" cried Joe Hinman, throwing up his cap. "At this rate, we'll have the rope paid for, and the nails, and something more besides, when Jack and Henry Burns get back. We'll come pretty near taking care of ourselves for the rest of the summer."

Already the crew, with visions of being self-supporting, began to have an increased respect for themselves. It was an agreeable sensation.

They soon found, however, that they were handicapped by the need of a car to store their catch in; for, on some days when they had lobsters to sell, the cottagers didn't happen to want any; and again it happened that they hadn't any on hand when they were wanted. They began the construction of a car, therefore, out of some old packing-boxes, after they had finished a few more pots, and were hard at work on it when the yacht *Viking* hove in sight on an afternoon.

The *Viking*, following its frightful experience in the storm, had had a prosperous trip. The boys had made some heavy catches, and were returning with twenty-two hard-earned dollars.

There was a joyful celebration down on the shore that evening, in honour of the *Viking's* return, and to commemorate their luck as fishermen.

"You've been buying the stuff for us all along," Joe Hinman had said to Jack Harvey. "Just come down to the camp to-night, and bring Tom and Bob and the Warren boys. We'll get the food this time."

And they did, in generous style. There were seven of the biggest and fiercest-looking lobsters that they had caught in the last two days, broiling over a bed of red coals, when the visitors arrived. There were two tins of biscuit, baked in the sheet-iron oven. There were provisions that the crew had been able to buy with their own earnings. There were potatoes baked in the ashes, and coffee, steaming hot.

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"Yes, and what's more, Jack," said Joe Hinman,

as they sat about the fire on the shore, "there's enough stuff left to make about seven more pots. You fellows can go ahead and make the rest, if you want to; and we'll take turns tending them and getting the bait."

"All right," replied Harvey; "and if we get a bigger stock in the car than we can dispose of around here, we'll load up the *Viking*, when we get a strong westerly some day, and run down to the big hotel at Stoneland. They'll pay bigger prices than we can get at the market."

"My! but this lobster is good," said young Joe Warren. "Henry, pass over that melted butter and vinegar."

"Isn't it a great feast, though?" exclaimed young Tim. "Beats city grub all hollow."

And, indeed, it probably did surpass the sort of living Tim got at home.

"How's our friend, Mr. Carleton?" asked Bob. "It's a wonder he hasn't been around to welcome us back."

"Perhaps he is offended with me for not taking him aboard on our fishing trip," said Henry Burns.

"Why, he hasn't been to see us for two days," replied Joe. "By the way, though, last time I met him he asked me if I had seen anything of a ruby scarf-pin aboard the *Surprise*. Said he'd lost one."

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"He asked me that, too," said Arthur Warren. "He was up near the cottage yesterday. Said he thought he might have dropped it out aboard the *Viking*."

"I think not," said Harvey. "If he had we should have found it, for we air that bedding out every clear day."

"I don't recall seeing him wear one," said Henry Burns.

It is quite possible that Mr. Carleton might have been on hand to greet the fishermen on their return, had he not been away down the island for the day, in a rig he had hired of Captain Sam. The horse, though well recommended by Captain Sam, was modelled somewhat on the same generous lines as the captain's boat, the *Nancy Jane*; that is, broad and beamy, solid and substantial, but not especially speedy; more inclined to thrash up and down, with considerable clatter, than to skim along and make time. The result on this occasion was, that it was about half-past nine o'clock when Mr. Carleton drove into Captain Sam's dooryard, rather weary, and not in the best of temper.

However, good-hearted Mrs. Curtis had supper waiting for him, and he lost no time in stretching his legs under the table, where, at his ease over a hot cup of tea, he was inclined to improve in spirits and rally the captain on the slowness of his horse.

"Well," said Captain Sam, with imperturbable good humour, "I'm sorry the old nag didn't fetch you up a little quicker. She's a safe, steady driver, though. Reckon the youngsters would have liked to see you over to their shore supper."

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They're all over there. Guess you must have seen their fire down on the shore as you drove up. You know the *Viking* got in this afternoon. Had real good luck, too, so Henry Burns was saying."

Mr. Carleton, leaning back in his chair and leisurely passing his cup for another serving of tea, straightened up suddenly at this remark. But he only said, indifferently, "That so? I'll have to look them up in the morning. I'm afraid I'm too tired to walk down there to-night."

"Oh, they will be coming up before long now," said Captain Sam.

"Why, don't seem as if you was eating much," he added, as Mr. Carleton rose from the table.

Mr. Carleton had swallowed his last cup of tea in two gulps.

"First rate, first rate," he said. "Had a good supper. I'll take a little stroll with a cigar, before turning in."

Mr. Carleton walked leisurely out of the yard; but, when he had passed down the road a few steps, he quickened his pace and reached the shore almost running. Taking the first boat that came to hand, at random, he pushed off and rowed out to the *Viking* with a few quick, powerful strokes. Then, pausing for a moment alongside, he listened for the sounds of any one approaching. It was still. Mr. Carleton sprang aboard.

He rushed to the companionway. But the hatch was drawn, the cabin doors shut, and the lock set. Mr. Carleton uttered an exclamation of anger. Stooping over, he felt along under the seats on either side of the cockpit. His search was rewarded, for his hand rested presently on the blade of a small hatchet, which was used by the yachtsmen for all sorts of work, from chopping bait to splitting kindling.

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Mr. Carleton sprang to his feet, gave one quick glance about, then rushed to the companionway and smashed the lock with two smart blows. The next moment, he shoved back the hatch, opened the doors, and vanished below.

But, though unseen, Mr. Carleton had not been unheard.

Only a few moments before this, Tom and Bob and Henry Burns and Harvey had gone down to the shore, after bidding the crew good night.

"How did you happen to bring the canoe, Jack?" inquired Allan Harding. "I thought you wasn't going to use that any more."

"Well, I did say so last year," replied Harvey. "I thought I had come too near drowning ever to enjoy it again. But Tom and Bob were coming down in theirs, so Henry and I got mine down from the Warren's shed."

"We'll race you up," said Tom.

"All right," said Harvey. "I think you can beat us, though."

For a short distance, however, Henry Burns and Harvey held their own. Then the skill of the other two, and their long practice of paddling

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together, began to tell, and their canoe forged ahead.

"It's no use, Henry," said Harvey, good-naturedly. "I can't handle a paddle with Tom Harris. They have kept a straight line, but I can't keep this craft up to her course."

They slowed down, accordingly, and the other canoe left them considerably astern. Then Tom, turning and discovering that the others had fallen back, spoke to Bob, and they waited for the second canoe to come up.

It was at this very moment that Mr. Carleton, hatchet in hand, had smashed the lock.

"Hark! what was that?" exclaimed Bob White. "Did you hear it? That was out aboard the *Viking*."

"It sounded like it, sure enough," said Tom. "Say, fellows," he cried as the other canoe came near, "did you leave anybody aboard the yacht? We just heard somebody out there."

"No, we didn't," replied Harvey. "Come on, let's get up to her quick."

If Tom and Bob had beaten them before, they could not do it now. Harvey's paddle went into the water with a strength that was well-nigh doubled with excitement. Moreover, if there had been any possible doubt in their minds as to whether there was really anybody aboard the *Viking*, that doubt was dispelled by a faint gleam of light showing from out the cabin door.

"How can that be?" exclaimed Harvey. "I sprung that lock, myself."

They were alongside, next moment, and aboard, with the light lines that held the canoes quickly made fast.

Rushing to the companionway, Harvey cried, angrily:

"Here! Who's that down there? What are you doing?"

The man, springing up, and holding the lantern in one hand, disclosed the features of their friend, Mr. Carleton.

"Hello!" he said. "Say, this is too bad."

"You bet it's too bad!" cried Harvey, interrupting him. "What do you mean by breaking in here?"

Mr. Carleton, setting down the lantern, emerged from the cabin.

"I really must apologize," he said, coolly. "I simply couldn't wait—"

"Yes, but you could wait!" Harvey broke in, hotly, and advancing toward Mr. Carleton. "It's no way to do, to sneak out here in the night and smash our things."

"See here, young man," exclaimed Mr. Carleton, himself warming a little, though his voice was calm and modulated, "I wouldn't try to threaten me, if I was you, don't you know. I might get angry, too. I—"

"Do it!" cried Harvey, excitedly. "Get angry. I'd

just like to have you. Just give us a chance and see what happens.”

“And what might that be?” demanded Mr. Carleton, sharply.

“I’ll tell you,” replied Harvey. “We’ll throw you overboard. Say, fellows, won’t we?”

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“We certainly will,” answered Henry Burns, calmly.

“Say the word, Jack,” said Bob.

The four boys approached Mr. Carleton. He eyed them for a moment threateningly. They were certainly sturdy opponents. And that his intended threat had been without avail, and that they were thoroughly fearless and ready to act, there could be no doubt. Mr. Carleton’s demeanour altered.

“Good! I like your pluck,” he laughed. “Really, I think I’d do the same thing if I were in your place. I don’t blame you, and I was sorry I was so hasty, the moment I had done it. You see, I’ve lost a very valuable ruby scarf-pin somewhere—a keepsake, too, don’t you know. I’ve worried myself just about frantic over it. Now I thought it must have fallen out when I was aboard here. So, when I found your cabin locked up, I simply couldn’t stand it any longer.

“But I’ll make any amends in my power,” he added. “I’ll come out to-morrow, and I’ll bring the best lock that money will buy over in Bellport. I’ll send over for it first thing.”

“Hadn’t you better go ashore now?” suggested Henry Burns.

“Why, yes,—good night,—I will,” replied Mr. Carleton. “Good night—I’m sorry it happened—I’ll fix it all right, though.”

And, stepping into his boat alongside, he put out his oars and rowed away.

“Never mind about that lock,” Henry Burns called out.

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“What!” exclaimed Mr. Carleton, pausing for a moment.

“I say, never mind the lock,” repeated Henry Burns. “We’ll attend to that, ourselves. We’d just as lieves you would keep away from the *Viking* after this.”

Mr. Carleton made no reply as he rowed away.

“I wonder if we were too rough on him,” said Jack Harvey to his companion, a little later, as they were undressing, preparatory to turning in for the night.

“I don’t see why,” answered Henry Burns. “That’s a pretty high-handed proceeding, to come aboard here and smash into our cabin.”

“Well, perhaps he *was* worried about that pin,” said Harvey. “Some persons do lose their heads just that way.”

“Yes, but he isn’t one of the kind that lose their heads,” said Henry Burns. “And for my part, I can’t recall for the life of me ever seeing him

CHAPTER XV. MR. CARLETON GOES AWAY

Squire Brackett, having received sufficient encouragement from Mr. Carleton to warrant action on his part, hitched up his horse one afternoon and drove around the road back of the cove, turning off at length at the pasture lane that led in to Billy Cook's farmhouse. Billy, barefoot, as usual, was busy hoeing in a small garden patch at a little distance from the house.

"How d'ye do, Billy," said the squire, sauntering out, with his hands tucked under his coat-tails.

"Afternoon, squire," responded Billy; and added, to himself, "Wonder what he's up to."

"Quite a stranger, squire," said he. "What brings you way 'round here?"

"Oh, nothing," replied Squire Brackett, seating himself on the handle of the wheelbarrow that was loaded with garden-truck. "I was driving by and thought I'd just drop in and say good day."

"Humph! guess not," thought Billy to himself. He knew the squire was not in the habit of making social visits.

"Well, glad to see you, squire," he declared, cordially. "Nice summer we're having. Wouldn't like to take home a couple dozen fresh eggs, would you? Hens doing right well lately. I can spare you some, I reckon, store price."

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"Why, yes, I should," answered the squire. "Those hens of yours do lay the finest eggs I know of."

The squire, watching Billy at his work, discoursed of this and that; of the weather, the fishing, politics, and the prospect of the hay crop.

"Wonder what he's driving at," was Billy's inward reflection.

"Have a smoke, Billy?" asked the squire, proffering the other one of Rob Dakin's best and biggest five-cent affairs.

"Don't care if I do," replied Billy, and made a further mental observation that something was coming now, sure.

"By the way, Billy," remarked the squire, presently, "how do we stand on that mortgage on the island down yonder?"

He said it in an offhand way, just as though he didn't know, even to the fraction of a cent, the amount of principal and interest due to that very hour.

"Why, I guess you know better than I do, the amount of interest up to date," replied Billy. "But it ain't due just yet, eh, squire?"

"Why, no, it isn't," replied Squire Brackett; "and

I was thinking perhaps we might fix it up between us so there wouldn't be anything due, and so that you would have something in your own pocket, besides. How would you like that?"

"P'r'aps," said Billy.

"Well, now," continued the squire, "there's two hundred dollars and interest due. Seems to me, if I remember right, you offered to sell the island to me, a year ago or so, for twelve hundred dollars. That's a pretty big price, but I've been thinking it over some lately, and I reckon I'll come pretty near that figure, if you'd like to make the trade."

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A year ago, Billy Cook would have jumped at the offer. But Billy, boots or no boots, had a vein of Yankee shrewdness in him.

"There's something in the wind," he thought. "The squire told me I was crazy when I offered it to him for that, last year."

"Well, squire, I'll tell you," he replied. "Guess I did name something like that as a figure, a year ago. But I dunno about letting it go for that now, when things are looking up so. They tell me some of them New York and Boston real estate fellers have been down here lately, looking over land. However, I'll just talk it over with the old lady, and let you know in a day or two."

The squire was taken aback.

"Well," said he, rising to go, "of course I don't leave that offer open. That's a whole lot of money for the land. But I've got a little money just come due, and I thought I might put it into that. Maybe I won't have it to spare by the time you get ready."

"Well, I reckon the land won't blow away, squire," chuckled Billy. "It's anchored pretty reasonably firm, I guess. I'll just go in and get those eggs."

It did not take Billy Cook long, following the squire's departure, to come to a conclusion regarding the true inwardness of the affair. There was only one man, at present, in the village, who would be likely to be offering anything like that amount of money for the island; and that man was Mr. Carleton. So Billy lost no time in hunting the gentleman up.

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But, when he had found Mr. Carleton and suggested the matter to him, he was surprised to meet with a curt denial. Mr. Carleton, being in a bad humour, and having, moreover, as much an intention of purchasing the land as he had of buying the bay, replied, very shortly, in the negative.

"Hm! p'r'aps I guessed wrong," commented Billy. "But there's something up. That's sure. I'll just jump the squire on the price, anyway. I may catch him."

With which resolve, Billy visited the squire the following day, offered him the land at an advance of three hundred dollars, and, much to his own surprise, got it.

"It's a fearful price, fifteen hundred dollars for that land," exclaimed the squire, after he had tried in vain to beat down the figure. "I'll never

get a cent out of it; but I'm just fool enough to do it."

"P'r'aps you be," thought Billy.

"I don't like to part with that island, squire," he said. "If you want it, you'd better draw up the papers, right away to-day, and we'll go over to Mayville and have everything filed straight and regular. Else I might get sorry and back out."

"All right," said Squire Brackett.

"We can't do it any too soon to suit me," he thought.

So Uncle Billy and Squire Brackett went to Mayville, and the squire generously paid the fares.

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"Guess I can stand it, at a thousand dollars profit," said the squire to himself.

Henry Burns and Jack Harvey, arising on the morning following their adventure with Mr. Carleton, proceeded at once to restore the yacht to its former condition, by purchasing at Rob Dakin's a strong lock for the cabin. It was heavier and clumsier than the one that had been broken, but, as Henry Burns remarked, it was good enough for fishermen.

Then they sailed down alongshore to where the crew had made their lobster-pots, went to work, and, in a few days, completed the making of the remainder to the extent of their material. This proved easier fishing, too, in a way, than the outside cod and hake fishing, and involved, of course, no danger, as the pots were set near shore. And, as they had got their lath-pots practically without expense, it was likely to prove even more profitable, while it lasted.

The car that they had made, to keep the lobsters alive in, was a big, square boxlike affair, with the slats nailed on just far enough apart so the lobsters could not escape, but affording a flow of sea-water through the car almost as free as the sea itself. The two trap-doors in the roof of the car, through which the lobsters were put in and taken out, were fastened with heavy padlocks. The car was moored in a sheltered nook alongshore, a little distance above the area of water covered by the lath-pots.

They learned how to pack the live lobsters for shipping, too, and sent lots, now and then, by steamer, over to the Bellport and Mayville markets, and to Stoneland. They learned how to stow them into a flour-barrel with their tails curled snugly under, and their backs uppermost, so they could not move; and that a barrel would hold just fifty-five, by actual count, stowed in that way, allowing for ice at the top, and all covered securely with a piece of coarse sacking. They received as much as twelve and fifteen cents a pound for these, shipped so that they would arrive alive at market, and began to feel quite prosperous.

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They listened to many a learned discussion, in Rob Dakin's cracker and sugar-barrel forum, over the habits of the lobster; how it was generally conceded by the local fisherman that the lobster took the bait better at night; but that other wise men among the catchers argued

stoutly that flood-tide, whether it served by night or day, was the more favourable time; and how both the ebb and flow of the tides doubtless carried the lobsters back and forth across the feeding-grounds.

They heard discussed, too, the relative merits of flounder and sculpin and cod's heads as the more attractive baits, and whether these, fresh or old, were the more enticing.

Billy Cook had a theory that a lobster has as keen a scent as a hound, and that a fish of somewhat gamy odour was the better lure; while Long Dave Benson "allowed" that a lobster has an eye like a fish-hawk, and that what was needed was a fish with a gleam of white showing at a distance, like the flounder.

In all, there was a greater and more varied amount of natural philosophy and fish-lore dispensed, free, within the walls of Rob Dakin's grocery store, than one might hear in a lifetime at any university.

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Be it recorded, however, that the suggestion made by young Joe Warren, at one of these discussions, that the lobster regarded one of these lath-pots as some sort of a summer-house, thoughtfully provided for homeless wanderers of the sea, was received with merited and unanimous contempt.

They saw little of Mr. Carleton, these days. He had, at first, attempted to retain the favour of Harvey's crew, but they would have nought to do with him, following the example of their recognized leader. So it came about that Mr. Carleton, left much to himself, and not caring, seemingly, to cultivate the friendship of the elder persons among the summer arrivals, spent the greater part of his time in driving about the island, and in hiring Captain Sam's sailboat, for short cruises about the bay.

He took Harry Brackett out with him occasionally, and, being a man of shrewd observation, startled that young man one day not a little, by bursting suddenly into laughter when the yacht *Viking* sailed past, at a little distance.

"I see your two beauty-spots on the sail," he said, laughing heartily, and pointing to the places where the sail had been neatly mended. "That was a clever trick. Ha! ha! How did you happen to think of that little dodge of tying up the reef-points? Guess you know more about a sailboat than some folks seem to think, eh?"

Harry Brackett, taken by surprise, made a feeble attempt at denial, but Mr. Carleton wouldn't listen to it. He had an assertive, positive way, that Harry Brackett could not withstand. So the boy ended by admitting the act, vastly relieved to find that a man like Mr. Carleton, of whom his father spoke so highly, regarded it as a really good joke.

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"Makes me feel like a boy again, for all the world," chuckled Mr. Carleton. "Count me in on the next one. I'm a good deal of a boy, myself."

Also, did the astute Mr. Carleton feign to regard as a joke an incident that occurred some days later, of a more serious nature, and which he

discovered quite by chance.

It had come on foggy, with a lazy wind from the southeast, and for several days the island and the bay had been obscured by thick banks of fog, so that one could not see a boat's length ahead. The steamers came in cautiously, sounding their whistles, to note, if they were near land, how quick the echo, or an answering fog-bell, came back to them.

There was no sailing, and the boys remained ashore, mostly up at the comfortable Warren cottage, or within the tents. They tended the lobster-pots when the fog did not roll in too thick; but for two entire days it was too heavy for them to find the buoys, and they did no fishing.

It happened on one of these days that, finding it dull in the town, Mr. Carleton invested in a suit of oilskins and rowed down along the shore, where he dropped a line off the ledges and fished for cunners. He was a smart fisherman, and caught a good mess in a short running of the flood-tide.

"I'll get the captain to clean them, and have Mrs. Curtis make me one of those fine chowders for supper," he said, as he pushed the basket of fish under the seat, put the oars into the oar-locks and proceeded to row in.

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But Mr. Carleton miscalculated a little, in the fog, and rowed some distance down the shore before he discovered his mistake. He was turning to row back, when the sound of some one else rowing attracted his attention. He was close to shore, out of sight.

Presently the boat came dimly into view through the fog, and Mr. Carleton made out the occupant to be Harry Brackett. He was about to hail him, when the rower turned his boat inshore and stepped out. Then Mr. Carleton observed that the object at which Harry Brackett had arrived was the lobster-car owned by the campers. Mr. Carleton quietly stepped out of his own boat, and walked up into the bushes.

Harry Brackett reached for the line with which the car was moored, and drew the car in to shore. Then, taking from his pocket a ring on which several keys dangled, he proceeded to try them, one by one, in the padlock of one of the trap-doors. A certain key finally answered his purpose, and the next moment Mr. Carleton saw the door lifted. Harry Brackett, using a short-handled net, lifted out half a dozen lobsters, dropped them into his boat, and, relocking the trap-door, got into his boat, and started to row away.

But he nearly fell over in his seat with fright, when the sound of laughter close on shore greeted him. The next moment, Mr. Carleton stepped into view.

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"Ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Carleton. "Oh, you're a sly dog. I see what you're up to. Little bake going on among some of you island chaps, eh? No reason why our friends should not contribute something to the fun. Oh, I've been a boy, myself. Look out they don't catch you, though. Heavy fine, you know, for that sort of thing."

Harry Brackett, terrified, rowed ashore to where Mr. Carleton was standing. He must explain. He had no idea of stealing the lobsters—which was met with derisive laughter from Mr. Carleton, and the assurance that he was a bold young chap.

From which effort at dissimulation, Harry Brackett came, at length, to beg and implore Mr. Carleton that he would say nothing about it.

Now, if Mr. Carleton had had any notion that young Harry Brackett might at some time be useful to him, he certainly went about the manner of gaining an ascendancy over him most admirably. For didn't Mr. Carleton promise that he would say nothing about the affair? And didn't he feign to treat it as a huge joke? He certainly did. But how cunningly, also, in all his making light of it, did he convey to young Harry Brackett's mind the fact that he knew it was a criminal thing; and that it would meet with heavy punishment, if discovered. And how cunningly did he play upon first the one, and then the other idea; the idea of a practical joke, and the idea of the penalty for it, if it should be known; until young Harry Brackett would gladly have promised to do anything in all the world that Mr. Carleton might ask, to buy his silence.

"Then you won't let on about it?" urged Harry Brackett, apprehensively, for the tenth time or more, as he started to row away.

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"Never a word from me," said Mr. Carleton. "Ho, you rascal—I've been a youngster, too. But you're taking pretty big chances of getting into trouble. Look out for yourself. Ho! ho!"

"I'll never take another chance like it," whined Harry Brackett.

For the remainder of Mr. Carleton's stay on the island, there was one more youth that avoided him now, though for a different reason than that of the others. This was young Harry Brackett. He was ashamed to look Mr. Carleton in the face. Perhaps, on the other hand, it was rather Mr. Carleton who avoided meeting the young yachtsman. And perhaps he, too, was ashamed of what he had done.

However, this newly developed modesty on Harry Brackett's part did not prevent Mr. Carleton, driving along the road an afternoon or two later, from overtaking him and insisting that he get in and ride.

"Glad to see you," said Mr. Carleton, as affably as he knew how. "Haven't seen you around much for a day or two. Lobsters didn't make you chaps sick, did they? Ha! ha!"

Harry Brackett flushed, and felt decidedly uncomfortable.

But he tried to laugh it off, and said he was feeling first rate.

"Well," said Mr. Carleton, "you're all right. I like to see a boy of spirit. I'm glad to have met you. I'm going to leave, to-morrow, by the way."

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Harry Brackett wouldn't, for the world, have said how glad he was to hear of it. On the contrary, he said he was sorry; and added, that

his father, the squire, would be sorry, too.

"I'll be sorry to lose the squire's company," replied Mr. Carleton. "But don't say anything to him about my going. That's a peculiarity of mine; I don't like to say good-bye to people. Sort of distresses me, don't you know. That is, don't say anything about it until after I am gone. Like as not, I shall not speak of it to anybody but you. Captain Sam, even, won't know of it until I settle up with him, to-morrow."

"How about Harvey and Henry Burns and that crowd?" inquired Harry Brackett.

"Why, the fact is," replied Mr. Carleton, "we have had a little falling out. I'm sorry about it, too. They're not such bad young chaps—except that Burns boy. He's too notional—don't you think so?"

"Yes," said Harry Brackett, decidedly.

"Well, I broke a lock on their cabin door," continued Mr. Carleton, "because I was desperately worried about the loss of a pin that was worth most as much as their boat—to say nothing of a cheap lock. Of course I was going to get them another, and a better one. They wouldn't have made much fuss, either, I think, if it hadn't been for young Burns. Harvey was hot-headed about it, but he would have got over it. The other young chap, he was cool as ice; but I could see he was the one I couldn't make friends with again, so I gave it up."

"Humph!" exclaimed Harry Brackett—"and after all you have done for them, too."

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"That's it," said Mr. Carleton; "though I don't care anything about that. I was glad to give them a good time."

"Say," he exclaimed, suddenly, as though an idea had just come to his mind, "I tell you what you do. I'm going over to Bellport for a few days, and then down the coast somewhere. But I'll leave word at Bellport for my letters to be forwarded. I want you to write to me once a week or so. Let me know where the *Viking* is, and what the boys are doing, and what you are doing. If we get a chance, you and I will play a little joke on them, just to show them they're not so smart—might just tie in a few more reef-points, or something of that sort, eh?"

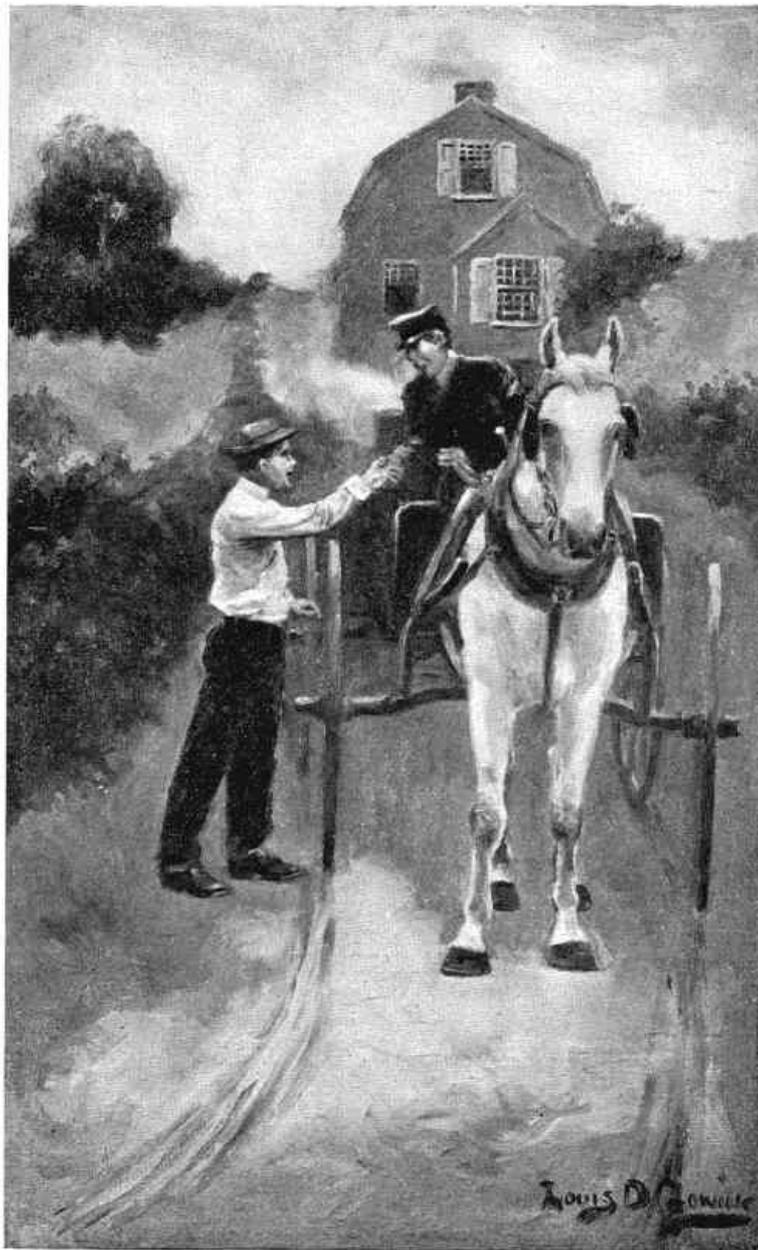
Mr. Carleton laughed as he spoke.

"I'll do it," said Harry Brackett. "Are you in earnest, though?"

"Yes, sir, honour bright," replied Mr. Carleton. "You keep me informed, and we'll have a joke on them yet."

"Well, good-bye," said Harry Brackett, getting down from the wagon and shaking hands with Mr. Carleton.

"Good-bye," said the other. "And if any one inquires about me, after I am gone, just tell them you heard me say I was going back to Boston."



“JUST TELL THEM THAT YOU HEARD ME SAY I WAS GOING BACK TO BOSTON.”

“Harry,” said Squire Brackett, the second evening following this, “I want you to go over to Captain Sam’s and take this note to Mr. Carleton. It’s about a little business transaction, so be careful and don’t lose it. You’re pretty careless sometimes.”

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“Why, he’s gone away,” answered Harry Brackett. “No use taking that over to Captain Sam’s.”

“Gone away!” shouted the squire, seizing his son by the collar. “Gone away! When did he go?”

“Captain Sam says he went yesterday.”

“Why didn’t you tell me about it before?” cried Squire Brackett, shaking his son vigorously.

“Why, how did I know anything about it?” whined Harry Brackett. “How did I know you wanted to see him before he went? You’re always blaming me for things. I’m not to blame.”

On second thought, Squire Brackett came to the same conclusion. Still, it being his habit of mind invariably to blame somebody else for his own misfortunes, he had to vent his irritation on his

son.

"Well, clear out of here!" he cried. "You never know anything except at the wrong time."

Harry Brackett disappeared.

One would have thought that the squire had lost his dearest friend on earth, in the departure of Mr. Carleton, judging by the deep and profound melancholy that fell upon him, for a fortnight. Or, on the other hand, one might have thought that Mr. Carleton was his bitterest foe, if any one had seen him rage and fume in secret, whenever he thought of Mr. Carleton or pronounced his name. Mrs. Brackett overheard him mutter, on one or two occasions, "Fifteen hundred dollars tied up in an island!" But, when she inquired what he meant, she received a reply that was both incommunicative and not wholly courteous.

As for Billy Cook, the squire wouldn't speak to him, when next they met—nor for half the summer.

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"Never mind," said Uncle Billy to himself, "I'll buy a new pair of Sunday boots, and I'll pay as much as two dollars and a half for 'em."

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CHAPTER XVI. SEARCHING THE VIKING

"Where are you fellows going?" asked George Warren, from a comfortable seat on the Warren veranda, of Henry Burns and Jack Harvey, as they were passing the cottage of an afternoon. The two yachtsmen were carrying, between them, a big basket of clams, which they had just dug on the flats at the head of the cove.

"Going fishing, down the shore a way," replied Henry Burns. "We've just got the bait. We have to keep our lobsters fat and contented, you know, so they'll look pleasant when they get to market."

"Don't you think you humour them too much?" asked George Warren, quizzically. "You'll spoil them with overfeeding, the way Colonel Witham did his boarders."

"No, we feed them the same way he did," answered Henry Burns; "give them lots of fish, because they are cheap. And we hope they'll get tired of fish, by and by, the way Witham's boarders used to, and not eat so much. Then we'll take it easy. Come on, though, and help us catch some. We've got bait enough for the whole crowd."

"All right," responded George. "You go ahead, and we'll take our boat and come out and join you."

The three Warren boys, launching their boat in the cove, rowed down to the point and joined the party, consisting of Henry Burns and Harvey and Tom and Bob, who were just putting off in the *Viking's* tender. When they had rowed down the shore a way, they were met by Harvey's crew,

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and all proceeded in the three boats a short distance farther, a half-mile or more below the crew's camp. They baited up their hooks and threw out.

"This looks nice and social," said George Warren, surveying the three boats, with their eleven occupants. "It's the first time we have all been out here together this year. We ought to make this a prize contest."

"Good!" exclaimed Harvey. "What do you say to one of those new dollar yachting-caps at the store, for the one that catches the most fish? We'll each put in nine cents to pay for it. Got any money, fellows?"

"Lots of it," replied young Tim. "We're in for it."

"They're regular millionaires, nowadays, since they made those lobster-pots," remarked Henry Burns.

"There'll be one cent left over," said young Joe Warren. "What do we do with that?"

"That goes with the hat," said Henry Burns. "You can buy peanuts with it, if you win, Joe."

"Well, I've got the first fish, anyway," cried young Joe, who had felt a tremendous yank on his line.

Up came a big flounder, which was skittering about, the next moment, in the bottom of the boat.

"I've got a bigger one," cried Joe Hinman, excitedly; but, when he began to haul in, nothing came of it.

Little Tim Reardon, who had given a sly tug at Joe's line when the other wasn't looking, snickered.

"That would have beaten Joe's, if you'd got him," he said, grinning.

"I'll beat you, if you try that trick again," exclaimed Joe Hinman, eyeing Tim sharply.

The fish began coming in lively, from little harbour pollock to sculpins with monster heads and attenuated bodies, and cunners, that stole the bait almost as fast as the boys could throw overboard.

"Everything counts," said Henry Burns, as he drew in a huge skate; and added, as he took the hook out of the fish's capacious mouth, "Wonder how Old Witham would have liked him for a boarder."

"Hello!" exclaimed Harvey, "here comes another boat; and it looks like Squire Brackett in the stern."

"Yes, and it's young Harry, rowing," said Arthur Warren. "First time I've seen him working, this summer."

The squire and his son were, indeed, coming out to the fishing-grounds.

"Something new for the squire to be doing his own fishing," remarked Arthur Warren. "He must be saving money."

"Well, we ought to salute him, anyway," said Henry Burns. "Say, fellows, one, two, three, all together, 'How d'ye do, squire,' just as he comes abreast."

The chorus that greeted Squire Brackett made him jump up in his seat.

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He didn't reply to the salutation, but glared at the boys, angrily.

"Always up to their monkey-shines!" he muttered. "I'll teach 'em to have respect for me, some day yet."

"Better stop and drop in a line here, squire," said George Warren, good-naturedly. "We've got them tolled around, with so many baits out."

And he demonstrated his remark by pulling out a big cunner.

"Bah!" ejaculated the squire. "I should think you would scare all the fish between here and the cape, with your confounded racket."

The squire directed his son, and the latter rowed past the other boats and tied up, at length, at a spar buoy, with red and black horizontal stripes, which marked a ledge in the middle of a channel.

"We'll get a mess of cunners about these rocks," the squire remarked, as he and Harry made ready.

Luck in fishing, always capricious, seemed to have deserted the boat in which were Harvey's crew, although the boys in the other two boats continued to pull in the fish at intervals.

"Let's give it up," said Joe Hinman, at length, winding in his line and removing a clam-head. "What do you say to going down now and hauling the lobster-pots? We'll take down our fish, and some from the other boat, to bait them up with."

"Guess we might as well," said George Baker, reluctantly. "We can't catch up with the other fellows now."

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So they drew up alongside of the *Viking's* tender, and the boys threw their catch into the crew's boat.

"Twenty-six, twenty-seven," counted Henry Burns, as the last one went over. "Keep that score in mind, George, when we come to reckon up. Tom's ahead in our boat. He's caught ten of them. But we want to see which boat wins, too."

The crew rowed away, down alongshore.

An hour and a half later, the boys in both boats stopped fishing, to reckon up their catch.

"Tom's got nineteen fish," called out Henry Burns.

"It's a tie," cried young Joe, excitedly. "I've got just nineteen."

"Then we'll give you each five minutes more," said Harvey, pulling out a silver watch. "Say when you're ready to throw overboard, fellows."

Tom and young Joe baited up for the final effort,

and the lines went out together.

They waited expectantly. Two, three, four minutes went by, without a bite.

"Guess they'll need five minutes more," said Henry Burns.

But the words were hardly uttered before young Joe gave a whoop, and began hauling in vigorously.

"I've won!" he shouted.

"No, you haven't," cried Tom, pulling in rapidly, hand over hand.

"You're just within the time-limit," said Harvey, as Tom's fish came in over the gunwale. "It's another tie; you'll have to try it over again."

"All right," said young Joe. "I got mine first, though—No, hold on here. Hooray! I've won, after all."

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Young Joe, who had been in the act of disengaging his bait from the mouth of a sculpin, stopped suddenly, and made a grimace of delight.

"Pull up the anchor, George," he said to his eldest brother. "Let's row alongside the other boat, and I'll prove that I win."

George Warren looked at Joe's catch, and laughed.

"I guess you're right," he said.

They rowed up to the other boat.

"What did you do—catch two at once, Joe?" asked Tom, as Joe produced his catch.

"That's what!" exclaimed young Joe.

"I don't see but one," said Tom.

"Well, look here," said young Joe. He reached his fingers cautiously down the throat of the big sculpin, holding the jaws open with a piece of stick. Then, triumphantly, he dragged forth by the tail a smaller fish, that had in fact been swallowed the moment before Joe had caught the larger one.

"The cannibal!" exclaimed Tom Harris. "That's the meanest trick I ever had played on me by a fish." But he added, smiling, "I give up, Joe. You've won. I wouldn't catch a fish as mean as that sculpin. And to think that he'd gobble a clam before he had a fish half-swallowed! He's a regular Squire Brackett."

Mention of that gentleman called attention to the fact that the squire and his son had ceased fishing also, and were casting off from the buoy, preparatory to rowing in. At the same moment the boys noticed that the crew's boat was coming in sight from down below, and that the crew were waving for them to wait.

They pulled up anchor, and rowed a little way in the direction of the other boat.

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Squire Brackett's curiosity over the success of the crew was perhaps aroused, for he, too, waited a few moments. Then, when the crew had

come up, Harry Brackett rowed near enough for the squire to look into the boat, with the others.

The crew had certainly made a successful haul. There were a score of fine lobsters in the bottom of their boat—a score of good-sized ones, and one other. That one other caught the squire's watchful eye.

"Want to sell a couple of them?" he asked.

"Yes, certainly," replied Joe Hinman.

"Well, give me that one," said Squire Brackett, pointing to one of large size, "and that one, there," pointing to the small one.

Joe handed them over.

"Those will cost you thirty-five cents, squire," he said.

"That small one will cost you more than that," chuckled the squire to himself, as he paid the money.

Then the squire, reaching a hand into his pocket and producing a folding rule, opened it and laid it carefully along the length of the lobster.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, turning in triumph to the boys, "that lobster will cost you just twenty dollars. That's a short lobster—a half-inch shorter than the law allows. You know the fine for it."

"Why, you don't mean that, do you, squire?" asked Joe Hinman, dismayed at seeing the profits of their fishing thus suddenly threatening to vanish. "We haven't shipped a single short lobster all this summer. But we don't stop to measure them down here. We wait till we get up to the car. We have a measuring-stick there, and if a lobster is under the law we set him free, near the ledges off the camp. We throw out some old fish around those ledges, to see if we can't keep them around there, and be able to catch 'em later—perhaps another year, when they've got their growth."

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"No, you don't!" exclaimed the squire. "Can't fool me that way. There's the evidence!" And he held up the incriminating lobster, triumphantly.

As matter of fact, the squire well knew that the fishermen around Grand Island, when they wanted a lobster for a dinner, took the first one that came to hand, long or short. They figured out that the law was devised to prevent the indiscriminate and wholesale shipping of lobsters before they had attained a fair growth; and the local custom about the island was to catch and eat a lobster, long or short, whenever anybody wanted one. Nor was the squire an exception to this custom. But the law answered his purpose now.

He and his son rowed up alongshore, the latter grinning derisively back at the chagrined crew.

"Hello, what luck?" bawled a voice, as the crew ruefully pulled in to land and proceeded to stow their catch in the car.

"Mighty bad luck, Captain Sam," replied Joe Hinman, dolefully, to the figure on shore.

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Little Tim, the first to jump from the bow of the boat, narrated their adventure with the squire. Captain Sam snorted.

“Ho, the shrewd old fox!” he exclaimed. “Why, he’s eaten enough short lobsters in the last two years to cost him a thousand dollars. Only trouble is, he’s eaten the proof. We can’t catch him on those. Wait till I see him, though, I’ll give him a piece of my mind about raking up laws that way.”

Perhaps the utterance about law, on Captain Sam’s part, refreshed his memory, however; for, the next moment, he burst into a roar of laughter.

“Oh, yes, it’s funny, I suppose,” said Little Tim; “but you don’t have to pay the fine.”

Captain Sam roared again.

“No, and you won’t, either, I reckon,” he laughed. “See here.”

He whispered something in Little Tim’s ear.

“Don’t let on that I told you, though,” he said. “The squire owes me a grudge already. Ha! ha! I was watching all of you out there fishing. Ho! the old fox!”

Captain Sam walked away, chuckling to himself.

“He will rake up laws just to pay a spite with, eh?” he muttered.

Little Tim was off like a shot.

Twenty minutes later, a barefoot figure, panting and perspiring, accosted Squire Brackett, as the latter, bearing his precious evidence in the shape of the offending lobster, walked up the village street.

“We’ll just show this lobster to the fish-warden, my son,” said the squire. “Then we’ll go home to supper.”

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“Squire Brackett, you aren’t really going to complain on us, are you?” piped Little Tim, out of breath. “We didn’t mean to break the law, you know.”

“Get out of here, you little ragamuffin!” exclaimed the squire, reddening and waving Tim out of his path. “Somebody’s got to teach you youngsters a lesson—playing your pranks ’round here, day and night. Somebody’s got to uphold the law. Sooner you boys begin to have some respect for it, the better for honest folks on the island.”

“Well, if a chap breaks the law without thinking, do you want him to ‘catch it’ just the same?” queried young Tim. “P’r’aps you have eaten short lobsters, yourself.”

“Certainly, any person that breaks the law ought to be punished—every time,” replied the squire. “That’ll teach ’em a lesson. I’ll show you boys that when you come down here you’ve got to behave, or suffer for it.”

“Because,” continued young Tim, “you were breaking the law, yourself, this afternoon—you and Harry.”

Little Tim dodged back out of reach, in a hurry; for the squire made a dart at him, turning purple with anger.

“What do you mean, you young scamp!” cried the squire. “Just let me get you by the ear once. Accusing me of breaking the law!”

Little Tim’s nimble bare feet carried him out of the way of the squire’s arm. From a safe distance, he continued:

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“Yes, you and Harry were breaking the law, out there in the boat. You were tied up to one of the spar-buoys. They belong to the gov’ment. I’ve heard a fisherman say so; and it’s fifty dollars fine for any one to moor a boat to one of ’em. Didn’t you know that, squire?”

Little Tim asked this question with a provoking innocence that nearly threw the squire into an apoplectic fit.

“Pooh!” he exclaimed. “Pooh!” He turned a shade deeper purple, feigned to bluster for a moment, and then, realizing, with full and overwhelming consciousness, that what Little Tim had said was true, subsided, muttering to himself.

The squire stood irresolutely in the street, holding the lobster in one hand, and glaring in a confused sort of way at Little Tim, who was now grinning provokingly.

“Here, you young scamp,” he said at length, “come here.”

Little Tim approached, discreetly.

“Now,” said the squire, hemming and hawing, and evidently somewhat embarrassed, “on second thought, I—I’m going to let you youngsters off this time. I guess you didn’t intend to do anything wrong, did you?”

“No, sir,” replied Little Tim, looking very sober and serious, but chuckling inwardly.

“Well,” said the squire, “I think I won’t complain of you this time. We’ll just drop the whole affair. Of course a mere nominal fine of fifty dollars wouldn’t be anything to me; but I reckon twenty dollars would be kind of a pinch for you boys, and you have been working pretty industriously. You go along now—but look out, and don’t do anything of the sort again.”

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Little Tim bolted for the camp.

The squire stood for a moment, scowling after the vanishing figure, and glancing out of the corner of an eye at his son, Harry, to see if that young man was treating the incident in its proper light—to wit, with respect to his father. Harry Brackett was discreetly serious.

“Harry,” said the squire, finally, handing over the piece of incriminating evidence, “you take those lobsters up to the house and tell your mother to boil them for supper.”

“The short one, too?” asked Harry Brackett.

“Yes, confound you!” roared the squire. “Take them both along. Do you think I buy lobsters to throw away? Clear out! And, look here, if I hear

of your saying anything about this affair to any one, you'll catch it."

Harry Brackett departed homeward, while the squire, muttering maledictions on Harvey, his crew, and Henry Burns, entered the village store.

"Those boys have altogether too much information," he said. "I'd like to know if that young Henry Burns put him up to that."

As for Henry Burns, his mind had been given over for some time to the consideration of a different matter. He, himself, couldn't have told exactly just when and where he had formed a certain impression; but, once the idea had impressed him, he had turned it over and over, looking at it from all sides, and trying to recall any incident that would shed light on it.

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He had a habit of thinking of things in this way, without saying anything to anybody about them until he had made up his mind. And what he had been considering in this way, for a week or more, was nothing less than the yacht *Viking*, and their departed friend, Mr. Carleton.

"Jack," he said, as he and Harvey sat cooking their supper on the stove in the cabin, the evening following this same afternoon's fishing, "do you know I believe there is something queer about the *Viking*."

"Not a thing!" exclaimed Harvey. "She's as straight and clean a boat, without faults, as any one could find in a year."

"No, that isn't what I meant," said Henry Burns, smiling. "I almost think there's something about her that we haven't discovered. Did you ever think there might be something hidden aboard the boat that's valuable?"

"Cracky! no," replied Harvey. "What in the world put that into your head?"

"Mr. Carleton did," answered Henry Burns.

"Mr. Carleton!" exclaimed Harvey. "Why, I never heard him say anything like that."

"Neither did I," said Henry Burns. "It's what he did—breaking into our cabin, and that sort of thing."

"What sort of thing?" asked Harvey, somewhat incredulous, despite his having considerable faith in the ideas of his companion.

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"Why, he tried to do it once before," said Henry Burns.

"He did?" queried Harvey, in amazement. "You never said anything to me about it."

"No; because I didn't think so, myself, at the time," replied Henry Burns. "You see, it was over there that night at Springton. Do you remember the man on the beach next morning?"

"Go ahead," said Harvey. "Perhaps I'll see it when you tell it."

"Well," continued Henry Burns, "I mean the old fisherman that spoke to Mr. Carleton just as we were pushing off. Don't you remember, he spoke

about Mr. Carleton's borrowing his skiff to go out to his yacht the night before? Now you just think how Mr. Carleton looks—tall and nicely dressed—and that big blond moustache—and then that heavy, deep voice of his. That fisherman wasn't mistaken. He remembered him. It was only the night before, too, mind you.

"And, besides, the fisherman asked him if he had found his own boat all right in the morning. Now, don't you see, whoever it was that borrowed the fisherman's boat had gone down to the place where we had left our tender, expecting to find a boat at that very spot. You put the two things together, and it looks like Mr. Carleton. I didn't think of it then, but I've been thinking of it since."

Harry gave a whistle of astonishment.

"And he hadn't lost that pin at that time, either," said Henry Burns. "Nor had he lost the pin he told about, the night after, when he was looking about the cabin with a light, while we were asleep. Then, I don't believe he had lost any pin at all when he broke into our cabin; and if he had, why didn't he wait till we came up? He knew we would be back in an hour or two. No, sir, he was after something in that cabin."

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"Well, if you don't think of queer things!" exclaimed Harvey. "Anything else?"

"Nothing of itself," replied Henry Burns, thoughtfully. "But isn't it kind of queer that he should have tried to buy the *Viking* when he had seen her only once? I'm sure Harry Brackett was making an offer for him. He had just come from Bellport, you know; and that's where Mr. Carleton was staying. Now a man doesn't usually buy a boat offhand that way."

"That's so," assented Harvey. "Well, what do you make of it all?"

"Why, that's what puzzles me," said Henry Burns. "But you know how we came by the boat, in the first place. Supposing the men that owned her, and who committed that robbery up at Benton, had hidden something valuable aboard her, and that Mr. Carleton had heard of it. Naturally, he would try to get hold of it, wouldn't he?"

"Whew!" ejaculated Harvey. "But how could he hear of it? The men that committed the robbery are in prison."

"Yes, that's true," said Henry Burns. "But persons can visit them on certain days, in certain hours. There are ways in which Mr. Carleton could have got the information."

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Jack Harvey was by this time wrought up to a high pitch of excitement.

"We'll overhaul her this very night," he cried. "We'll light the lanterns and go over her from one end to the other. Say, do you know, it might be hidden in the ballast—in a hollow piece of the pig-iron, I mean. Of course the ballast was taken out of her last fall."

Henry Burns gave a quiet smile.

"It might be," he said, "but more likely somewhere about the cabin. We better wait till

morning, though, and do the job thoroughly. We'll get Tom and Bob out then, to help—especially if you want to go through the ballast.”

“I'll turn her upside down, if necessary,” cried Harvey, who was fired with the novelty of the adventure. “Well, perhaps we better wait till morning. But I don't feel as though I could go to sleep.”

“I can,” said Henry Burns, and he set the example, shortly.

“Well, if he can't think of weirder things, and go to sleep more peacefully than anybody I ever heard of!” exclaimed Harvey, as he put out the cabin lantern and turned in for the night.

On his promise of secrecy, they let George Warren into the scheme next morning. The other Warren boys had gone up the island. So, at George's suggestion, they took the *Viking* up the cove, alongside the *Spray*, and lashed the two boats together.

“Now you can take the ballast out on to the deck of our yacht, if you want to,” said George Warren.

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“Let's overhaul the cabin, first,” said Henry Burns.

As for Jack Harvey, he wanted to overhaul the whole boat at once, so filled was he with the mystery and the excitement of the thing. He threw open this locker and that, piled their contents out on to the cabin floor, and rummaged eagerly fore and aft, as though he half-expected to come across a hidden fortune in the turning of a hand.

“Look out for Jack,” said George Warren, winking at Henry Burns. “With half a word of encouragement, he'll take the hatchet and chop into the fine woodwork.”

“I'll bet I would, too,” declared Harvey, seating himself, red-faced and perspiring, on one of the berths. “Say, Henry, where do you think it is?”

“Probably under where you're sitting,” replied Henry Burns, slyly, winking back at George Warren.

Harvey jumped up, with a spring that bumped his head against the roof of the cabin; whereupon he sat down again, as abruptly, rubbing his crown, and muttering in a way that made the others double up with laughter.

“That's a good suggestion, anyway,” he said, making the best of it. And he fell to tossing the blankets out of the cabin door. He searched in vain, however, for any hidden opening in the floor of the berth, and sounded fruitlessly for any suspicious hollow place about its frame.

“I'll tell you what we'll do,” suggested Henry Burns; “you and Tom start forward, and George and I will start aft, and we'll work toward one another, examining everything carefully as we go. We'll pass the stuff to Bob and he can carry it outside.”

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Setting the example, Henry Burns began with the provision locker on the starboard side, next to the bulkhead. He took everything out,

scrutinized every board with which the locker was sealed, and tapped on the boards with a little hammer. But there was no unusual fitting of the boards that suggested a hidden chamber, nor any variance in the sound where the hammer fell, to warrant cutting into the sides of the locker. He examined top, sides, and bottom, with equal care and with no favourable result.

Next, on the starboard side, was the stove platform and the stove. There was no use disturbing that, so he passed it by.

A chamber, sealed up and lined with zinc for an ice-box, afforded a likewise unfavourable field for exploration.

Then came a series of lockers, with alcoves and shelves between, which occupied the space above the berths. These, and the drawers beneath the berths, were searched, but yielded no secrets.

George Warren, on the port side, searched likewise, but with equally discouraging results.

Harvey, forward, had the hatch off and the water-casks and some spare rigging thrown out on deck. The cabin deck and cockpit of the *Viking* looked as though the boat had been in eruption and had heaved up all its contents.

"My!" exclaimed George Warren, "this is hot work. I feel like a pirate sacking a ship for gold."

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"Only there isn't any gold," said Harvey; "but I'll try the ballast before I quit."

"I'm afraid that's not much use," said Henry Burns. "They wouldn't go so deep as that to hide anything. I'm afraid I've raised your hopes for nothing."

But Harvey was not for giving up so soon; and, seeing his heart was set on it, the others took hold with a will and helped him. They took up the cabin floor and lifted out the sticks of ballast.

"Glad there isn't very much of this stuff," said George Warren, as he passed a heavy piece of the iron out to Harvey.

"Well, so am I," responded Harvey. "There's lead forward, so we won't disturb that. But I've heard of hiding things this way, and there might be a hollow piece of the iron, with a cap screwed in it, or something of that sort."

"He must have been reading detective stories," said Henry Burns.

Perhaps Harvey, himself, came to the conclusion that he was a little too visionary; for, after he had sounded each piece with the hammer until they had a big pile of it heaped outside, he grinned rather sheepishly and suggested that they had gone far enough. The boys needed no second admission on his part. They passed the stuff in again, and it was stowed away as before.

"Say, Henry," said Jack Harvey, when, after another half-hour, they had restored the yacht to its former order, "this wasn't one of your jokes, was it—this hidden treasure idea?"

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Henry Burns sat down by the wheel, wearily.

"No, it wasn't, honour bright," he replied. "But I guess it is a kind of a joke, after all. You four can pitch in and throw me overboard, if you like."

But they were too tired to accept Henry Burns's invitation.

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CHAPTER XVII. A RAINY NIGHT

The summer days went by pleasantly now, with naught to interrupt the enjoyment of the yachtsmen. The three yachts, the *Viking*, the *Surprise*, and the *Spray*, went on a friendly cruise around Grand Island, putting in at little harbours overnight, and the crews wakening the stillness of many a small hamlet with their songs and skylarking at twilight. They had races from port to port, the largest boat giving the other two time-allowance. They fished and swam and grew strong.

Toward the middle of August, the crew gave up lobster catching and stored the lath-pots away for another year. The *Surprise* took to going on voyages down the bay, fishing on its own account. In fact, Harvey's four charges had developed a surprising and most commendable ability to look out for themselves, without assistance from him and Henry Burns.

The *Viking*, too, went on a ten days' fishing voyage to the outer islands, cleaned up a good catch of cod and hake, and came back, with all the gear neatly packed away, ready to store for the winter.

There had been only one thing lacking for the season's complete financial success. The mackerel had not appeared around the coast. It was getting near the first of September, and the local fishermen had lost hope of their coming.

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"Guess it's going to be an off year," remarked Captain Sam. "They're uncertain fish. One year you can almost bail 'em out with a pail, and another year they just keep away. They're getting a few down around Cape Cod, I hear, but I reckon the seiners have cleaned 'em out so there won't be any 'round these parts."

Nevertheless, the young fishermen were alive to the possibility of their coming. They scanned the water eagerly for signs of a school whenever they were cruising, and, at early morning, watched the harbour entrances in the hope they might see the fish breaking.

"If we could only get the first run of them," said Little Tim, "we'd just make a fortune. The big hotels down the bay haven't had any this season, except those they've sent to Boston and Portland for. They'd take the whole boat-load."

Little Tim was, in fact, the greatest optimist to be found around Grand Island. Perhaps it was because he knew less about signs and indications of fish, and trusted only to his own hopes. The old salts shook their heads and agreed it was surely an off year. But, wherever

the *Surprise* cruised, if there was not a sea on, and the yacht was sailing slowly enough to admit of it, Little Tim had a line overboard, trolling far astern. The jig was baited with a white strip of fish, to catch the eye of any hungry mackerel that might have ventured into the bay, despite the predictions of the islanders.

Then, early one afternoon, Little Tim's faith was rewarded. They were sailing lazily along, with a light west wind, in the lee of the small islands back of Hawk Island, some six or seven miles below Southport. Little Tim, seated on the after-rail, had his usual line astern, and the crew had had their usual jokes at his expense—especially when, now and then, a tug at the line, which had set Tim's heart jumping, had proved to be only a floating bunch of seaweed, greatly to the chagrin of Tim, and to the amusement of the others.

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There came a smart tug at the line, and Little Tim was up like a rabbit out of its hole. He seized the line and began hauling in rapidly.

"Tim's got some more seaweed," said Allan Harding. "Too bad there isn't money in that. He's pulled enough up alongside the boat to make us all rich."

"No, it isn't!" cried Tim, excitedly. "Look, there's a fish coming in—hooray! It's a mackerel, too. See him shine."

Little Tim yanked the fish out of water, with a jerk that sent fish and mackerel-jig higher than his head. But there was no mistake about it. There was a mackerel, flopping and jumping in the bottom of the boat, glistening and gleaming, with its mingled shades of green and black and white.

"Isn't he a beauty?" exclaimed Tim, dancing about in wild excitement. "It isn't a No. 1 size—only a 'tinker;' but it's a mackerel sure enough, and they don't come alone, these fellows. There are more. Get out the lines."

But his companions, no longer scoffing, were as excited as he. Joe Hinman had the boat up into the wind, in a twinkling. The other two boys had the sail down on the run, and furled, with a couple of stops about it, and they were drifting slowly, the next moment, with lines out on every hand.

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However, Little Tim proved to be more of a discoverer than prophet. The fish, if there were more of them about, were not running in large numbers. They caught a few more scattering ones, but they could see no school in sight. They stuck to it, however, till the middle of the afternoon.

"They're coming in, though," said Joe Hinman; "and we are the only ones that know it. We haven't the bait for much fishing, anyway; so let's run up to harbour while the wind lasts, tell Jack and Henry Burns, and we'll all come down here again early in the morning, before the other boats get out."

Little Tim, winding up his line reluctantly, drew one more fish in before they set sail, well-nigh going overboard in his excitement.

They reached Southport Harbour about five o'clock, and ran close alongside the *Viking*, which lay at its mooring.

"We've got something good for supper, Henry," said Little Tim to Henry Burns, who was busily engaged cleaning up the decks of the yacht, with a broom which he dipped overboard now and then.

"Better send up and invite young Joe down," said Henry Burns, paying little attention to the new arrivals. "Jack and I are going into the tent, to eat supper with Tom and Bob."

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"All right," said young Tim. "It may be your only chance, though, to eat one of these this summer." Henry Burns glanced up from his work at the string of six mackerel which Tim proudly displayed. Then he flung down his broom and ran to the companionway.

"Jack, come out here," he cried. "They've got some mackerel. They've come at last."

Harvey emerged hurriedly from the cabin, and gave a whoop of exultation when he saw the fish.

"We want to go down first thing in the morning," said Joe Hinman, "before any of the other boats get out. There'll be money in the first catch, if we have any luck."

"We won't wait till morning," said Henry Burns, decidedly. "We'll start to-night, and be on the grounds first thing. I'll get Tom and Bob out. You fellows get your lines ready and we'll go and catch some bait right off."

Henry Burns, while not of excitable temperament, had a way of doing things sharply and promptly when occasion demanded. He went below and presently gave a signal of three short toots on the fish-horn, in the direction of the camp. Bob was alongside next moment, in the canoe.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Get ready for a trip down the bay," replied Henry Burns. "We're off to-night, just as soon as we get the bait. The mackerel are in. Tim's found them at last."

Tim showed the crew's catch.

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"Fine!" exclaimed Bob. "I'll tell you what," he added, "I've got supper under way. Let me take those fish, and I'll cook them, too, and get supper ready for all of us, while the rest of you catch the bait. Tom will come out and help you."

Tim tossed the fish into the canoe, and Bob hastened ashore.

They were all out in the cove shortly, with lines down close to the muddy bottom, for flounders and sculpins. The tide, at half-flood, served them fortunately, and soon the fish began to come aboard. Then, when they had their catch, they rowed around to the wharf, dropping Henry Burns ashore near the Warren cottage.

The *Spray* was gone from harbour; but Henry Burns left word for the Warren boys to follow, in the morning, impressing the importance of secrecy on Mrs. Warren, with a solemnity as

great as if they were going after hidden gold.

At the wharf, near the beach, a huge sort of coffee-mill was set up, which the mackerel fishermen used for grinding bait—but which had had no service thus far this year. Chopping the fish into pieces, they threw these into the mill, whence they dropped into a big wooden bucket, ground into a mess that might, as Little Tim remarked, look appetizing to a mackerel, but didn't to him.

"There, we've got 'chum' enough," said Harvey, when the bucket was two-thirds filled. "We'll need the rest of the fish to bait the hooks. Come on, before any of the fishermen see what we are doing."

They rowed around quickly to the camp, whence the odours of supper emerged, appetizingly. Bob had been as good as his word, and everything was ready. They sat about the opening of the tent, and did full justice to Bob's cooking.

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"Lucky it's going to be a good night," said Henry Burns, glancing off at the sea and sky. "Looks like a little breeze, doesn't it, Jack?"

"I hope so," replied Harvey. "We'll start, anyway. It's clear, and it won't be like drifting about down off Loon Island, if we get becalmed."

"Can't stop to clean up dishes to-night," said Bob, as he piled the stuff into the tent, as soon as they were finished. "We usually leave things more shipshape, don't we, Tom?"

They tied the flap of the tent carefully, saw that the tent-pegs were firm, and the guy-ropes all right, and departed. By half-past seven o'clock they were out aboard, and the two yachts were under way.

"Too bad the *Spray* isn't coming along," said Henry Burns; "but I've left word for them to follow in the morning."

There was a light westerly breeze blowing, which was favourable for a straight run to the islands, with sheets started a little, and everything drawing. They set the forestaysail and both jibs and the club-topsail on the *Viking*; and, there being no sea, with the wind offshore, they made fast time.

The *Surprise*, with everything spread, followed in the wake of the larger yacht.

"We'll tell the mackerel you are coming," called Henry Burns to the crew.

"They know it already. We told them we were coming back. We saw 'em first," responded Tim.

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They were among the islands by ten o'clock, though the wind had fallen. They anchored in the lee of one, and prepared to turn in.

"We ought to be out early," said Harvey; "but how are we going to wake up? I'm sure to sleep till long after sunrise, unless somebody wakes me. We ought to have some alarm to set, to wake us."

"Don't need it," replied Henry Burns. "I'll set myself. I don't know how I do it, but if I go to bed thinking I want to wake up at a certain hour,

I almost always do wake at about that time. How will four o'clock do?"

"Early enough," said Harvey; "but don't oversleep."

Sure enough, Henry Burns was awake next morning by a few minutes after four o'clock; but he was not ahead of Little Tim, this time, who was so excited that he had slept all night with one eye half-open, and who had been up once or twice in the dead of night, thinking it must be near morning. He was over the rail of the *Viking*, at the first appearance of Henry Burns, and, between them, there was no more sleep for anybody.

It was dead calm over all the bay; and, one thing was certain, there was as yet no news of the mackerel having come in, for there were no boats out.

"We've stolen a march on the fishermen for once," exclaimed Tom, as they ate a hurried breakfast and got the lines ready. "I wonder if the mackerel are looking for breakfast, too."

They put out, shortly, in the two dories, rowing down a half-mile to where the crew had seen the fish the night before. There was no sign of the water breaking, anywhere, to denote the presence of a school.

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"Never mind, we'll throw out, anyway," said Harvey. "Sometimes they're around when they don't break. They may be feeding deeper."

Taking a long-handled tin dipper, he filled the bucket of bait nearly to the brim with sea-water, and stirred it vigorously for a moment. Then he took a dipper of the stuff and threw it as far from the boat as he could, scattering it broadly over the surface of the water.

They waited, watching eagerly, but the bits of ground fish sank slowly, undisturbed.

"Don't seem to be at home," muttered Harvey. "Row out a little farther, and we'll try them again."

They repeated the manœuvre several times, but each time the bait was untaken. It sank slowly, each tiny particle clearly defined in the still water, settling in odd little patches of discoloration.

Then, of a sudden, there was a sharp severance of one of these patches, as though an arrow had been shot through it. The next moment, there was a darting here and there and everywhere. The pieces of fish disappeared in tiny flurries. At the same time, the surface of the water broke into myriads of tiny ripples, as though whipped up by a breeze.

"They're here," whispered Harvey. "Get out the lines." He filled the dipper once more and threw it broadcast, but this time nearer the boats. They threw out the lines, baited with the shining pieces of flounder.

It seemed as though every bait was seized at once; for, in a moment, every boy was pulling in, and a half-dozen mackerel came over the gunwales together.

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They baited up anew, then, knowing that no bait serves so well for mackerel as a piece cut from the under side of the fish, itself. This, white and shiny, and pierced twice through the tough skin with the barb of the hook, would indeed often answer several times in succession, without rebaiting.

They rigged two lines for each fisherman, tying an end of each line to the gunwale, so that, when a bite was felt, one of the lines could be dropped while the fish on the other was hauled aboard. The mackerel, indeed, bit so ravenously that it was hardly necessary to stop to see if a fish was hooked, but only to catch up one line, as quick as a fish had been removed from the other and that line thrown out, and haul in again. Nine times out of ten there would be a mackerel on the hook. Standing up in the dories, to work to better advantage, they were soon half knee-deep in the fish.

"We'll fill the boats, if they keep this up," said Harvey. "Tom, you're nearest the oars; just row back toward the yacht, easily, and we'll toll them up that way."

He threw out more bait, as Tom worked the dory back, and the whole school followed, hungrily. In a few minutes the boys had climbed aboard the yachts and were fishing from them, to better advantage.

A half-hour went by, and the fish had not ceased biting. The boys were drenched to the skin from their hips to their feet, with the drippings from the wet lines; for, in their haste, they had not stopped to don their oilskin breeches.

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"We ought to have known better, with all the experience we have had this summer," said Henry Burns; "but never mind, we'll make enough out of this catch to buy new clothes, if the wind only serves us, later."

By the end of an hour, the sun was up and gleaming across the water.

"They're likely to leave us soon, now," remarked Harvey; but, oddly enough, the fish still remained about the boats in such numbers that the water seemed fairly alive with them. However, with the warmth of the sun's rays, the voracity of the mackerel abated somewhat, and they began pulling them in more slowly.

"I'm just as glad," exclaimed Tom, whose arms, bronzed and muscular, were nevertheless beginning to feel the novel exercise. "My arms and wrists ache, and I know I'll never be able to stand up straight again. My back is bent, and frozen that way, with leaning over this rail."

Suddenly, after a quarter of an hour more, the fish began making little leaps half out of water, breaking the surface with little splashings and whirls.

"They'll be gone now," said Harvey. "Some bigger fish are chasing them. That's what makes them act that way."

This seemed to be true, for presently the water that, a moment before, had been alive with the darting fish, became still and deserted. They took one or two more, by letting their baits sink

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deep in the water, but the big catch was ended.

"It's pretty near a record for hand-line fishing in a single morning around here, I guess," said Harvey. "How many do you think we've caught, Henry?"

"Nearly five hundred, I should say," answered Henry Burns.

"More than that, I'll bet," exclaimed his enthusiastic comrade. And for once, at least, Harvey was nearer correct than Henry Burns; for, when they had counted them, some hours later, there were five hundred, and eighteen more, in the *Viking's* catch; and as for the crew of the *Surprise*, they were only fifty below this figure.

"Oh, but I'm hungry!" exclaimed Bob, dropping on to the seat. "And, say, it's somebody's else turn to cook breakfast."

"I'll do it," said Tom.

"Well, you go ahead," said Henry Burns, "and the rest of us will stow these fish down below, out of the sun."

They went to work with a will, the crew of the *Surprise* doing likewise.

"Too bad to stow fish in this nice, clean cabin," said Joe Hinman; "but never mind, we'll have to turn to, by and by, and scrub it, that's all."

They had the luck with them, again; for hardly had they begun to prepare breakfast, than the water rippled with a second day's westerly breeze. They got the two yachts under sail, without a moment's loss of time.

"See here, Joe," called Harvey, as the yachts began to fill away, "we'll play fair with you. We can outsail you some, and we shall get to Stoneland before you do. We'll take the big hotel in the harbour, and then the market. The market will buy all that either of us have left. We'll leave you the other hotel, a half-mile up the shore. There are 'most as many guests there, and they're all summer boarders, so they'll take as many fish. If we break a stay on the trip over and get delayed, you give us the same chance, eh?"

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"Ay, ay," responded Joe. "Good luck!"

The wind not only came sharp and strong, an hour later, but there were thunder-clouds in the sky, down near the horizon-line, and the breeze was full of quick flaws and was treacherous. Before they were half-way over to Stoneland, they were sailing under two reefs and making the water fly.

"It's great!" cried Harvey, hugging the wheel, in his delight. "Let her blow good and hard as long as it doesn't storm. We'll do the fifteen miles in an hour and a half, at this rate."

The two yachts were lying well over in the water, crushing it white under the lee-rail, and making fast time.

"We'll get a storm, too, by nightfall," said Henry Burns, looking weather-wise at the sky. "But we shall have sold our fish first, and we'll be snug

behind the breakwater. So let it come."

The yachtsmen were in great spirits. Even Henry Burns betrayed symptoms of excitement as they ran into the harbour, early in the forenoon, and brought the *Viking* up neatly at the hotel wharf.

A few minutes later, Henry Burns and Jack Harvey approached a somewhat important-appearing person on the hotel veranda, who had been pointed out to them as the proprietor.

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"Fish? No, I don't buy fish," he answered, shortly, in reply to Henry Burns's question. "See the steward. He attends to that."

Harvey reddened, but Henry Burns smiled and said:

"That's all right, Jack. We're only fishermen, you know. Come on, we'll see the steward. We'll make him pay more for the fish, just because the proprietor was haughty."

Henry Burns was fortunate enough to catch the steward in the hotel office, where he stated his errand, coolly, before some of the guests.

"Good!" exclaimed one of them. "You'd better get 'em, Mr. Blake. You haven't given us any fresh mackerel this season."

"He'll have to buy some, now, whether he wants to or not," said Henry Burns to Harvey, as they followed the steward into his private office.

"Now see here," said the steward, "I've got some six hundred guests in this house, and I need about three hundred fish. I want a fairly easy price for that many."

"Twenty cents apiece, right through," answered Henry Burns, promptly.

"Ho! That's too much," said the steward. "Can't do it. Try again."

"That's the figure," insisted Henry Burns. "You'll have to pay more, if we sell them to the market, you know. Then there's the hotel up the shore. What would your boarders say if we took them up there and sold them?"

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Steward Blake looked at Henry Burns sternly for a moment; then a grim smile played about the corners of his mouth.

"You're kind of sharp, aren't you?" he asked. "Well, I guess you've got me there, as these are the first of the season. Throw in an extra dozen for good measure, and it's a bargain."

"All right," said Henry Burns.

A few moments later, with three twenty-dollar bills tucked away in a wallet in his inner waistcoat pocket, Henry Burns, with Harvey, was going briskly down to the wharf, where he and his comrades were soon engaged in loading the fish into the hotel wagon.

"We can be haughty now, ourselves," he said, as they got under way once more and stood down for the market.

Ten cents apiece was the marketman's figure, and they let the remainder go for that. Then,

with eighty dollars for the entire morning's catch, they went aboard the *Viking* and punched and pummelled one another like a lot of young bears, from sheer excess of joy.

"I wonder how the crew will come out," said Harvey. "I'm afraid they won't do as well at a bargain as you did, Henry."

"Perhaps so," said Henry Burns. "They've got Little Tim aboard, and he's pretty shrewd, sometimes."

And indeed, it was at Little Tim's suggestion that the *Surprise* went on up the coast, after the crew had done business with the hotel left for them according to the agreement, and they sold the remainder of their catch at the hotel at Hampton, three miles farther on. And they, too, found themselves rich at the end of their bargaining, with sixty dollars to divide among the four of them.

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Then, as the day wore on threatening, with the thunder-clouds slowly mounting higher, and the wind coming in fiercer gusts, the yachts, each in a safe harbour, laid up for the day. The respective crews wandered about the towns as if they were each, individually, the mayor, or at least were a party of the selectmen.

The Warren boys, having returned on the previous evening, and being apprised by Mrs. Warren of the news confided to her care, were disappointed not to have joined the party; but they made ready, the next morning, to follow. Then the early morning steamer from Bellport brought them a letter, saying that Mr. Warren, senior, would arrive on the night-boat from Benton, and had arranged for a week's cruise with them, among the islands. So they changed their plans to a short run down toward the foot of Grand Island, to be back at nightfall.

There, again, the fortune of sailing was against them. By mid-afternoon, when they would have put back, the storm threatened.

"No use," said George Warren, reluctantly. "We'll have to wait for it to blow over. We'll be glad enough of this good harbour in a half-hour more."

The storm broke soon after, heavily. By five o'clock it was pouring in torrents, with sharp flashes of lightning illumining the darkened waters of the bay. By six o'clock it eased up a little.

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"Well, one of us is in for it," said George Warren. "Somebody's got to tramp up the island, home. Father will be down, and he won't like it, to find us gone. The other two can sail the yacht up in the morning. We'll draw lots to see who goes."

To the immense relief of his brothers, the lot fell to him. They consoled him, but with satisfaction not all unconcealed. He took it in good part, however.

"Don't feel too bad about it, Joe," he said, as he bade them good night. "I know you wanted to go home, but I'll tell the folks you're comfortable."

He started off in the drizzle. They had run down about seven miles, and there was that length of

muddy road ahead of him. It was not his fortune to accomplish much of his journey, however. Three miles up the island, the storm resumed its fury, blowing the rain fiercely in his face, while the whole island seemed to shake with the crashing of the thunder. It was useless to contend against it, and, at length, he turned in at a farmhouse by the roadside, and sought shelter.

"Yes, indeed," said the housewife, to his request. "There's the spare room at the end of the hall up-stairs for you, and welcome. There's wood in the wood-box, too, and you can build up a fire in the fireplace and dry your clothes. You're as wet as a drowned cat. When you're dried out, come down-stairs and I'll have a cup of tea for you. We've had a boarder for two days in that room, but he went away yesterday; and I'm glad he's gone, for your sake."

George Warren scrambled up the stairs, at the risk of the lamp which the woman had handed to him, lighted. Inside the room, he took a handful of kindling from the wood-box, and soon had it ablaze, with the aid of a few scraps of old newspaper. Then he laid some larger pieces of driftwood across, and quickly had a cheerful fire roaring up the chimney.

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He threw off his wet clothing, wrapped a blanket about him, and crouched by the fire to enjoy its warmth—for he had been chilled through.

The huge, old-fashioned fireplace would seem not to have been used for a long time; for, in the corners of it were odds and ends and scraps of paper, that had evidently been swept up from the floor and thrown in there, as the most convenient place for their disposal. George Warren poked some of this stuff into the fire and watched it blaze. He picked up a few scraps of paper and threw them in.

Then, as he repeated this action, there was the half of an envelope that the light of the fire illuminated, as he held it in his hand. Part of the address remained, and, even as he consigned it to the flames, he read it clearly:

"Carleton,
"Bellport,
"Me."

"Hello! that's funny," he remarked. "That's Mr. Carleton's name—and he was over at Bellport, too. I thought he had gone away to Boston. I'll have to ask about him in the morning."

But, in his hurry next morning, George Warren forgot about the letter until he was a half-mile up the road.

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"I'll have to tell Henry Burns and Harvey about that, anyway," he said, as he walked along. "Henry Burns likes mysteries. He'll have some queer notion about why Mr. Carleton was down there, I'll bet."

But George Warren failed to inform either Henry Burns or any one else about his discovery; for he went on a week's cruise, next day, and when he returned it had passed out of his mind. At least, he didn't think of it till about two weeks later.

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CHAPTER XVIII. TWO SECRETS DISCOVERED

Squire Brackett sat in his office, deep in thought. To say that he was out of temper, would be putting it mildly. Something that he was trying to do baffled him; and, being thwarted, he was irritable and unhappy. Now when Squire Brackett was unhappy, he usually succeeded in making everybody else with whom he came in contact likewise unhappy. Therefore, when he betook himself to his office, of an afternoon, and sat himself down at his desk, to attempt to solve a certain puzzle, as he had done now for several weeks, at intervals, the members of his household kept discreetly aloof.

Before the squire, on the shelf of his desk, lay the paper on which he had pasted the scraps of Mr. Carleton's letter. The first effort at a solution of the puzzle had been one more of curiosity than aught else on his part. He had thought it would be rather a smart achievement, to discover something which another man had attempted to destroy, though it probably would be of no particular importance to the discoverer. But, from that condition of mind, he had progressed to a state wherein he thought he saw, hidden in the fragments of the letter, something of more than ordinary import.

As Squire Brackett had arranged them, the words and parts of words now lay before him thus:

lock
ey
must be
sound
mbers
aboard yacht
starboa
still
under
ays
third

The squire's increase of curiosity had resulted largely from his interpretation of the first two fragments. At a casual glance, he had decided that the first four letters were a part of the word, "locker,"—which would be natural if the writer were referring to a yacht. But he arrived at a different and more exciting conclusion, when it suddenly dawned upon him that the first word was really complete as it stood; that it was the word, "lock." This, because the next two letters clearly were part of the word, "key."

"Of course," he exclaimed. "If I hadn't been stupid I'd have thought of that before. Aha! I have a whole sentence now, by simply supplying a few of the missing words." He wrote as follows, picking out these words that the letter, as he had it before him, contained: "key — lock — must be still aboard yacht."

"That's plain enough for a boy to read," said Squire Brackett. "The sentence was, 'The key to the lock must be still aboard yacht.'"

"Hm!" he exclaimed, rubbing his forehead, reflectively. "That's interesting; and it's queer."

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Somebody knows a thing or two about that boat—and that somebody, whoever he is, has been writing it to Carleton. Still, I don't see how that helps me. I can't make much out of it."

The letter, having yielded up this much of its secret to the squire, became immediately of greater interest to him; but, at the same time, an object of greater annoyance and perplexity. He couldn't get the thing off his mind. It became a sort of continual nightmare to him. Why, he asked, should any one write to Mr. Carleton about a key to a lock aboard the *Viking*?

Being somewhat heavy-witted, in spite of a certain natural shrewdness, the squire did not answer his own question readily.

On this particular afternoon, however, he advanced a step farther.

"Perhaps," he said to himself, "that word, 'sound,' does not refer to timbers at all. It might be Long Island Sound, where this yacht has been at some time, probably. Oh, I wish I had the rest of the letter."

"I tell you what!" exclaimed the squire, "this thing is queer. That's what it is. Who should know anything about this yacht, and who would be writing to Mr. Carleton about it? It couldn't be the men that had it before the boys got it. They were a band of thieves. What's that? Hello! Why not? This man Carleton has cleared out. He didn't buy that land of me. He never intended to; that's what."

"I've got it!" he cried, jumping up excitedly and thumping his desk with his fist. "Chambers! Chambers! That's the man. He's the man that set fire to the hotel. He's the man that Jack Harvey captured down in the Thoroughfare. He's the man that knows about the *Viking*—and there's his name in the letter—or a part of his name.

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"Those letters, 'mbers,' don't mean 'timbers' at all. They were a part of the name 'Chambers.' Yes, and those letters at the end of the list, 'ays,' don't mean 'stays,' either, as I thought they did. That word is 'says.'

"'Chambers says' something—now what does he say? I have it:

"'Chambers says key to the lock must be still aboard yacht.'

"Wait a minute," said the squire to himself. "That word, 'starboard' comes in here somewhere. Starboard—starboard—oh, I see; 'starboard locker.' That first word is 'locker,' just as I thought in the beginning."

The squire wrote his translation of the letter, as he had thus far evolved it, as follows:

"Chambers says the key to the starboard locker must be still aboard yacht."

"Now let me see," reflected Squire Brackett, "that leaves only three more words—'sound,' 'third,' and 'under.' Well, I don't know what they have to do with it. They probably referred to something else in the letter. But what on earth can that be in the starboard locker,—that's what I'd like to know."

Deeply agitated, he arose from his chair and strode up and down the room. He rubbed his hands together in a self-satisfied way.

"Looks like I'd get even with some of 'em yet," he exclaimed, softly. "There's something aboard that yacht that's valuable—and what's more, that man Carleton came all the way down here on purpose to get it. I see it—I see it. They had a locker where they hid valuables, and there's something there yet worth getting. Oh, I wish I had the rest of that letter!"

The squire, forming a sudden resolve, put the precious paper in a drawer, locked it therein, and hurried down to the tent on the point. By good luck, he met Henry Burns coming away from it.

"How d'ye do, my boy?" he said, trying to smile agreeably and to conceal his excitement, at the same time.

"How do you do, Squire Brackett?" replied Henry Burns, reading easily something of more than ordinary significance in the squire's shrewd face. "Nice day, sir."

"Yes—yes, so it is," returned the squire. "See here, I'd like to hire that yacht of yours for a few days—possibly a week. I won't sail her, of course. I'm no skipper. I'll get John Hart to run her for me."

"Sorry to disappoint you, squire," said Henry Burns, "but we can't let the *Viking*. The season is most over, you see, and we want to have some fun with her the rest of the time. We've begun cleaning her out and washing her insides, ready for painting. Perhaps the crew will let you have the *Surprise*, though. I guess Harvey will be willing."

"Well, now," said the squire, "supposing I pay you ten dollars for her, just for four days. I'll take—"

"No, sorry to refuse," said Henry Burns, "but I don't see how we can do it. Besides, we've got lots of money, ourselves, you know. We've been mackereling."

The squire continued his urging, but Henry Burns was obdurate. The *Viking* couldn't be hired—by Squire Brackett, at least. He went home, fuming inwardly.

"If I only had the rest of that letter," he kept repeating. "I don't dare to offer them very much, on a mere chance. It might turn out like that land I bought of Billy Cook."

The squire, having his mind thus tantalized, began to worry over the mystery and even to dream of it. One night he dreamed that he had hired the yacht, and that he had found a bag filled with twenty dollar gold pieces in it; and, when he woke up, he was so angry to find it was only a dream that he scandalized poor Mrs. Brackett with his exclamations.

Young Harry Brackett was made to feel the effects of his father's mental disturbance. The squire assailed him with questions about Mr. Carleton, which puzzled the son exceedingly. Finally the squire demanded, point-blank, to

know what Mr. Carleton had said to him when he commissioned him to buy the yacht.

"And you needn't deny that he did get you to try to buy it, either," he exclaimed, warmly, "because I know all about that."

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Harry Brackett, taken aback, but concluding that Mr. Carleton had told his father about it, admitted the commission, but could not recall anything in particular that Mr. Carleton had said at that time.

"Didn't he want to know something about the yacht that he was intending to buy?" demanded the squire. "Now just wake those sleepy wits of yours up and try to think."

Harry Brackett, much confused, endeavoured to obey.

"No, I don't remember that he did," said he, finally, "only he wanted to know, of course, if I'd heard anything wrong about the yacht—anything queer about her—or something of that sort—seems to me he asked if there was anything queer about the boat—anything ever discovered about her."

The squire concealed a thrill of satisfaction by scowling, and exclaimed:

"Well, why didn't you say so before? I might want to buy that boat, myself, sometime. I want to find out about her."

A night or two after this, Squire Brackett awoke. He had had another dream: that he and Mr. Carleton had stolen aboard the *Viking*, in the dead of night, and had broken into the cabin. There, after the strange and impossible fashion of dreams, they had discovered the man, Chambers, at work, tearing up the cabin floor. Then, the dream progressed to a stage wherein Mr. Carleton and Chambers were handing out bags of money to the squire, piling his arms full of them.

By degrees, these bags grew heavier, until the squire sank under their weight. But, to his horror, Carleton and Chambers did not cease heaping the bags of money upon him until he was smothering under them. They covered his face, his nose, the top of his head. He woke up in the midst of a vain endeavour to call for help, in which he could not utter a sound.

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Possibly the squire's dream was explained by the fact that he found himself submerged beneath the bed-clothes, which he had drawn completely over his head, almost stifling himself. His pillow, which he clutched tightly in his arms, rested also on his left ear, like one of the imaginary bags of gold.

"Oh! oh!" he groaned, freeing himself from the weight of clothing, "that was a terrible nightmare. Confound that yacht! I wish it was sunk in the middle of Samoset Bay, and I'd never set eyes on it again."

But, with this awakening, the old subject of the mystery of the *Viking* returned to torment him. He lay awake for a half-hour or more, vainly trying to forget it and go to sleep, but finding the paper with the cryptogram forever flitting

before his eyes.

Then, of a sudden, he sprang out of bed, with a yell that awakened poor Mrs. Brackett in terror. Her first thought, naturally, was of burglars.

"I have it! I have it!" cried Squire Brackett, dancing about like a certain philosopher of old, "I have it—it's 'money!'"

"James Brackett!" exclaimed his wife, sitting up and glaring at him indignantly, "I believe you're going crazy over money. That's all you think about, is money—and all you talk about is money; and now here you are dreaming about money. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, jumping out of bed in the middle of the night and screaming 'money,' and frightening me almost to death? You come back to bed!"

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But the squire did seem to have gone actually crazy, for it was evident he was fully awake. He continued to prance about excitedly, exclaiming, "It's money! I've got it! I've got it!" until poor Mrs. Brackett was at her wit's end.

Ignoring alike her entreaties and her scornful remarks, he descended to his office, drew forth the mystical paper, eyed it triumphantly for a moment, and then wrote as follows:

"Chambers says MONEY must be still aboard yacht."

"Hooray!" cried the squire. "There it is. Oh, I reckon I'm pretty deep, myself. Yes, and I see the rest of it now." The squire finished the letter thus:

"Sound under third starboard locker."

"That's right," he said. "That means there's some sort of a secret chamber in one of the starboard lockers, and that by sounding, or hammering, on the right spot, it will echo hollow, or give some sound different from the other boards. Oh, I'll get that yacht, no matter what I have to pay—and I'll get the money, too. I reckon I haven't cut my eye-teeth for nothing."

The squire could hardly close his eyes for the rest of the night. By daybreak he was out alongside the *Viking*.

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"Look here," said Squire Brackett, as he opened the doors of the cabin, and peered in at Henry Burns and Harvey, who were at breakfast, "I want you boys to do me a little favour."

Harvey's face betrayed his astonishment.

"Oh, I'll make it worth your while, too," continued the squire. "I'm willing to pay handsomely for it. You see, I've got a party of friends coming down the bay, and I want to meet them at Mayville and give them a few days' cruising. I'll admit there's a little business in it for me, too. Now I want to do the thing up in good shape, and my boat isn't fit for putting on style. I want the *Viking* for just one week, and I'll pay you twenty dollars for it."

There was no immediate response. Henry Burns and Harvey looked at each other doubtfully. The offer was almost tempting.

"Well," cried the squire, seizing the opportunity,

"I'll not stand at five dollars at a time like this. Say twenty-five dollars for a single week, and the money is yours."

"In advance?" asked Henry Burns.

"Yes, sir," replied Squire Brackett, "in advance—though I reckon my name on a piece of paper is good for that amount anywhere in this county. Yes, and I'll do more. I'll sign an agreement to deliver the yacht back to you in this harbour, one week from the time of hiring it, in as good condition as when I get it, or pay for the difference."

Henry Burns looked at Harvey, inquiringly. Harvey nodded.

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"Well," said Henry Burns, "on those conditions I think we'll let you have her—but only for one week. You'll have to wait two days, though. We've got some fresh enamel on part of the woodwork, and some of the mahogany finish has been scraped and newly oiled, and it isn't quite dry enough for hard usage yet. Let's see, to-day is Wednesday. You may have her on Saturday morning, if you'll bring her back the next Saturday, any time before night."

"Here's the money," said Squire Brackett, promptly. "We'll consider the bargain closed, eh?"

"Yes," assented the two yachtsmen.

"Now what do you make of that?" exclaimed Harvey, as the squire rowed awkwardly ashore.

"Why, I think he has some land deal on hand," replied Henry Burns, "and he wishes to make a grand impression on the persons he is going to meet. He calls them his friends, but he's friendly to any one that he thinks he can make money out of. They probably are from the city, and he wishes to have them enjoy the sights of the bay in a fine boat. There's money in it in some way for the squire, you can depend on it, or he wouldn't do it."

Henry Burns was certainly right, in part.

"Well, we will have the yacht in fairly good shape for him by Saturday," said Harvey. "We'll bring down the fine cushions and fixings from the Warren cottage, Friday night."

The boys worked industriously through this and the two succeeding days, putting the *Viking* in shape. The outer body of the boat had not received hard usage, even in their fishing, and the decks had been kept carefully scrubbed. So, with the cleaning and painting and oiling of the cabin woodwork, and varnishing, where needed, they had got the yacht in fairly good condition before the squire had applied for her. Now, with the finishing touches, and the rubbing up of brass work, the *Viking* was beginning to shine and glisten as of old.

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"I am almost sorry we agreed to let the squire have her," said Henry Burns, as he and Harvey lay rolled in their blankets, the former on the starboard, the latter on the port berth, in the midship section of the yacht, on Friday night. They had finished a hard day's work, had extinguished the cabin lantern, and were having

a quiet chat before going off to sleep.

"Oh, well, a week will soon pass," said Harvey, "and twenty-five dollars will swell our bank-account and put a finishing touch to the season's balance. We'll have to go and figure up with Rob Dakin, pretty soon, and see how we stand."

Rob Dakin, the storekeeper, was the boys' banker. They had deposited their earnings in his safe, from time to time, keeping an account with him for groceries and rigging, and drawing out what they needed.

"Yes," responded Henry Burns, "we've got a good balance coming to us—and we've had a good time, too."

"I've had the best time I ever had here," said Harvey, enthusiastically.

They were talking in this way, growing drowsy, and speaking in low tones, when Henry Burns suddenly uttered a warning "hush" to Harvey, and half arose, resting on one elbow.

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"What's the matter?" whispered Harvey.

Henry Burns laughed, softly.

"The boat is bewitched," he said. "You needn't get nervous, though. It's just a funny little, squeaky kind of witch-noise. I heard it the other night when I was lying here; but, when I sat up and listened, the sound stopped."

"What sort of a noise is it?" asked Harvey, not much interested.

"Why, I'll tell you," answered Henry Burns, "I suppose the witchcraft is really something loose about this berth, or about one of those shelves, or lockers; and that it works with the swinging of the boat in some way, and makes a squeaking noise."

"I don't see anything very mysterious about that," muttered Harvey.

"I don't, either," replied Henry Burns. "Only the queer thing about it seems to be, that when I get up and listen for it, it stops."

"Well, if any witches fly out of that locker, just wake me up to take a look at them," laughed Harvey, preparing to roll up in his blanket again for the night.

Henry Burns, also, lay down again, and the cabin was still. In about five minutes more, Henry Burns reached down quietly for one of his shoes and rapped with it on the shelf, above his head.

"What's that?" demanded Harvey, roused from the early stages of slumber—"some more of your witches? Say, you can't make me nervous, so you better let me go to sleep."

"Jack," said Henry Burns, arising and stepping over beside his companion, "go over and try my berth awhile. Don't go to sleep, but keep still, and listen—and tell me what you hear."

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Harvey, grumbling a little at his comrade's oddity, complied, yawning ferociously.

"If I see a witch I'll eat him up," he exclaimed.

"I'm dead tired."

"Keep quiet," was Henry Burns's admonition. Harvey was silent, and again they lay still for almost ten minutes. Then, of a sudden, Harvey raised himself on an elbow. Henry Burns was all attention. "Did you hear it?" he asked, softly.

"Sh-h-h," whispered Harvey. He lifted his head close to the door of the locker and listened intently. Then, presently, he burst into laughter.

"You're right, Henry," he cried. "They're witches—four-legged ones—and we'll have to clear 'em out of this cabin before they do any mischief. There's a nest of young mice in there somewhere, and it's them we hear squeaking."

"Well, to tell the truth, I thought of that, too," said Henry Burns; "but I didn't suppose mice ever got into a boat like this in the summer-time, when it's in use."

"Well, I don't know as I ever heard of it," responded Harvey, "though I don't see why they shouldn't. The schooners and fishermen have them in the hold, often. But sure enough they've got in here somehow. Let's have a look."

The boys got up, lighted two of the cabin lanterns, and proceeded to investigate.

The berth on which Henry Burns had lain, and from which Harvey had just arisen, was in the middle of the boat. It was about six feet long by two feet wide, and sufficiently raised from the cabin floor to admit of two good-sized drawers occupying the space beneath. There was a locker in the side of the cabin, opening by a door close by the head, and one of the same size at the foot, of the berth. Between these was an alcove with some shelves.

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The door of the forward locker was so disposed that, if one were lying on the berth with his head forward, the door could not be opened without its coming in contact with his head. Therefore, the sound, if it came from within the locker, would be immediately in the ears of any one occupying the berth.

Holding a lantern in one hand, Henry Burns opened the door of the locker and looked within. There was no sign of anything alive there.

"We gave this cabin a pretty good overhauling before, after that treasure," said Harvey. "It looks just the same now as it did."

"Well, it must be underneath, then," said Henry Burns.

"Yes, and we looked there, too," said Harvey.

"Well, we'll do the job more thoroughly, this time," replied Henry Burns. "Hand me one of those candles, and I'll look underneath."

So saying, he set down his lantern, and pulled out one of the drawers directly underneath the berth where he had lain. As he did so, he gave an exclamation of surprise.

"What is it?" asked Harvey, appearing with the candle.

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"I think we're on the right track," said Henry

Burns. "Look, there's where the witches get through."

Close to the cabin floor, where a support of the cabin roof came down, a few inches below the lower edge of the drawer, was a small hole, large enough to admit of a mouse.

"That looks like the front door, sure enough," said Harvey.

They looked within the drawer, but there was no sign of occupancy there.

"We'll take the drawer completely out," said Henry Burns. "I don't believe we did that, before. Perhaps it doesn't fill the entire space."

"All right, I'll take the other one out, too," responded Harvey. "We'll look behind both."

He drew the drawer out and set it down on the cabin floor. Henry Burns pulled out the drawer he had been examining, and set it down on top of the other. Then, as he glanced at them by the light of the candle which he held, he said, abruptly:

"Look there, Jack. We've found it. As sure as you live, this drawer is six or seven inches shorter than the other. There's a chamber behind it. Say, you don't suppose—"

Henry Burns did not conclude his sentence. Instead, he got down on hands and knees, held the candle under the berth, and peered within. As he did so, he uttered a cry of triumph.

"Here, Jack, look inside," he said, hastily, withdrawing his head, and handing the candle to his companion.

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Harvey ducked his head, and peered within.

What he saw, in the chamber behind the space taken up by the drawer, was a little boxlike object, fastened in some manner to the under side of the bottom of the locker.

Harvey, in turn, handed the candle over to Henry Burns.

"Here," he said. "You found it. It's your right to have the first look at whatever is there."

Henry Burns, as near the point of actual excitement as he ever got, took the candle, eagerly, and looked again. The boxlike object was clearly a drawer of some sort, for, on closer scrutiny, there was revealed a tiny knob by which it might be drawn out.

"The mice are here, anyway," said Henry Burns, as he reached in and set the candle down, preparatory to extending his arm at full length to draw out the box. "I see a hole in one corner where they can get in and out."

Then, as he seized the knob and pulled the little drawer open, there darted out a small object that ran across his hand and disappeared in the darkness beyond the lantern lights.

Henry Burns laughed, the next moment, for he had dodged back, bumping his head and letting go of the knob.

"Run for your life, Jack," he cried. "Here comes the witch."

Then, before Harvey's astonished eyes, Henry Burns drew forth into the light of the cabin lantern a little drawer; and, within it, a nest fashioned of odds and ends of paper and soft stuff; and, within the nest, a family of tiny mice, lying as snug as the proverbial bug in a rug.

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The drawer was about a foot in length, six inches deep, and perhaps four inches in height. It contained no apparent treasure—only a litter of paper that mice had torn and gnawed into pieces. There was no gold nor jewels therein.

"Hm!" exclaimed Harvey, with an expression of chagrin overshadowing his face, "Don't look as though there was anything there to make us rich—or to have warranted Carleton in breaking into our cabin, eh?"

"There isn't now," replied Henry Burns, calmly, but with a shade of disappointment in his voice. "There isn't now, but there was. The mice have got here before us, that's all."

He held up to the light a scrap of the torn paper. It was no ordinary paper that the lantern-light revealed to the eyes of the astonished Harvey—far from it. It was the paper that no man may make for himself—the paper of a national bank-note—and there were, on this particular fragment, yet to be seen, a full cipher and the half of another. Harvey fairly gasped.

"That was a hundred-dollar bill!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, or a thousand," said Henry Burns.

Harvey groaned.

"Better drop those mice overboard, hadn't we?" said he.

Henry Burns scooped the family up in his hand and passed them over.

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"I believe you said if you saw a witch you'd eat her," he remarked, slyly.

"Ugh!" ejaculated Harvey, as he dropped the mice alongside. "Say, you take it coolly enough, don't you?"

"Well, why not?" replied Henry Burns. "It isn't our money that's gone."

"It would have been," said Harvey.

"I don't know whether it would or not," responded Henry Burns. "We'd have to turn it over to the authorities, I suppose, to see if any one claimed it—hullo! what's this?"

Running the litter through his fingers, he turned up from the very bottom a piece of the paper that had escaped entire mutilation. He held it up triumphantly to the light.

"We've got one prize," he cried. "It's the only one that isn't destroyed—but it's fifty dollars, and that's something."

"But there's only a piece of it," said Harvey.

"More than half," said Henry Burns, joyfully. "That's enough. We can redeem it."

"Oh, but isn't that awful?" groaned Harvey, gazing ruefully at the litter of paper that filled the drawer. "Just think of all that money going to make a nest for mice."

"It's what you might call extravagance," replied Henry Burns. "I wonder how much there was. We'll never know, though. But there was enough to make it worth while for Mr. Carleton to come down here after it."

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"Say," exclaimed Harvey, suddenly, "do you suppose that's what the squire's after?"

Henry Burns smiled, and stood for a moment thinking, before he replied.

"Possibly," he answered. "But I don't see how he could know of it. Where could he have learned of it? At any rate," he added, with a twinkle in his eyes, "I don't see as we are under any obligation to tell him about it. We don't have to assume that he is hiring our yacht to steal something out of the cabin. He has told us what he wants the boat for. We'll take him at his word."

"Oh, by the way," he added, "did we throw those lobster shells overboard after we finished supper?"

"All but one claw that I didn't eat," replied the astonished Harvey. "Why, what do you want of it?"

In reply, Henry Burns, his eyes twinkling more than ever, and with a quiet smile playing about the corners of his mouth, went and got the lobster-claw from the ice-box. Emptying out the scraps of now worthless paper, he deposited the lobster-claw in their place, took the candle, and once more replaced the drawer in the secret chamber. Then he shoved in the larger drawer.

"Whoever finds that may keep it," he said, as he rolled himself in his blanket and blew out the lantern nearest him.

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CHAPTER XIX. THE LOSS OF THE VIKING

Squire Brackett was for once in rare good humour, as he came down to the breakfast-table on Saturday morning. He was beaming like a harvest moon, and a look of satisfaction overspread his heavy face. He even smiled affably on his son Harry, and was, withal, so pleased with himself, and so off his guard, that his son took advantage of the opportunity to ask him for ten dollars—and got it. By the time Squire Brackett had repented of his generosity, young Harry had disappeared.

"The scamp!" reflected the squire. "Smart enough to see something is up, wasn't he? Well, I reckon I'm glad of it. He comes by his smartness honestly, I vow. I wonder how the wind is."

He was, indeed, a bit apprehensive on this score, for he was a bad sailor. He had, moreover, a vivid recollection of the last time he went

threshing down the bay in Captain Sam's *Nancy Jane*, and of how sick and frightened he was.

"However," he thought, "I guess I can stand it." And he added, chuckling, "It will be worth my while, or my name isn't Brackett."

Mrs. Brackett was perplexed. She couldn't, for the life of her, understand what had come over the squire, to induce him to venture forth on a yachting trip.

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"Why, you just hate the water—you know you do, James," she exclaimed, as the squire was bustling about, getting out his greatcoat and preparing otherwise for his departure. "You said, a year ago, when you got back from that chase after those boys, that you'd had enough sailing to last you the rest of your life. And I don't see why you don't use your own boat. Here you've been talking about selling her for the last three years, because every time you go out in her you're dreadfully sick. You'd better get some use out of that boat while you have it."

"Well! well!" responded Squire Brackett, somewhat impatiently. "This is a business trip. You can't understand, because it's business—important business. I guess I know my affairs, or I wouldn't be the richest man on Grand Island. You just get that lunch ready, so I can start before the wind grows any stronger."

Mrs. Brackett complied, obediently, but wondering.

"Morning! morning! Nice day, my lads," said the squire with unwonted cordiality, some minutes later, as he appeared alongside the *Viking*, accompanied by John Hart and Ed Sanders, who were to constitute his crew.

"Good morning, squire," responded the yachtsmen, catching the painter of his boat and making it fast. "You're going to have a glorious day to start off in."

"Think so?" queried the squire. "Not going to blow much, eh?"

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"Not this morning, by the looks," replied Henry Burns; "just a nice little easy southerly that will take you up to the head of the island in fine style. Then all you've got to do is to beat down the western side, a mile or so, and you can stand right over to Mayville without touching a sheet—isn't that so, Captain Hart?"

John Hart, having the prevailing contempt of the born and bred fisherman for the amateur sailor, grunted a curt affirmative.

"Well, take good care of the *Viking*," said Harvey, as the squire's crew cast loose from the mooring and stood away, leaving the boys in their tender astern.

"We'll do that," replied the squire, assuringly. "And if we don't, why, you've got it in black and white that I'll make it good to you. A bargain's a bargain. That's my principle."

The *Viking*, under a gentle breeze, was soon out of the harbour, clear of the bluff, and was running up alongshore. Jack Harvey and Henry Burns rowed ashore, to the tent, where Tom and Bob were awaiting them. Something that Henry

Burns and Harvey confided to them, as they sat together on the point, sent the campers off into roars of laughter.

"Oh, but I'd give my shoes to see the squire when he finds that lobster-claw—if that's what he's after," cried Tom, punching Henry Burns in an ecstasy of mirth. "Do you suppose that's really what he's hired her for, though?"

"Don't know," replied Henry Burns, solemnly. "No; Squire Brackett wouldn't do anything like that."

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"Well, let's go up to the store and see how we stand," suggested Harvey. "Come on, fellows. You're interested in this."

"How much do you think we have earned, Jack?" asked Henry Burns, as they walked up the street toward Rob Dakin's store.

"Oh, more than two hundred dollars—quite a little more, before taking out expenses," replied Harvey.

"Yes; nearer three hundred, counting Tom's and Bob's share, I think," said Henry Burns.

"Well, that's reckoning in the fifty dollars we found in the cabin, isn't it?" asked Harvey.

"Yes, I guess it is," said his companion. "It remains to be seen, of course, whether we can keep that or not. We'll ask Rob Dakin what he thinks about that."

"Well, I'll tell you what I think about it," said Rob Dakin, some minutes later, after the boys had seated themselves in his store. "You say you found that piece of a bill in a locker in the cabin of your boat. Now there are two things to consider about that:

"In the first place, if the owner of the boat—supposing she was stolen—put that money in there, and he should turn up and claim the money, why, you might have to give it up. Of course the boat was taken over by the sheriff and sold, according to law; and if the owner claimed the boat I reckon he'd have to pay Mrs. Newcome what it cost her. But nobody has ever claimed her, and there isn't really any danger of that. So far as that goes, the money seems to be yours.

"Now, in the second place, the men that had this boat, and who were sent to prison, might have had this money. Well, if it was their own money, why, the State would take it and keep it and restore it to them after they are set free. If it was stolen money, and the owner couldn't be found, I can't just say whether you could keep it or whether it would belong to the State. I'm not quite lawyer enough for that. But if they should deny knowing anything about it, why, I reckon it would belong to you, as you found it aboard your own boat."

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"Well, we will figure it in, anyway," said Henry Burns.

So, at their request to draw them up a statement of their affairs, real "shipshape," as Henry Burns expressed it, Rob Dakin set to work and, after some minutes' figuring, produced a sheet at which they gazed with pride and satisfaction. It

LEDGER OF THE VIKING—FISHING SLOOP

Earnings

1st trip to Loon Island	\$18.00
2d trip to Loon Island	22.00
3d trip to Loon Island	35.00
Lobsters—apart from crew	45.00
Big mackerel catch	80.00
Other mackerel	30.00
Other fishing	15.00
Paid by the Squire	25.00
Found in the cabin	50.00

Total earnings	\$320.00

Expenses

Tom's and Bob's share first three trips	\$25.00
Tom's and Bob's share mackerel	36.66
Tom's and Bob's share other fish	5.00
Bait purchased	9.50
Anchor	5.00
Extra rigging	15.00
Hooks and lines	10.00
Provisions	25.00
Hire of tender	10.00
Paid Captain Sam for labour	11.50
Incidentals	13.50

Total expenses	\$166.16

Balance	\$153.84
Henry Burns's share	76.92
Jack Harvey's share	76.92

"Hooray!" cried Harvey, waving the paper, triumphantly. "I wonder what my dad would say to that. I'll bet he'd be pleased. That's the first money I ever earned."

"Well, why don't you write him about it?" suggested Henry Burns, with a wink at Tom. "You're feeling pretty strong after the summer's sailing."

"Say, I never thought of that," exclaimed Harvey. "I'll do it—that is, I'll do it some day—say—well, some rainy day when I've nothing else to do."

"You like to write letters about as well as I do," said Henry Burns, laughing. "But I'll tell you what I'll do. You write to your father, and I'll write and tell old Mrs. Newcome what we've done this summer with the boat. She'd be pleased to know about it."

"All right," said Harvey. "It's a bargain—that is, some day when it's raining good and hard and nothing else to do. Perhaps you'll let me read your letter over first. It will sort of give me an idea what to say."

"We're much obliged to you, Mr. Dakin," said Henry Burns, as they left the store. "You keep the money for us till we go home. We'll want a few more provisions, too."

"Oh, you're welcome," responded Rob Dakin, good-naturedly. "You're good customers, and I'm glad to oblige you. I hope you can keep that fifty

dollars.”

And, to look ahead a little, they did keep it. Some days later, Mr. Warren, who had been communicated with at Benton, and who had looked into the matter, wrote them a letter that contained good news. It was, simply, that the men in prison, questioned regarding it, had denied flatly knowing anything about a secret drawer or hiding-place anywhere aboard the *Viking*. Perhaps they had their own good reasons for doing this. Perhaps it was, that they feared the consequences of the disclosure. Perhaps the money had really been stolen and concealed there by them. Perhaps they feared their admission of such a hiding-place would put them at the mercy of the authorities—who might have unearthed more about it than had been told—and that it might convict them of still another crime.

Whatever their reason, it was known to them alone. But their denial left the money to the finders.

To return, however, to the day of their reckoning, the yachtsmen, in high spirits, invaded the Warren cottage; and, later, the party, augmented by the three brothers, travelled down to the camp of Harvey’s crew, where they held carnival till late into the night.

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Squire Brackett’s adventures throughout the day had been, on the whole, rather more exciting than those of the campers and the yachtsmen. The squire had gone aboard the *Viking* with mingled feelings of exultation and misgiving. But, as he had looked abroad over the surface of the bay, his courage had been restored somewhat, for there were no waves of any size discernible to his eyes, and the wind was still light.

He seated himself nervously near the stern, where John Hart was holding the wheel, while Ed Sanders managed the jib-sheets. The jibs soon ceased to draw, however, as they were beginning to run squarely before the wind; so Ed Sanders contented himself with hauling up the centreboard, and then betook himself to the cabin, for a nap.

This was a sad blow to the squire. He was fairly consumed with eagerness to go below and hunt about in the cabin, undisturbed, and without attracting attention. But he couldn’t do it while Ed Sanders remained awake. So he was constrained to sit out in the sun, and listen to John Hart’s explanations of the art of sailing—which didn’t interest the squire at all—and hope for slumber on the part of Ed Sanders.

Finally there came a welcome sound to his ears, a hearty snore from the cabin.

“I declare, that makes me sleepy, too,” said Squire Brackett, simulating a yawn and stretching his arms above his head. “I believe I’ll go below for a few moments, myself, and see if I can’t get a nap. It’s hot, this morning.”

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The morning was, in fact, unusually sultry for September, and the wind showed no signs of increasing and cooling the air.

“Well,” replied John Hart, “this is a good

morning to sleep, but I don't know as I would go below if I were you, squire. You know, if a man has any tendency to be squeamish, that is apt to send him off."

"Yes, I know," answered the squire; "but it seems so nice and still that I think it won't disturb me. I'll just drop off to sleep as easy as a kitten."

He accordingly descended the companion, looked sharply at Ed Sanders, to satisfy himself that he was sound asleep, and went to the forward end of the cabin.

"Let's see," he muttered, "I wonder if the 'third starboard locker' means the third from the stern or the third from the bow."

The squire began opening the lockers along the starboard side, at random, and peering inside.

"We'll see what sort of an equipment these youngsters have left us," he exclaimed, aloud.

But, just at this moment, the squire felt a queer sensation, like a strange, quick spasm of dizziness, accompanied by a slight shiver. It was gone the next moment.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed to himself. "Funny how a man's imagination works in a cubby-hole like this. I almost thought I was dizzy for a moment. Confound that John Hart! I wish he hadn't said anything about being seasick. Of course a man can't be seasick on a quiet day like this. Pooh!"

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The squire perhaps had not taken into account, as had John Hart, that, whereas the sea was not ruffled by any chop-sea or breakers, there was still an exceedingly long, almost imperceptible undulation of the bay; a moderate but continuous heaving of the ground-swell, that swayed the boat gently from beam to beam or rocked it slowly from stem to stern. The squire did not realize that it was this that had set his brain momentarily awl.

Like many another sailorman, John Hart, having given his advice and finding it disregarded, considered it no longer his business whether the squire fared well or ill. Likewise, he did not see fit to warn him of the near approach of a big tramp steamer that was on its way, a little farther out in the bay, to Benton, to load with spool-wood.

The big tramp was making time, with black smoke pouring out of its two funnels; and, as it went along, it sent a heavy cross-sea rolling away from its bows and stern.

A few moments later, just as the squire had opened the lower drawer beneath the third locker from the starboard end of the yacht, something extraordinary happened to him. His feet were suddenly knocked from under him. At the same time, it seemed as though the cabin roof had fallen down; for the squire's head came in violent contact with it. Likewise, it seemed as though the yacht was standing on its bowsprit and kicking its stern into the air; and, likewise, as though it were performing, at the very same instant, as violent a series of antics as the craziest bronco that ever tried to buck its rider.

The immediate result was, that Squire Brackett first bumped his head against the roof of the cabin. Then he fell over sidewise and hit a corner of the centreboard box. Finally, he found himself lying on the cabin floor, rolling about in highly undignified and uncomfortable fashion.

But, saddest to relate, when he had in a measure recovered from his amazement and endeavoured to pick himself up from the floor, his head was swimming round and round like a humming-top. Poor Squire Brackett was, indeed, as addle-brained as a sailor that has had a day's shore leave and has spent it among the grog-shops. With a groan of anguish, he relinquished all hope of treasure-hunting and crawled upon one of the berths, where he lay helpless, and muttering maledictions on the head of John Hart for not warning him of what was coming.

"Hello, what's the matter?" cried Ed Sanders, sitting up and addressing the squire, whose sudden downfall had awakened him.

"The matter!" roared the squire, in a burst of energy and indignation—"the matter is, that you were down here sleeping like a mummy instead of attending to business on deck. Here's a sea hit us and nearly turned the yacht upside down, and my neck nearly broken."

"Ho, we're all right," said Ed Sanders, intending to be reassuring. "Just a little swash from a steamer, I guess. She's rocking a little, but there ain't any harm in it."

The squire was so unutterably disgusted that he couldn't find words to reply. What could he say to a man that assured him he was all right when he was beginning to feel the qualms of seasickness? There were no words in the language to do the occasion justice.

Nor was he mollified or comforted by the appearance, the next moment, of John Hart at the companionway, also declaring that really nothing had happened—nothing of any consequence—and that he would be feeling as fine as an admiral in a few minutes.

The squire tried to reply, but could only choke and sputter.

"Nothing of any consequence, eh?" he groaned. "Oh, my head! O-h-h! If I die I hope they'll indict John Hart for murder, and hang Ed Sanders for criminal negligence. Nothing of any consequence—but I know I'll never live to see the end of this voyage."

The squire's agitation was not abated with the rounding of the head of the island; for, with this, what slight sea was running was soon broadside on, so that it rolled the *Viking* from side to side—not roughly, but enough to cause him untold misery.

Finally, at John Hart's solicitation, he was induced to return to the outer air, where he sat, wrapped up in two heavy blankets, shivering, and with his teeth chattering, although the day was exceedingly hot.

When, at the close of the afternoon, they had arrived at Mayville, the squire had had enough yachting. He staggered ashore and took a

carriage to the hotel, rather than spend the night aboard the *Viking*.

"Well, sir," said John Hart, some time the next forenoon, when the squire, improved in appearance and temper, had come down to the dock, "when do you expect that yachting party to arrive?"

"What yacht—" began the squire. He had forgotten for the moment the alleged object of the trip to Mayville. "Oh, you mean my party?" he said. "Why, they won't be here until night. I won't need you two at all to-day. You can have the day off. Here's fifty cents to buy both of you your dinners. You needn't come back until night."

"Well," said Ed Sanders as he and John Hart departed from the dock and went on up the main street of Mayville, "I thought the squire wasn't hurt much by that bump he got yesterday in the cabin, but I declare if I don't think it injured his brain. Did you ever know of his giving anybody fifty cents before?"

"No, never did," answered John Hart; "but if getting seasick has that effect on him, we'll make him sick every time he goes out. Next southerly we get, with the tide running out, we'll sail into the worst chop-sea we can find and give him a dollar's worth."

Squire Brackett, however, watched them disappear with a satisfaction equal to theirs. He rubbed his hands like a money-changer, and stepped from the wharf aboard the *Viking* with the assurance of a buccaneer. He almost imagined he was a sailor when a man on the wharf accosted him.

"Fine boat you've got there," said the stranger—

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evidently from the city.

"She's pretty good, if I do say it," replied Squire Brackett, swelling out his chest and looking nautical.

"Looks as though she might carry sail some," continued the stranger, admiringly.

"Ha!" exclaimed the squire. "The harder it blows the better we like it. My men say to me, time and time again, 'Most too much wind, Captain Brackett; better reef, hadn't we?' 'Not much,' is what I say. 'Let a topsail go if it wants to. I'll buy another when that's gone. Keep her down to her work. She'll stand it.' What's the use of having a good boat if you keep her in a glass case, eh, sir?"

"Well, I suppose that's so," replied the stranger, much impressed. "But you've got to have the nerve to do it."

"It's nothing when you're accustomed to it," said Squire Brackett, taking a nautical survey of the sky, and rolling toward the companionway like an old salt.

Before he began operations, however, he returned on deck, took the bow-line and drew the yacht close in to the pier, stepped off and cast loose the end of the line where it was made fast to a spiling. There was another line out astern, to which an anchor was attached, and

which had been dropped at some distance from the boat. This was to keep the yacht from getting in too snug to the pier and scraping the paint from its sides. The squire took hold of this rope and drew the yacht out farther from the pier, so that no one could step aboard from there.

Thus safe from interruption, he again went below and sprang breathlessly to the drawer.

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"Here's the third starboard locker from the bow," he muttered. "'Money is still aboard yacht,' eh? Ha! ha! I'll show 'em a thing or two. He didn't intend to buy my land—the rascal. Well, I'll get his treasure. They will run down my sailboat, will they? Well, I'll pull a prize out of their own boat. They're a smart lot, the whole of them; but I'll show 'em who's smarter."

Squire Brackett's hand shook with excitement as he drew out the large drawer.

He looked into it earnestly, but there was clearly nothing of value in it, nor anything queer in its construction. He opened the door to the locker, and pounded on the bottom of that.

"There's nothing odd about that, so far as I can see," he exclaimed. "Well, it's in behind there. That's where it is. I'll just get a light and take a look."

The squire hurried to the provision locker, rummaged therein, and found the stub of a candle. He nearly burned his fingers in lighting it, so wrought up was he.

Returning to the opening whence he had withdrawn the drawer, he got down on his hands and knees and peered within. The candle-light flickered on the little drawer that fitted snugly to the under side of the locker's bottom. The squire felt a queer, almost choking sensation come over him. He thought of the jewel robbery of the year before, up at Benton. He thought of the men that had had the *Viking*. The possibilities of his find swept through his excited brain, till the fancy fired his imagination beyond his hitherto wildest dreams.

In a delirium of expectation, and breathing short and quick like a man that has run a race, the squire snatched at the tiny knob, grasped the little drawer with eager hands, drew it forth, and rushed with it to the cabin door.

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For one brief, ecstatic moment he paused exultantly. Then a strange, remarkable change came over him and he stood like a man stiff frozen. The look of anguish, of rage, of disappointment, of amazement that distorted his features was like that which an ingenious South Sea Islander might give to an image he had carved out of a very knotty and cross-grained junk of wood.

He held the drawer out at arm's length, as though he was demanding that some imaginary person should look and behold the contents. And the contents, that the squire's own eyes rested upon, were indeed not silver nor gold nor precious jewels, nor even the tawdriest trinkets, but—of all abominations—Henry Burns's lobster-claw!

A moment later, the squire uttering an exclamation that shall not be recorded here, lifted the drawer above his head, hurled it down upon the floor, and crushed it with his heel. Once, twice, thrice he stamped upon it, shattering it to pieces, and crunching the lobster-claw into a shapeless mass. And then—why then, all at once, it flashed into his mind that he had, in his fury, done precisely the wrong thing; the very thing he should not have done.

If any one had put that claw in there for him to find, why, of course, they would look for it when the *Viking* was returned. It was bad enough to be cheated, defrauded, robbed—thought the squire. But to know that Henry Burns and Jack Harvey and all the rest of the scamps would look for that drawer, and find it missing, and laugh themselves sick to think of his discomfiture, why, that was not to be thought of.

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Squire Brackett stooped down and gathered up the pieces of the shattered drawer. Fortunately, they were of common pine, and were mostly wrenched apart where they had been nailed together. The squire hunted for hammer and nails in the yachtsmen's stores, and hammered the drawer together as best it would go. He cast loose the line astern and pushed the yacht in to the pier again. Then he hunted around, outside of a boat-shop near by, till he found, a small piece of wood that would do, with proper shaping, to supply one of the parts he had broken.

Altogether, with his clumsiness in the matter of reconstruction, the squire consumed the rest of the morning repairing the drawer he had wrecked.

Then, when he had finished his work, he strode away up the street and made a purchase. The purchase was a fine, big boiled lobster—just a shade redder than the squire's face as he paid for it. But, having paid for it, he took it back to the yacht and ate it for his dinner—all but one claw. That claw he wished to save. He was so careful of it, indeed, that he put it away in a certain secret drawer under the third locker on the starboard side.

"No, they're not coming," he said, that evening, to John Hart and Ed Sanders, on their return. "Too bad. Got a telegram saying they can't come. The sailing party's given up. Shame, isn't it? However, I've got some business I'm going to attend to before I go home. We'll stay the week out. Your pay goes on just the same. So you needn't say anything to the boys about my not using their yacht. They might think they got a shade the best of me. It's all right, though. I can make use of the time."

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The squire, in truth, was too ashamed to return so suddenly. He spent the week in Mayville; and of all miserable weeks in his existence, that week was the most dismal of any.

Saturday came, and it was a day of fitful weather. Part of the day it rained. Then there were signs of clearing, with the wind sharp and squally from the west. They waited till mid-afternoon, and then the weather improving a little, the squire gave the order to start. He dreaded the sail, but he would wait no longer.

They went across the bay under two reefs, and the squire's hair stood on end all the way.

It was shortly after supper, and Henry Burns and Jack Harvey sat with their friends, the Warren boys, on the veranda of the Warren cottage. The wind was still high, and now and then there came a brief rain-squall.

"I wonder if the *Viking* will be in," said George Warren.

"Possibly," replied Harvey; "but, if she isn't, we'll give the squire another day. It's stiff wind for him to sail in. What worries me, is whether the crew are all right or not. They've been gone a week almost, and they're way down 'round Stoneland somewhere."

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"Oh, they are all right," said Henry Burns.

And yet, if Henry Burns could have seen the position of the good yacht *Surprise*, at that precise moment, he might not have thought she was exactly all right. For the yacht *Surprise* was hung up on a sand-bar, some ten miles below Stoneland, among the islands; and the crew had already worked an hour, in vain attempts to get her off.

There came a driving squall of wind and rain, presently, and the boys went inside.

"The *Viking* won't be in to-night, I guess, after all," said Harvey.

Then, as it grew dark, they busied themselves till they were taken all by surprise by a knock at the door. There stood Ed Sanders, his clothes dripping.

"We're in," he said. "The squire sent me up to tell you. He's gone home. The *Viking's* fast at her mooring, and all right. Come out and you can see her lantern that I set at the foremast. She don't need a light, safe in the harbour here, but I thought you might like to see it and know she is there."

"We'll go down right away," said Henry Burns. "Much obliged to you."

"No, you won't," cried George Warren. "You don't stir out of this house to-night. You're going to stay with us. The boat is all right."

They stepped to the door and looked out upon the bay. It was clearing, but it was not pleasant. Everything was soaked with the rain, and the wind was blowing.

"What do you say, Jack?"

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"Oh, I think we might as well stay," answered Harvey.

So they stayed. And they slept soundly, too, with the night-breeze whistling past their window. But it is certain they would not have slept soundly, nor slept at all, if they had but known of a certain letter that young Harry Brackett had written and sent to Bellport, three days before, and of the significance it had to the man who received it.

It was about six o'clock the next morning that Jack Harvey, still sleeping soundly, was rudely

awakened. Henry Burns was shaking him violently.

“Jack, wake up!” cried Henry Burns. “Wake up and get your clothes on. There’s something the matter. The *Viking’s* gone. Yes, she’s really gone out of the harbour; for I’ve been clear down to the shore to see. It isn’t any joke. Hurry up. I’ll get the fellows out.”

A few moments later, Henry Burns, followed by Harvey and the three Warren boys, was running for the shore.

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CHAPTER XX. FLEEING IN THE NIGHT

Southport was very quiet of a Sunday morning, the sleepy aspect of its weather-beaten, low buildings taking on an even more drowsy appearance with the Sabbath calm, and without the sign of any activity along the shore and in the harbour to interrupt its rest. The faint tinkle of a cow-bell, or the mild bleating of a few sheep coming in from a near-by pasture, only served to accentuate the stillness.

The whole island sparkled with the morning sunlight, the rain-drops of the night before gleaming on bushes and grass before they vanished under its warmth and with the drying wind. The waters of the bay rolled away clear and blue, ruffled a little by the freshening breeze, and here and there showing patches of a darker hue, where a wind-flaw bore down quick and sharp and flayed the water.

On the point, in front of the tent, stood the boys that had dashed down from the Warren cottage, with Tom and Bob, rudely aroused from their morning nap, and hastily dressed in trousers and sweaters.

There was no comfort nor hope in the view that extended before them. Down between the islands, a schooner was running to sea, winged out before the favouring breeze. Nearer, a coaster, light and drawing little water, was beating up the bay, bound for Benton, to load with lumber. Over toward the Cape was a fisherman, with stubby mast and no topmast, skirting alongshore.

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But there was no yacht, sailing or drifting. There was no yacht *Viking* anywhere to be seen. Nor could she have sunk at the mooring, for at that depth of water her topmast would be showing. However, half suspecting some trick might have been played on them, and the yacht taken out into deeper water and sunk, they went out in a rowboat and the canoe, and examined the water for quite a distance, all about.

“We’re losing precious time, though,” said Henry Burns. “The *Viking’s* been stolen. The first thing we’ve got to do, is to run over to the mainland and send a telegram down to Stoneland—though I’m afraid, with this breeze blowing all night, she’s got past there long before this. We’ll telegraph on to Portland, and to Boston, too, and

have the police on the watch."

"Oh, if the *Surprise* was only here," groaned Harvey. "We might stand some chance in a long chase. Confound the crew! Here they are, gone, at the one time in the whole summer that we need them most."

"Isn't it just barely possible, though, that John Hart or Ed Sanders didn't make her good and fast to the mooring, and that she went adrift? If that is so, she would have gone clear across to the islands in the night, or even past them, out to sea."

"That's possible," replied Henry Burns, "but it isn't likely. That's one thing a good sailor does, always, by sheer habit—leave a boat secure. We'll get them out, though."

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A hurried search brought forth Ed Sanders and John Hart, who stoutly protested the yacht had been left as fast as human hands could tie her. Moreover, they intimated, in no uncertain language, that the yacht had been turned over to the possession of the owners, according to agreement; and that, if they had not seen fit to look after their own property, it was not the fault of John Hart or Ed Sanders or Squire Brackett.

And the yachtsmen realized there was no answer to this.

"Jack," said Henry Burns, as they hurried back again to the shore, "there's no use trying to fool ourselves with false hopes. The *Viking's* stolen—and you and I know who took her. He came back for the treasure in the cabin."

In the same breath, they uttered the name of Mr. Carleton.

Then, to their amazement, George Warren gave an exclamation of dismay and self-reproach; for there had come back to him again, for the first time, the memory of that rainy night down the island, and of the envelope he had found in the fireplace, with the name of Mr. Carleton upon it. He told them now of the discovery he had made.

"Oh, if I'd only thought of it last night," he cried, "I shouldn't have urged you to stay at the cottage. You see, the cruise we've been on put the thing clean out of my mind. I hadn't thought of Carleton since that night. Hang it! I feel as though I was to blame—and you'd have gone aboard last night if it hadn't been for me."

Poor George Warren looked the picture of dismay. "There's nothing for you to blame yourself about," said Henry Burns. "You couldn't suspect Carleton was coming back."

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They had been running all the while, and had come by this time to Captain Sam's door.

"Now," said Henry Burns, quick and sharp, "we've got to jump lively and be off. You fellows will all help, of course. Tom, you and Bob have got to go to Bellport. The canoe will do it twice as quick as any boat could beat up around the head of the island and sail over."

"We're off," replied Tom Harris. Without another word, he and Bob dashed for the shore, had their sweaters off, in a twinkling, snatched up the canoe as though it were a feather's weight,

launched it, and started down along the island for the Narrows. The light craft darted ahead swiftly, impelled by bronzed and muscular arms. The boys were trained to hard work, in rough water and smooth; and they wasted no effort now in starting off at any frenzied pace, under the excitement. They set, from the first, a strong, steady, even stroke, that could be sustained for hours if need be, knowing, as does a trained athlete, that the long distance race is to the man that sustains, and does not exhaust, his strength in useless haste.

"You fellows make for the islands in the *Spray*, will you?" said Henry Burns, turning to the Warren boys. "There's a man in back of Hawk Island that owns a big fishing-boat; and if they've seen the *Viking* go down through that way, perhaps he'll go along for us. Every man around this bay will help, when he knows there's a yacht been stolen."

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"We'll start just as soon as we can get a jug of water and some food aboard," said George Warren.

"I'll go back to the house for the food," said young Joe.

The Warren boys started off on the run.

Henry Burns and Jack Harvey, their faces drawn and anxious-looking, but determined to keep up their courage, knocked at the door of Captain Sam.

"Come in," was the hearty response.

They opened the door, which admitted directly into the dining-room, where sat Captain Sam, with Mrs. Curtis about to pour his coffee.

"You're just in time. Sit right down," cried Captain Sam hospitably. "Baked beans and brown bread is what you get, you know. I can always tell it's Sunday morning, as soon as I wake up, by the smell from the oven. Haw! haw!"

"Hello, what's the matter?" he added, seeing the expressions of distress on their faces. "Nothing gone wrong, is there?"

They told him, hurriedly.

Captain Sam Curtis raised his brawny right hand, which clutched an iron knife with which he had been dexterously engaged in conveying beans from his dish to his mouth, and brought it down on the table with a smash that made the coffee-cups jump in their saucers.

"I knew it and I said it!" he cried. "I didn't like the looks of that Carleton from the first—did I, Nancy Jane?"

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"No, you didn't, Sam," responded Mrs. Curtis. "You declared he had a queer way with him—though I couldn't see it."

"The villain!" roared Captain Sam. "A boat-thief, is he? We'll catch him, if we have to sail to New York after him. Nancy Jane, throw some bread and cheese and that cold meat and brown bread into a box, and we'll get away quicker'n scat."

He bolted a cup of coffee at one swallow and

unloaded his plate of beans with a rapidity truly marvellous, urging the boys, between gulps, to do likewise. But they had not much appetite and ate only a little, hastily.

"He's the man—the scoundrel!" exclaimed Captain Sam, wrathfully, as they gathered his belongings and prepared to leave the cottage. "And didn't I see him night before last, as sure as a man can see? I was coming down through the pasture from the post-office, about dusk, and there was a man ahead in the path; and when he heard me coming behind him, he slips off into the bushes and cuts across lots. Once he looks back for a moment, over his shoulder, and I says, 'Why, that looks as much like that man Carleton that boarded at my house as one pea looks like another.' But he didn't answer when I called to him; only pushed ahead, out of the way. And I thought it was queer—and now I know it."

The *Nancy Jane*, Captain Sam's big fishing-boat, named for his wife, and, like that good woman, plump and sturdy of build, and not dashing, was swinging idly at its mooring. They jumped aboard, lifted the tender aboard also, so it would not drag and delay them, ran the mainsail and jib up, cast off, and stood down alongshore. The chase of the *Viking* had begun.

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The yacht *Spray*, which had been under way for some minutes, was off about half a mile, heading for the islands. The canoe had already reached the Narrows, a little more than half a mile below, and was not to be seen. The *Nancy Jane* was doing her best. Jack Harvey and Henry Burns looked at each other, their faces set and anxious. They could hardly speak.

Only Henry Burns managed to say, "Keep up your courage, Jack. We'll get him, yet."

Jack Harvey shook his head, dubiously.

"He's got a long start," he said; "and you know how the old *Viking* can sail."

As for Captain Sam, he must have had his own convictions about the relative merits of the *Nancy Jane* and the *Viking*; but he refrained from expressing them. He merely drew out his pipe and sent up such clouds of smoke that it might have seemed as though the *Nancy Jane* was propelled by an engine.

Tom Harris and Bob White lost little time in reaching the Narrows. At this point, the waters of the Eastern and Western Bays came so near together that only a narrow strip of the island prevented the sea from flowing between and making two islands, instead of one. The boys lifted the canoe on their shoulders, carried across and launched it again in the Western Bay. They had now some six miles of water to cross.

Heading somewhat above their destination, so as to allow for the setting of the tide, they proceeded vigorously. With the precision bred of long practice, their paddles cut the water at the same moment; while, under the guidance of Tom's stern paddle, the canoe sped on an undeviating course, leaving a wake as straight as though a line had been drawn for them to follow.

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Then, when they came to within the last mile of

Bellport, Tom gave the word, and they finished at racing speed. In upon a clean strip of sandy beach they ran; nor had the bow scarcely grated upon the shore, before they were out and were carrying the canoe up above the reach of tide-water, or the wash of any passing boat. Then, still stripped for the race, with arms and shoulders bared, they started on a run for the telegraph office. They had set out at about half-past six, and it was now eight o'clock.

Oh, but the minutes seemed hours now. The little office, where the one operator did whatever business came that way, was locked, when they arrived. It was Sunday morning, and the operator was being shaved at a near-by hotel. They fairly dragged him out of the barber's hands, however, and got him to send their messages: one to Stoneland, another to Boston, and another to Portland. They were brief:

"Yacht *Viking*; thirty-eight feet, six; sloop; foresail, two jibs; painted white; new sails. Stolen last night. Stop her."

The messages were directed to the harbour-master at each port.

The boys, donning their sweaters, sat in the shade by the roadside, to rest. The pace had been so swift, and their intent so absorbing, that they had not fairly considered until now the real extent of the loss. But now they groaned with sympathy for their comrades.

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"Isn't it awful?" exclaimed Bob. "Just think of losing a boat like the *Viking*."

"Yes, and think of the start he's got," replied Tom. "He's had a smashing breeze all night. He must have got past Stoneland. Only the despatch to Portland or Boston will catch him."

"Well," said Bob, "what next?"

"Breakfast, the first thing," said Tom. "Then let's go down the bay toward Stoneland and see what's happened."

They had, indeed, eaten nothing since Henry Burns had awakened them with the dire news.

An hour later, they were paddling leisurely down alongshore.

In all the village of Southport, through which the exciting and unusual news had spread, there was but one man who regarded the loss of the *Viking* with anything approaching satisfaction. Having assured himself that no legal blame could attach to him, Squire Brackett was far from being downcast over the event. He thought of the secret drawer and the lobster-claw.

"I'm glad she's gone," he muttered. "Serves 'em right. And they can't blame me for it. I brought her back all safe."

And yet, if the squire had known it, he was, by reason of having a son, in that measure responsible for the *Viking's* strange disappearance.

Since Mr. Carleton's sudden departure from Southport, there had been a desultory correspondence carried on between him and

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young Harry Brackett, unknown to any one but themselves. Harry Brackett, indeed, felt rather flattered to receive attention from so important a person; and he had become convinced that Mr. Carleton did, in truth, regard certain things that the boy had done as practical jokes, instead of putting a worse interpretation on them.

Moreover, in furtherance of this idea, Mr. Carleton in all his letters spoke of a certain indefinite time when, if occasion offered, he should return to Southport, and the two would have some quiet joke of their own at the expense of the yachtsmen.

"And when I come, I shall stay into the fall," he wrote, in one letter. "I expect to buy some land of your father. But say nothing to him about my coming. My plans might fall through and I should not wish to disappoint him."

Thus it had happened that when, on Thursday, Harry Brackett's letter of the day before reached Mr. Carleton at Bellport, it was a letter of much importance to that gentleman. He sat on the veranda of the hotel, holding the letter in his hand, thinking deeply, and uttering his thoughts softly to himself.

"So the squire's got the boat," he murmured. "I wish it was I that had her. I was a fool to start off so soon down this way, and not see Chambers, myself. It's funny, too, about that secret drawer with the money. There wasn't any when Chambers and I and French owned her. But it must be there, for Chambers's friend, Will Edwards, told me about it in Portland. And didn't he write me from Boston that Chambers says it is still there? And isn't it queer, and lucky, too, that there's only Chambers and I left to share it, since Will Edwards has been put where he won't need money for ten long years?"

Mr. Carleton arose and paced the veranda, still talking to himself.

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"He said I was the one to get it, did Will Edwards, because I appear like a gentleman, and can meet people—and, besides, I had the money to spend. But there's little enough of that left. I've spent a lot. Somebody's got to pay me. It's the last chance, and I'll have the boat if—"

Mr. Carleton did not finish the sentence. But behind the heavy moustache, that had seemed like a disguise, almost, to Henry Burns, Mr. Carleton's teeth were clenched tight; and his eyes looked away across the bay to Grand Island, with an expression in them that was cold and resolute.

Harry Brackett got an answer to his letter, next morning, and the secret it contained filled him with expectation and excitement.

"A capital scheme for us, he says," exclaimed Harry Brackett, tearing the letter into little pieces and casting them to the winds. "I wonder what it is? I'm to meet him in the pasture tomorrow night. Cracky! but I guess something's going to happen. I'd like to get even with Jack Harvey and Henry Burns for once. I'll dare to do anything that Mr. Carleton will, too; for he'll get the blame, if there's any trouble, because he's a man."

Thus it happened that Captain Sam Curtis had not been mistaken when, on Friday night, he thought he saw his former lodger, Mr. Carleton, stealing through the bushes in the pasture, as he was coming from the post-office. Indeed, Captain Sam might have seen more, if he had been sharper-eyed. He might have seen Harry Brackett dodge quickly out of sight at the sound of his voice, then throw himself on the ground and lie still until he had passed.

What took place between Harry Brackett and Mr. Carleton, on this Friday night, was an agreement, merely, to meet there again on the succeeding night; after which, Mr. Carleton proceeded some three miles down the island, where he had engaged a room at a farmhouse.

"And what's the joke?" Harry Brackett had asked, eagerly.

"Leave that to me," Mr. Carleton had replied. "It won't hurt the boat any; I promise you that. But they may have to mend their sail a little after it. You know what that means, eh, you young rascal?"

Mr. Carleton chuckled.

"Keep watch for the *Viking*," were his parting words.

There was little need for Harry Brackett to watch for the *Viking's* return. He knew of it by the arrival home of Squire Brackett, in the worst humour he had ever been in—if there could be degrees of such bad humour as the squire's. He knew of it by his father's ordering him to "clear out," when he asked about the trip. So, his supper finished, he lost little time in obeying.

Harry Brackett hurrying up the road and turning off at length into the pasture, and Mr. Carleton walking rapidly up the island, and coming at length to the same spot, they met, shortly after eight o'clock. Great news had Harry Brackett to impart: the arrival of the *Viking*. Important enough it was to Mr. Carleton, but he took it coolly—or seemed to.

"Well, well," he said, laughing, "you're in for fun, aren't you? I didn't half expect you; the night started in so bad. I shouldn't have come, if I hadn't promised you I would. However, we're in for it. Ha! ha! I declare it makes me feel like a boy again. We'll have a laugh on them to-morrow, for I'm coming back to Captain Sam's to-morrow afternoon, to stay."

"Now," he continued, "you get back to the shore as quick as you can, and keep a watch on the *Viking*, to see whether the boys go aboard. If they do, we'll have our little joke some other night. If they don't—ho! ho! I'm too old to play jokes like a boy—but I'm in for a good time. I'll be down to the shore by ten o'clock."

"He's a queer sort of a man," said Harry Brackett, as he started on a jog-trot back to the village.

"I wish I didn't have to use him," said Mr. Carleton, as he watched the retreating figure. "But I don't dare keep watch, myself; and I need some one to help run the boat."

It was a long and somewhat dreary wait for Harry Brackett, down by the shore. The sky was clearing, but it was wet and soggy underfoot, and the night was depressing. He almost fancied that he was sorry he had entered into the scheme, though he didn't know exactly why. However, if Mr. Carleton, who had money to spend like a gentleman, and who was going to buy his father's land, could indulge in such a prank, why shouldn't he?

Yet he jumped, and sprang up almost frightened, when a hand was laid suddenly on his shoulder and a low voice spoke in his ear:

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"Well, anybody appeared?"

Mr. Carleton had come very quietly. The boy had not heard a footfall.

"No," he replied. "But how you startled me. What time is it?"

"A little after ten," replied Mr. Carleton. "We'll wait till nearer eleven, to make sure."

He was not especially companionable, was Mr. Carleton, during their vigil. He screened himself behind a thin clump of alders, lighted a cigar, and smoked silently. Harry Brackett quivered with impatience. He wondered what it was about Mr. Carleton that so changed his appearance. Why, of course, it was the dress. Mr. Carleton, the night being bad, had discarded his light yachting costume, and wore a heavy, almost shabby-looking suit, with a rough felt hat.

"What are we going to do?" inquired Harry Brackett, once more.

"Wait till we run her down alongshore between here and the crew's camp," replied Mr. Carleton. "Then you'll see."

It was a quarter to eleven, by Mr. Carleton's watch, when he at length arose and motioned for the boy to follow him.

"Any skiffs along the beach?" he asked.

"There are, 'most always," replied Harry Brackett. "The cottagers have them."

They found what they wanted, shortly, a little flat-bottomed affair, that just sufficed to float the two. They got in and rowed out to the yacht. Stepping aboard, Mr. Carleton dragged the light skiff also aboard after him. Then he paused abruptly, as though a thought had occurred to him. He shot one quick glance at Harry Brackett, and another off through the darkness.

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"We need another small boat," he said. "When we get down alongshore we'll use them both."

"There's a rowboat moored off that cottage just below," said Harry Brackett.

"Get it," said Mr. Carleton, "when we sail up to it."

Harry Brackett expressed surprise.

"Oh, we've got to put them back where we get them from, when we are through," laughed Mr. Carleton. "Let's untie the stops in this mainsail now. We'll run it up only a little way, enough to

drift down out of sight of any one from shore here. I want to light a cabin lamp, and I shouldn't dare to do it here, though I guess every one's gone to bed."

There was certainly no sign of life in and about the town. There was not a fisherman in the harbour. Not even a light gleamed from a cottage window. Southport had gone to bed. It was a gloomy sort of night, too, with the black clouds wheeling along overhead, and only the uncertain glimmering of the stars in the shifting patches of blue to relieve the dreariness. Harry Brackett wondered what time he would get back home.

"It's getting late," he suggested.

"Well, it won't take us long," replied Mr. Carleton. "There, the sail's free. Get forward and cast that mooring off, while I start the sail up a bit."

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Harry Brackett quickly gave the word that the *Viking* had dropped its mooring. Mr. Carleton gave another vigorous haul on the halyards, made them fast, and sprang to the wheel. They ran down to where the rowboat lay, and picked that up. But then, Mr. Carleton, strangely enough, ran the sail up more than "a little way." In fact, as it bagged out with a sharp flaw of the night-wind, the *Viking* shot ahead quickly and was almost instantly under full headway, gliding rapidly out from the shore.

"We've got to get that sail up still more," exclaimed Mr. Carleton. "We don't need it, but it's dangerous sailing this way. However, we will get there all the quicker. You pull on those halyards when I head up into the wind."

Harry Brackett, knowing little of what he was doing, complied.

"Now break into that cabin," commanded Mr. Carleton. "There's a hatchet under that seat. It's all right. It's a cheap lock. We've got to get in there."

Harry Brackett hesitated. Was it going a bit too far?

"Hurry up, there!" exclaimed Mr. Carleton, impatiently. "We mustn't lose any time."

There was something in his voice that made Harry Brackett hesitate no longer. He took the hatchet and smashed the lock from the staple.

"Now," said Mr. Carleton, quickly, "we're down 'most far enough. We'll need some rope. There's some light spare line up forward in the cabin, usually. You just go below and look for it. Don't light a lantern, though. It isn't safe yet."

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Harry Brackett stumbled below.

There were two reefs in the sail, but the wind was squally; and there was sail enough on to make the water boil around the stern, as the *Viking* sped swiftly onward. Harry Brackett, fumbling and groping about in the cabin, could hear the rush of the water along the yacht's sides. They were sailing fast.

Moreover, had Harry Brackett been on deck, he would have seen, now, that they were not

running down alongshore, but, instead, were standing directly out from it, and rapidly leaving it astern.

"I can't find any rope," he called, at length.

"Look again. It must be there," replied Mr. Carleton.

Harry Brackett rummaged some more.

"Light a lantern if you want to," called Mr. Carleton, finally. "We're most ready to drop anchor now. But turn the wick down low first."

The light glimmered for a moment or two—and then Harry Brackett, dashing out of the cabin as though he had seen an evil spirit in some dark corner, and giving one wild, terrified glance across the waters, rushed up to and confronted Mr. Carleton.

"Here!" he cried, "What does this mean? You're not going down alongshore! Why, we're half a mile out! What are you doing? Don't you get me into a scrape—oh, don't you!"

The boy was trembling; and the chill night air, seeming to penetrate to his very marrow all at once, with his fright, set his teeth to chattering.

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In answer, Mr. Carleton, holding the wheel with his right hand, reached out suddenly with the other hand and clutched the boy by an arm. He held him in a powerful grasp.

"See here," he said, "you keep quiet. Do you understand? It's a long swim from here to shore, and the water's cold. One cry from you, and overboard you go. Sit down!"

Harry Brackett fell upon the seat, all in a heap. He tried to speak; to beg; to implore this cruel, evil man that was now revealed to him, to stop—to let him go ashore. But something rose in his throat that seemed to choke him; while the tears rolled down his cheeks. He could only gasp and utter a few sobs. He shook and shivered as though it had been a winter's night.

"Get out of here!" exclaimed Mr. Carleton, sharply. "Go below and stop that whimpering. You're not going to be hurt. And when you get your spunk back, come on deck again. I need you to help."



“GET OUT OF HERE,” EXCLAIMED MR. CARLETON,
SHARPLY.”

Harry Brackett stumbled below and threw himself on a berth, groaning in anguish.

The *Viking*, with Mr. Carleton sitting stern and silent at the wheel, sped on through the night.

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CHAPTER XXI. A TIMELY ARRIVAL

Would they be pursued this night? Would before the dawn, to race with him? Thus there be any yacht set sail from Southport, thought Mr. Carleton. Thus he questioned himself, and answered, “No.”

And yet the good yacht *Viking* was, all unknown to any one, running a race. The goal was Stoneland—and the competitor, the yacht *Surprise*.

Thirty miles apart, these two yachts had entered upon this race—and no one knew it. At about the time the *Viking* had got under way from out Southport Harbour, so had the yacht *Surprise* floated clear. Should they try to beat back to Stoneland before morning? Why not? The night need not stop them. The crew knew the way. The yacht *Surprise* began the long, ten-mile beat for

Stoneland at about twelve o'clock. The yacht *Viking* was already under way. Would they meet or would they pass?

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Harry Brackett, lying miserably on the cabin berth, was suddenly aware that the yacht had ceased running and had swung up into the wind. Then he heard the sound of the sail dropping. He sat up in wonder. The next moment, Mr. Carleton descended into the cabin. The yacht *Viking* was drifting before the wind at its own will. There was little sea on, and Mr. Carleton had abandoned the wheel.

"What—what's the matter?" stammered poor Harry Brackett.

"Nothing," replied Mr. Carleton, shortly. He paid no heed to the forlorn figure on the berth, but hastily proceeded to light another lantern. He turned the wick up so that it shone brightly, and, carrying it, went direct to the third starboard locker that had been Squire Brackett's undoing. He stooped down and pulled out, first, the larger drawer, and then the smaller and secret one. By the lantern light, he looked within.

Harry Brackett, gazing at him in amazement, saw a strange and unaccountable thing. He saw the man's face, in the lantern's gleam, pale to a deathly hue. He saw the drawer that he held drop from his fingers and fall to the floor. He saw the man stagger back, like one that has been struck a blow. Then, the man's face, turned toward him, was so full of fierce passion and wrath that he shrank back, terrified, and dared not speak to ask him what it might mean. Now Mr. Carleton advanced to where he lay.

"Get up! I want you to help me," was all he said. But Harry Brackett, to his dying day, would never forget that voice. He scrambled up and followed the man outside.

"Get that sail up!" said Mr. Carleton.

Harry Brackett seized the halyards. The yacht *Viking* went on its course again. But precious moments had been lost.

The man's face was something fearful to look into. He threw the wheel over and back, as though he would twist it apart. But he uttered not a word.

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Now they were running near a thin chain of islands. Mr. Carleton brought forth a chart and spread it out upon the cockpit floor, with the lantern on one corner.

"Do you know this bay at all?" he inquired, suddenly.

"Ye-es," answered the boy. "Those are the Pine Islands just ahead, I think."

"Right," exclaimed Mr. Carleton. "I thought so. I'll go through like a book."

Presently he muttered something else, inaudible to Harry Brackett—and mercifully so. "I'll do it," he said. "The boy's in the way. I've got to go it alone."

It was quiet water in the channel between the islands, and the *Viking* skimmed through like a phantom yacht.

"Here, hold this wheel," said Mr. Carleton, suddenly, turning to Harry Brackett. "Keep her just as she's going."

As the boy obeyed, Mr. Carleton seized the line by which the rowboat was towing and drew it up close astern.

"Get into that boat!" he said, the next moment.

Harry Brackett gave a howl of terror, and shrank away.

"No, no, oh don't!" he cried. "Don't you leave me here. I might have to stay a week. I'd starve. I'll do any—"

Harry Brackett's words were choked off, abruptly. He felt himself gathered up in two powerful arms. He was half-dragged, half-lifted, over the stern of the yacht, and tumbled into the boat, headlong. Then, as he scrambled to his feet, howling for mercy, a knife flashed in the hand of Mr. Carleton. The rope was severed. The *Viking* shot ahead. The rowboat dropped astern. Harry Brackett, alone in the night, beheld the yacht speeding away like a shadow. A few rods away, the light waves moaned in upon a sandy beach. There was only the black, desolate island, untenanted save by sea-birds, to turn to. Like a lost and hopeless mariner, he got out an oar and paddled in to land, where, upon the beach, abandoned and overcome, he sank down and wept—a faint-hearted Crusoe, monarch of all the shadows and dreariness that he surveyed.

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And now that he was in turn alone and in sight of no man, Mr. Carleton, at the wheel of the *Viking*, engaged in strange pantomime. He clenched his fist and shook it at imaginary foes. He struck his hand again and again upon the wheel, as though that were alive and could feel the pain of the blow. If he had suddenly lost his wits he would not have done stranger things.

"But I've got the yacht!" he cried, angrily. "She'll pay me for what I've spent. I'll put her through."

And then a sudden thought struck him. He brought the *Viking* abruptly into the wind again, dropped the wheel, and rushed down the companionway. He threw open the door of the provision locker—and uttered a cry of rage. It was empty.

Back at the wheel now was Mr. Carleton. The lights of Stoneland Harbour shone faintly, far, far ahead. He sat, grim and troubled.

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"More time wasted!" he muttered. "But I've got to stop. And 'twill be three o'clock before I get in. If they've got word there, I'm lost. And where can a man buy food at that hour of the night? I have it—the big hotel. There'll be somebody on watch. I'll get it by four at the latest. I'll play the gentleman yachtsman in distress, and pay handsomely."

But he had lost time. The night had hindered him. By day, he could have laid a straighter course. And there had been delays. It was nearly half-past three when the yacht *Viking*, feeling its way into the harbour of Stoneland, rounded to off the wharves, and the anchor went down. Leaving his sail set, and giving the yacht plenty

of sheet, to lie easy, Mr. Carleton lifted the skiff over the rail, jumped in, and rowed ashore.

All safe and clear thus far. No sign of disturbance in the town, as he rowed in. No launch darting out to seize him. Only a few sluggish coasters lying near peacefully at anchor. Only a fishing-boat or two making an early start for the outer islands. Only, far down below, a red and a green light indistinctly to be seen, as of a small craft beating up to harbour.

Mr. Carleton rowed in to the wharf, tied his boat in a slip, and vanished up into the town.

A red and a green light, showing from port and starboard respectively, came to be seen more distinctly as the time went by. Close to, one might have seen now that it was a trim yacht, but beating in slowly, as one goes carefully in darkness, where shipping may lie.

There was also to be seen—if there had been any one to look—that a weary youth sat at the wheel; that a smaller, but brighter-eyed, nimble youngster was standing up forward, peering ahead into the darkness.

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“I think we can anchor most anywhere here now,” said the boy astern. “I guess the water isn’t too deep to fetch bottom.”

“Wait a minute, Joe,” answered the boy forward, rubbing one bare foot against his trousers leg. “I say, there’s a sail, on ahead a few rods. Luff up a little more, and we’ll run in near to that.”

“All right, Tim, tell me when we’re heading right,” responded the other boy. But he stared at his small companion in astonishment, a moment later, when the latter, deserting his post, darted aft, uttering a warning “hush.”

“What on earth is the matter with you, Tim Reardon?” exclaimed the boy at the wheel.

“Let her come up and take a look for yourself,” was Tim Reardon’s reply. “It’s the *Viking*, as sure as you’re alive. They must be asleep. We’ll get aboard and give Henry Burns one good toot on the horn. He’s fond of that sort of thing, so he can’t say anything to us. But I wonder what they’ve left the sail up for. Won’t they be surprised to see us?”

Joe Hinman, bringing the *Surprise* up into the wind at the other’s words, himself gave an exclamation of surprise to see the sail set on the *Viking*.

“That’s queer,” he said. “Tim, you take the tender and go aboard, while I hold the *Surprise* where she is. Don’t be a fool, though, and blow any horn. If they’re as tired as we are, they’ll be mad enough to throw you overboard.”

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Tim Reardon made no reply, as he rowed alongside the *Viking*, but a mischievous twinkle danced in his eyes.

When he had stepped softly aboard, however, and had crept down into the cabin, he darted swiftly on deck again.

“Joe,” he called, “this is great! They’ve gone ashore. And they must be coming back soon. That’s why they’ve left the sail up.”

Then Little Tim Reardon, scampering forward, did a strange thing. Tugging away at the rope, he brought the anchor off from bottom and clear to the surface of the water. Taking a few turns of the rope around the bits, to secure it, he darted astern, seized the wheel of the *Viking*, and put her under way.

"Here, you Tim, quit that!" cried Joe Hinman in disgust, from the stern of the *Surprise*. "You don't want to be too free with your tomfoolery with Jack and Henry Burns. Just remember whose yacht we're sailing. They'll be mad clean through, too. It's no joke to think you've lost a fine yacht."

Little Tim only chuckled derisively, realizing that his larger companion could not compel obedience from the deck of another boat.

"I'm doing this," he said. "We don't get a chance to play a joke like this on Henry Burns every day. Wouldn't he do it quick, himself, though? Besides, I'm not going far—only up around the end of that long wharf. We can watch from there and see what happens."

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"You're a meddlesome little monkey; that's what you are," exclaimed Joe Hinman, too sleepy and weary to see fun in anything. "You'll catch it from Jack—and you'll get what you deserve."

And yet Joe Hinman, so long as somebody else would smart for it, had just enough interest in the plot to follow along with the *Surprise*. Together, the two yachts turned in under the lee of a long wharf, less than an eighth of a mile ahead, lowered the sails so they should not be visible, and came to anchor.

"You've got to take the blame for this, Tim," said Joe Hinman, as they waited together on deck.

"I'll do it," chuckled Tim Reardon. "I like a joke as well as Henry Burns does. He'll take it all right, too. You see if he don't."

They woke the two boys who were sleeping in the cabin of the *Surprise*—to see the fun. George Baker and Allan Harding came on deck, sleepy and grumbling. Nor did the joke take on a more hilarious aspect, as the time went by and no Jack Harvey and no Henry Burns put in an appearance.

"I'm going to turn in," said Joe Hinman, at length. "You can have all the fun to yourself, Tim."

He went below, the two other boys following his example.

Little Tim, himself, began to lose heart in the joke—when, suddenly, in the faint gray of the approaching dawn, he espied a boat coming out from shore toward where the *Viking* had lain. It was four o'clock. The boat was a small skiff. There was only one person in it. Whoever he was, he was rowing furiously. There seemed to be a box of some sort on the seat in front of him.

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Suddenly the man ceased rowing. His head was turned for a moment. Then he sprang to his feet in the small skiff, with a jump that almost upset the craft. He peered wildly about him and seemed to be rubbing his eyes, like a person in a

dream or one rudely aroused from sleep. Then he sat down and rowed a way down the harbour—then across to one side—then in toward shore again.

“That isn’t either Jack or Henry Burns,” said Tim Reardon; “and yet he acts as though he had lost something—his head, I guess.”

Little Tim was nearer correct than he knew.

“He looks familiar, too,” thought Tim Reardon. “What man does he look like? I can’t think.”

But what happened next was more extraordinary than before. The man suddenly sprang up, gave one glance about on all sides, then picked up the box on the seat before him and dumped it overboard. He resumed his seat, seized the oars, and began rowing furiously down the harbour. At a point some way below where he had first appeared, he ran the boat in to shore, sprang out, left the boat without tying it or dragging it up on the beach, and started off, running desperately.

“That’s a crazy man,” said Little Tim to himself—and again spoke not far from the truth, unwittingly.

“Hang the joke!” cried Tim, finally. “I wish I hadn’t done it now. It don’t seem so funny after waiting all this time. I’m going to bed, too. I guess I will catch it, just as Joe said I would.”

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He went below, in the cabin of the *Viking*. His companions were aboard the *Surprise*.

Morning came, and Little Tim awoke with something disturbing his mind. Oh, yes; now that he was wide awake, he knew. It was that joke. He wished he hadn’t played it. He wished so more and more when Joe Hinman awoke and found that Jack and Henry Burns had not put in an appearance.

“You’ve made a nice mess of it, Tim,” he exclaimed. “I wouldn’t be in your shoes, when Jack gets you. Like as not they’ve come down in sight of shore and seen that the yacht was gone, and have given out an alarm. The best thing we can do is to go up into the town and find them, and try to square things.”

Little Tim, looking very sober, scampered off, followed soon by the others. More puzzling than ever it became, when a search through the town failed to yield any trace of the missing yachtsmen. The boys returned to the yachts, and waited.

Somewhere near eleven o’clock there was a curious coincidence. Joe Hinman, looking off on the water, suddenly uttered an exclamation of surprise and pointed to a sailboat that was coming in.

“That’s Captain Sam’s old tub,” he said. “I know her as far as I can see her.”

But they received a greater surprise, the next moment. A man in some sort of uniform, passing along by the wharves, also uttered an exclamation and stopped short.

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“Well, if that don’t beat me!” he said. “Of all fool things, to steal a yacht and bring her in here.

That's her, though: about thirty-eight feet; white; two jibs, and there's the name, '*Viking*.' Well, I never saw the like of this before."

The man stepped to the edge of the wharf and jumped down on to the deck of the *Viking*.

"Who's in charge here?" he asked.

"I am," replied Little Tim Reardon, emerging from the cabin.

The man laughed.

"You're the youngest boat-thief on record," he said, eying Tim wonderingly. "What put you up to it, boy? Been reading dime-novels?"

"Well, it's all right, anyway," replied Little Tim, who had, however, turned pale beneath his coating of tan. "They're our friends that own the yacht. We're waiting for 'em. Just let 'em know we're here with the boat, and they'll come down and tell you it's all right."

The man grinned.

"Say, you're pretty slick, if you are small," he said. "But the trouble is, your friends don't happen to be in town. They sent a telegram from Bellport. I guess you'll have to wait somewhere else for them."

Little Tim's eyes bulged out and his jaw dropped. But the next moment he was standing on his head, with his bare toes twinkling in the air, for sheer delight.

"Hooray; 'twas the man in the skiff that had her," he cried—to the utter amazement of the stranger and of his own companions. "Just wait a minute, anyway, till that sailboat gets in. It comes from Southport, and perhaps Captain Sam can explain things."

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But there was some one besides Captain Sam aboard the good old *Nancy Jane*, to explain things. There were Jack Harvey and Henry Burns, standing up forward and peering ahead eagerly. And how they did yell when they saw the crew of the *Surprise* standing on the wharf, waving to attract their attention.

And then, ten minutes later, when the *Nancy Jane*, waddling in like a fat, good-natured duck of a boat, had come alongside, and had let Jack Harvey and Henry Burns scramble aboard the *Viking*—almost with tears in their eyes—why then, Little Tim stepped forward and said he was under arrest for stealing the boat. And wouldn't they please pardon him, and get the man to let him go; he wouldn't do it again; oh, no. He had just found the yacht down below, with the sail up, and had run it up here for a joke—he was sorry—

But Little Tim didn't get any farther, for Henry Burns had him lifted clear up on his shoulder. And Jack Harvey had him, the next minute, and between the two he was mauled and hugged and slapped till his shoulders smarted—and he was almost in tears, too, to discover what he had accomplished.

As for the official, who had made such an important discovery, he hardly knew at first whether to be angry or not, at finding that his

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discovery was really of a yacht that had already been recovered. But he finally relented, and patted Little Tim on the back, too, and said he was a good boy. Then he took Mr. Carleton's description and hurried up into the town.

He got trace of Mr. Carleton, too, after a time, at the big hotel, where Carleton had succeeded in buying some provisions. He traced him from there, down through the town, to the wharf. Later, he found a man who had seen such a person come ashore from a skiff, and leave her adrift and run up the shore. And lastly, the station agent had seen a man answering that description take the early morning train out of town.

Mr. Carleton had, indeed, vanished—a disappointed, wrathful, frightened man. A strange and most complete disappearance, too, for neither Stoneland nor Southport heard of him more. True, there came a message from the police, a day later, that a man who was much like the missing Mr. Carleton, had had some trouble over a ticket with the conductor of a train entering Boston; but the man had got away from the station, and no arrest had been made.

But it was all one to Henry Burns and Jack Harvey, what should become of Mr. Carleton, when they had the *Viking* back. And there, in the course of the afternoon, when they were preparing to depart, was a canoe to be seen, coming down alongshore. So they sailed up and met it, and had Tom and Bob aboard. And there was Little Tim, whom they had taken with them, to be congratulated. And then, there were the Warren boys in the *Spray*, to be hunted up among the islands, and told the good news.

Oh, yes, and there was Captain Sam, roaring like a sea-lion over the good news. And there were the two yachts, the *Viking* and the *Surprise*, going up the bay together, to meet the *Spray* wherever they should find her.

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Then, late that afternoon, as Captain Sam was nearing Grand Island, on his return voyage, he espied in the distance, close to shore, a forlorn figure, rowing wearily in the direction of Southport.

"I'm blest if that don't look like young Harry Brackett," exclaimed Captain Sam. "It is, as sure as you're alive. Ahoy, don't you want a tow, there?"

But the boy, turning his head in the direction of the *Nancy Jane*, shook his head mournfully, and resumed his rowing.

"Well, you don't have ter," was Captain Sam's comment.

Harry Brackett, sore, sleepless, and weary, had his own reasons for not wishing to face the captain.

One week later, Jack Harvey, sitting on the step of Rob Dakin's store, received a letter. He opened and read:

"MY DEAR JACK:—I've won the lawsuit and you shall have some money as soon as things are settled. I wonder how you have got along this

summer. Too bad to cut you off, but I'll make it up to you by and by. Let me know how much money you need.

"Affectionately,
"Your father,
"WILLIAM HARVEY."

For once in his life, Jack Harvey was prompt with an answer. This is what he wrote:

"DEAR DAD:—Glad you won. Much obliged for offering me the money. I don't need it. I've been earning some, and if you want some ready money I'll lend you twenty-five dollars.

"Affectionately,
"Your son,
"JACK."

They were all aboard the yacht *Viking*, one evening not long after—Henry Burns and Jack Harvey, the crew, Tom and Bob, and the Warren boys.

"Fellows," said Harvey, "Henry's got us all together to tell us a secret—something he's discovered, he says. Come on, Henry, out with it."

Henry Burns, holding one hand in his coat pocket, and looking as grave as though his communication was to be one of the greatest importance, turned to his companions, and said:

"I thought, because you were all such warm friends of Squire Brackett, you might like to know whether he was after that secret drawer in the *Viking*, and whether he found the lobster-claw."

The outburst of elation and surprise that followed assured Henry Burns he was not mistaken.

"Well, I've found out," said Henry Burns. "You see, when we got the yacht back we saw the drawer on the floor, and the claw, too. That was Carleton's work, of course. I didn't think about the squire's having the drawer out, till later. We were all so upset, you know."

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"Jack," he continued, "do you remember our eating that lobster—the one that owned the claw we put into the drawer?"

"Why, yes, of course," replied Harvey.

"And do you remember saying that you'd have eaten both claws if the one you left hadn't been so big?"

"Why, yes, I remember that, too," replied the puzzled Harvey.

"Well, now, which claw was it that you didn't eat, and that we put into the drawer?" asked Henry Burns.

"The right one," answered Harvey. "I remember breaking off the left one to eat because it was smaller."

"That's just as I remember it, too," said Henry Burns. "Now look here." He withdrew his hand

from his pocket and produced the claw they had found on the cabin floor. A roar of laughter greeted its appearance.

It was the left claw of a lobster that Henry Burns held up to view.

THE END.

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- Silently corrected a few typos (but left nonstandard spelling and dialect as is).
- Rearranged front matter (and moved illustrations) to a more-logical streaming order.

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