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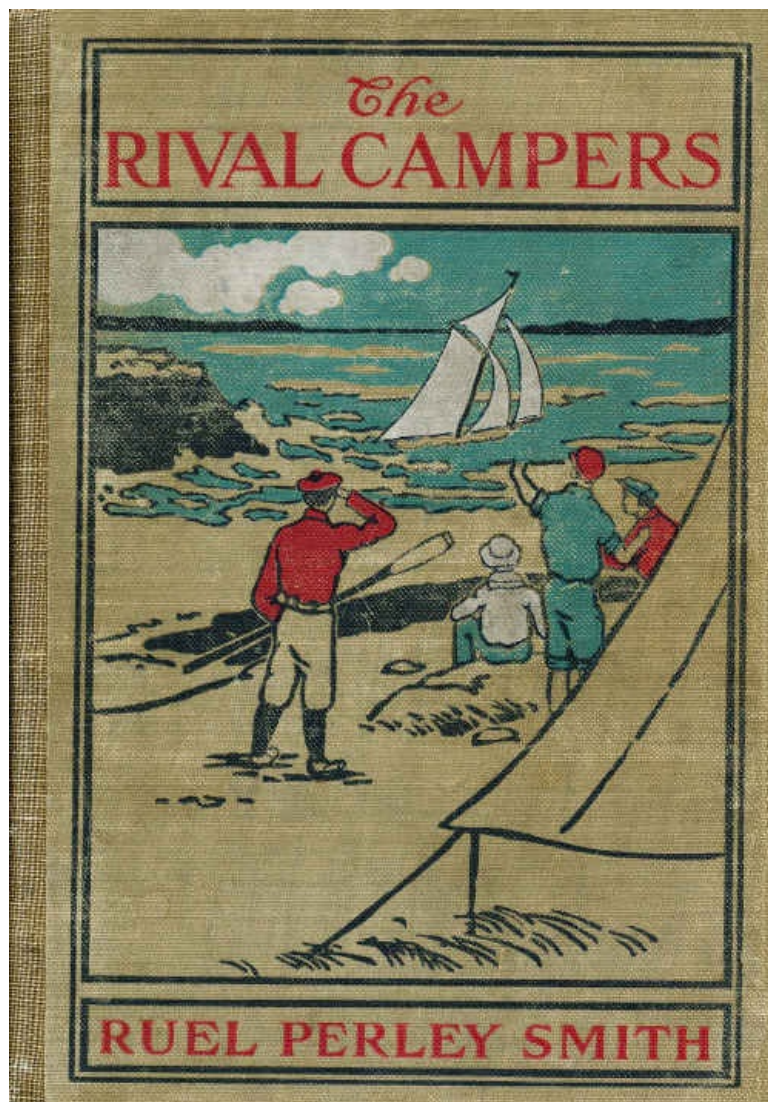
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THE

RIVAL CAMPERS

Or,

THE ADVENTURES OF HENRY BURNS

By
Ruel P. Smith

ILLUSTRATED BY
A. B. SHUTE

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WITH LOVE TO

Ruel Stevenson Smith

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[1]

THE RIVAL CAMPERS

CHAPTER I. THE CAMP

On a certain afternoon in the latter part of the month of June, the little fishing village of Southport, on Grand Island in Samoset Bay, was awakened from its customary nap by the familiar whistle of the steamboat from up the river. Southport, opening a sleepy eye at the sound, made deliberate preparation to receive its daily visitor, knowing that the steamer was as yet some distance up the island, and not even in sight, for behind the bluff around which the steamer must eventually come the town lay straggling irregularly along the shore of a deeply indented cove.

A few loungers about the village grocery-store seemed roused to a renewed interest in life, removed their pipes, and, with evident satisfaction at this relief from island monotony, sauntered lazily down to the wharf. The storekeeper and the freight-agent, as became men burdened with the present responsibility of seeing that the steamer was offered all possible assistance in making its landing, bustled about with importance.

Soon a wagon or two from down the island came rattling into the village, while from the hotel, a quarter of a mile distant, a number of guests appeared on the veranda, curious to scrutinize such new arrivals as might appear. From the summer cottages here and there flags were hastily run up, and from one a salute was fired; all of which might be taken to indicate that the coming of the steamer was the event of the day at Southport—as, indeed, it was.

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Now another whistle sounded shrilly from just behind the bluff, and the next moment the little

steamer shoved its bow from out a jagged screen of rock, while the chorused exclamation, "Thar she is!" from the assembled villagers announced that they were fully awake to the situation.

Among the crowd gathered on the wharf, three boys, between whom there existed sufficient family resemblance to indicate that they were brothers, scanned eagerly the faces of the passengers as the steamer came slowly to the landing. The eldest of the three, a boy of about sixteen years, turned at length to the other two, and remarked, in a tone of disappointment:

"They are not aboard. I can't see a sign of them. Something must have kept them."

"Unless," said one of the others, "they are hiding somewhere to surprise us."

"It's impossible," said the first boy, "for any one to hide away when he gets in sight of this island. No, if they were aboard we should have seen them the minute the steamer turned the bluff, waving to us and yelling at the top of their lungs. There's something in the air here that makes one feel like tearing around and making a noise."

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"Especially at night, when the cottagers are asleep," said the third boy.

"Besides," continued the eldest, "their canoe is not aboard, and you would not catch Tom Harris and Bob White coming down here for the summer without it, when they spend half their time in it on the river at home and are as expert at handling it as Indians,—and yet, they wrote that they would be here to-day."

It was evident the boys they were looking for were not aboard. The little steamer, after a violent demonstration of puffing and snorting, during which it made apparently several desperate attempts to rush headlong on the rocks, but was checked with a hasty scrambling of paddle-wheels, and was bawled at by captain and mates, was finally subdued and made fast to the wharf by the deck-hands. The passengers disembarked, and the same lusty, brown-armed crew, with a series of rushes, as though they feared their captive might at any moment break its bonds and make a dash for liberty, proceeded to unload the freight and baggage. Trucks laden with leaning towers of baggage were trundled noisily ashore and overturned upon the wharf.

In the midst of the bustle and commotion the group of three boys was joined by another boy, who had just come from the hotel.

"Hulloa, there!" said the new boy. "Where's Tom and Bob?"

"They are not aboard, Henry," said the eldest boy of the group.

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The new arrival gave a whistle of surprise.

"How do you feel this afternoon, Henry?" asked the second of the brothers.

"Oh, very poorly—very miserable. In fact, I don't seem to get any better."

This lugubrious reply, strange to say, did not evoke the sympathy which a listener might have

expected. The boys burst into roars of laughter.

"Poor Henry Burns!" exclaimed the eldest boy, giving the self-declared invalid a blow on the chest that would have meant the annihilation of weak lungs. "He will never be any better."

"And he may be a great deal worse," said the second boy, slapping the other on the back so hard that the dust flew under the blow.

"Won't the boys like him, though?" asked the third and youngest boy,—"that is, if they ever come."

Henry Burns received these sallies with the utmost unconcern. If he enjoyed the effect which his remarks had produced, it was denoted only by a twinkle in his eyes. He was rather a slender, pale-complexioned youth, of fourteen years. A physiognomist might have found in his features an unusual degree of coolness and self-control, united with an abnormal fondness for mischief; but Henry Burns would have passed with the ordinary person as a frail boy, fonder of books than of sports.

Just then the captain of the steamer put his head out of the pilot-house and called to the eldest of the brothers:

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"I've got a note for you, George Warren. A young chap who said he was on his way here in a canoe came aboard at Millville and asked me to give it to you; and there was another young chap in a canoe alongside who asked me to say they'd be here to-night."

"Hooray!" cried George Warren, opening and reading the note. "It's the boys, sure enough. They started at four o'clock this morning in the canoe, and will be here to-night. Much obliged, Captain Chase."

"Not a bit," responded the captain. "But let me tell you boys something. You needn't look for these 'ere young chaps to-night, because they won't get here. What's more," added the captain, as he surveyed the water and sky with the air of one defying the elements to withhold a secret from him, "if they try to cross the bay to-night you needn't look for them at all. The bay is nothing too smooth now; but wait till the tide turns and the wind in those clouds off to the east is let loose! There's going to be fun out there, and that before many hours, too."

With this dismally prophetic remark the captain gave orders to cast off the lines, and the steamer was soon on its way down the bay.

The three brothers, George, Arthur, and Joe Warren, and Henry Burns left the wharf and were walking in the direction of the hotel, when a remark from the latter stopped them short.

"Did it occur to any of you," asked Henry Burns, speaking in a slightly drawling tone, "that we shall never have a better opportunity to play a practical joke on your friends than we have to-day—?"

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"What friends?" exclaimed George Warren, indignantly.

"I thought you said Tom Harris and Bob White were coming down the river to-day in a canoe,"

said Henry Burns, in the most innocent manner.

"And so they are. And you think we would play a joke on them the first day they arrive, do you? I believe you would get up in the night, Henry Burns, to play a joke on your own grandmother. No, sirree, count me out of that," said George Warren. "It will be time enough to play jokes on them after they get here. I don't believe in treating friends in that way."

"Rather a mean thing to do, I think," said Arthur Warren.

"I'm out of it," said Joe.

"It doesn't occur to any of you to ask what the joke is, does it?" asked Henry Burns, dryly.

"Don't want to know," replied George.

"Nor I, either," said Arthur.

"Keep it to play on Witham," said Joe.

"Then I'll enlighten you without your asking," continued Henry Burns, nothing abashed. "You did not notice, perhaps, that though your friends, Tom and Bob, did not come ashore to-day, their baggage did, and it is back there on the wharf. Now I propose that we get John Briggs to let us take his wheelbarrow, wheel their traps over to the point, pitch their tent for them, and have everything ready by the time they get here. It's rather a mean thing to do, I know, and not the kind of a trick I'd play on old Witham; but there's nothing particular on hand in that line for to-day."

Henry Burns paused, with a sly twinkle in his eyes, to note the effect of his words.

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"Capital!" roared George Warren, slapping Henry Burns again on the back, regardless of the delicate state of that young gentleman's health. "We might have known better than to take Henry Burns seriously."

"Same old Henry Burns," said Arthur. "Take notice, boys, that he never is beaten in anything he sets his heart on, and that his delicate health will never, never be any better;" and he was about to imitate his elder brother's example in the matter of a punch at Henry Burns, but the latter, though of slighter build, grappled with him, and after a moment's friendly wrestling laid him on his back on the greensward, thereby illustrating the force of his remark as to Henry Burns's invincibility.

The suggestion was at once followed. Within an hour the boys had wheeled the baggage of the campers to a point of land overlooking the bay.

"It's all here," said Henry Burns, finally, as two of the boys deposited a big canvas bag, containing the tent, upon the grass, "except that one box on the wharf, which looks as though it contained food."

"We can let that stay there till we get things shipshape here, or get Briggs to put it in the storehouse by and by," suggested young Joe.

But if they could have foreseen then that the leaving of the box there upon the wharf, seemingly such an inconsequential thing, was to

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be the means of creating no end of trouble, it is quite possible that even young Joe himself, though rather fond of his ease, would have brought it away on his own shoulders; but it seemed of no consequence whether it should be removed then or later, and so the box remained where it was.

It required but a brief time to pitch the tent. It was a large, square-shaped canvas, with high walls on two sides, so that a person of medium height could stand erect there, and running to a peak at the top in the usual "A" shape. Putting the frame, of two poles and a cross-piece, together, and drawing the canvas over it as it lay on the ground, the two larger boys raised it into position while the others drove the pegs and stretched the guy-ropes.

"Now, then," drawled Henry Burns, "if you care to, we can carry the joke still further by cutting some poles and putting up the bunks."

This proposition also meeting with approval, Henry Burns and the eldest of the Warrens started for the woods, about a mile distant, to cut some spruce poles, leaving the younger brothers to complete the pegging of the tent, ditching it, and getting things in order.

The spot which had been selected for the camping-ground was one of the most beautiful on the island. It was a small point of land projecting into the bay, with a sandy beach on either side. Its outermost extremity, however, ended in a wall of ledge, which went down abruptly, so that the water at high tide came up to within a few feet of the greensward, and at low tide dropped down, rather than receded, leaving no bare rocks exposed.

A few spruce-trees grew on the point, sufficient to give shade, and in the midst of a clump of them was a clear spring of water that was cool to iciness during the hottest days. The point commanded a view of the entire bay on the eastern side of the island, so that when the breeze came up from the south, as it did almost daily through the summer, blowing fresh and steadily, the billows over all its broad surface seemed to be aiming their blows directly at it, while every breath of wind was laden with a salt odour that was health-giving and inspiring.

It was a choice bit of land that Bob's uncle had purchased several years ago, when a few speculators had thought the island might be "boomed" as a summer resort. The little fishing village of Southport, which numbered then some twenty odd houses, had, indeed, been augmented by the "boom" by about the same number of cottages; and adjoining the old tavern there had been built a more imposing structure, the new and the old composing the summer hotel.

But the village had not "boomed." It remained the same peaceful, quiet, quaint, and interesting village as of yore. Those cottagers who remained after the boom died out were rather glad than otherwise that the picturesque place had not been transformed into a fashionable resort. They liked it for its tranquillity and quaintness, and soon came into sympathy and friendliness with the villagers, who had parted with their lands only with the greatest reluctance, and who

viewed the new order of things with a suspicion born of years of conservativeness.

The gaiety of the place centred about the hotel, where, too, the greater number of the guests were those who came year after year, and who would as soon have thought of going to Jericho as to any other place than the island.

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The leading citizen of the village was Squire James Brackett, and its moving spirit one Captain Curtis, or "Cap'n Sam," as he was familiarly known. The former owned the best house in the village, a big, rambling, two-story farmhouse, perched on the hill overlooking the harbour. He was a vessel-owner and a man of importance. He was the only man in the town who had persistently refused to associate with the summer residents, which some attributed to the fact that he feared lest their coming might disturb his sway over town affairs.

Captain Sam was a man of altogether different stamp. It is safe to say he was on good terms with everybody on the island. He was for ever busy; the first man to arise in the town, and the last to retire at night. In fact, it is a fair assumption that, had Captain Sam deserted the island at an early date in its history, the town might have eventually fallen so sound asleep that it would not have awakened to this day.

Captain Sam united in his activities the duties of storekeeper, coal and ice merchant, musician, constable, and schoolmaster, the latter vocation occupying his winter months. The energy of the village was concentrated in this one man, who seemed tireless. He was on intimate terms with everybody, and knew everybody's business. That he was rather good-looking was the cause of some pangs of jealousy on the part of young Mrs. Curtis, when business called her husband away among the housewives and maids of the village. Finally, Captain Sam had a voice which defied walls and distance. It was even told by some of the village humourists that he had once stood at the head of the island and hailed a vessel sailing around the extreme southern end, thirteen miles distant.

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Grand Island, lying in the middle of the bay, almost divides the upper part of it into two big bodies of water, so that there are two great thoroughfares for vessels, leading out to sea, the western being the more generally used, for it is a more direct passage. The eastern bay is filled with islands at the entrance to the sea.

In the course of an hour, the boys who had gone to the woods returned to the camp, bringing with them four spruce poles. These were quickly trimmed of their branches, and cut to an even length of about seven feet. Then, four stakes being driven into the ground on each side of the tent under the walls, to form the legs of the bunks, the poles were mounted on these and made fast. Then pieces of board were nailed across from pole to pole, and on these were placed mattresses stuffed with dry hay from Captain Sam's stable.

"There," said young Joe, throwing himself on one of them, "is a spring bed that can't be beaten anywhere. I know some think spruce boughs are better, but they dry, and the needles fall off, and the bed gets hard. These will last all summer."

The pliant spruce poles were as good, indeed, as springs.

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In the meantime the younger boys had dug a trench completely around the tent, extending to the edge of the bank on one side of the point, so that a heavy rain could not flood the floor. In the rear of the tent they had set a huge box belonging to the campers, made of a packing-case and provided with a cover that lifted on leather hinges, and a padlock. It was, presumably, filled with the camp outfit. In one corner of the tent, on a box, they placed a large oil-stove and oven. The bedding was taken inside, and everything made shipshape. The comfort of the prospective campers seemed assured.

Over the top of the tent they had also stretched a big piece of stout cloth, made for the purpose, which was fastened to the ground at the ends with guy-ropes and pegs, and which was to protect the tent against leaking water in any long rainy period, and also serve as additional shade in hot weather.

The boys had done a hard afternoon's work. Pinning back the flaps of the tent, they sat at the entrance and looked out across the bay. The wind, which blew from the southeast, had not grown idle during the afternoon, but had increased steadily, and now came strong and damp from off the bay, rushing in at the opening of the tent and bulging it out so that it tugged violently at the ropes.

"It won't do to leave the tent-door unpinned," said Henry Burns. "It's going to blow great guns to-night." So, closing the entrance and making it fast, they went to the edge of the bank and sat there.

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"It's rough out there now," said George Warren, pointing to the bay, which was one mass of foaming waves; "but it will be worse from now till midnight. The wind is going to blow harder and the tide is just beginning to run out."

The tide indeed set strongly down the island shore, so that when it met the wind and waves blown up from oceanward it made a rough and turbulent chop sea.

All at once as they sat there a sailboat rushed out from behind the headland across the cove and thrashed its way through the white-capped waves, heading down the island and throwing the spray at every plunge into the seas. Those aboard had evidently a reckless disregard for their own safety, for, although such few coasters as could be seen in the distance were scudding for harbour, fearful of the approaching storm, this craft carried not only full mainsail and forestaysail,—sail, too, that was large for the boat at all times,—but a topsail and a jib. The boat was hauled well into the wind and heeled over, so that the water again and again came over the board into the cockpit.

Perched upon the windward rail were three boys. A fourth, a boy evidently near George Warren's age, stood at the wheel, seemingly the most unconcerned of all. He was large of his age and powerfully built, and his sleeves, rolled above the elbow, showed two brown and brawny arms. A fifth boy, somewhat younger in

appearance, lying in the bottom of the boat, with feet braced against the side, held the main-sheet.

The boat was a white sloop, about thirty feet in length over all, and clearly fast and able.

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"I'll say one thing for Jack Harvey and his crew," exclaimed George Warren, as the yacht rushed by the point, "although I think they're a mean lot. They can handle a boat as well as any skipper on the island. And as for fear, they don't know what it means."

"Look!" he cried. "Do you see what they are doing?" as the yacht was suddenly brought, quivering, into the wind and headed away from the island on the other tack. "There's nothing in the world Jack Harvey's doing that for except to frighten the hotel guests. He sees the crowd on the piazza watching him, and is just making game of their fright. He'll sail out there as long as he dares, or until his topmast goes, just to keep them watching him."

And so indeed it proved. An anxious crowd of summer guests at the hotel had no sooner begun to rejoice at the boat's apparent safety, than they saw it go about and head out into the bay once more. Then they breathed easier as it headed about again, and came rushing in. Then as it once more headed for the bay, they realized that what they were witnessing was a sheer bit of folly and recklessness. Angry as they were, they could but stand there and watch the yacht manoeuvre, the women crying out whenever a flaw threw the yacht over so that the mainsail was wet by the waves; the men angry at the bravado of the youthful yachtsmen, and vowing that the yacht might sink and the crew go with it before they would lift a hand to save one of them. All of which they knew they did not mean,—a fact which only increased their irritation.

"Ah!" said George Warren, as a big drop of rain suddenly splashed on his cheek. "Perhaps this will drive them in, if the wind won't." It had, indeed, begun to rain hard, and, although the crew of the yacht must have been drenched through and through with the flying spray, the water from the sky had, evidently, a more dampening effect on their spirits, for the yacht was headed inshore, and soon ran into a cove about three-quarters of a mile down the island, behind a point of land where, through the trees, the indistinct outlines of a tent could be seen.

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And so, as it was now the time when the sun would have set upon the bay, if it had not been shut out from sight by a heavy mass of clouds, and as the wind came laden with rain, which dashed in the faces of those who were out-of-doors to encounter it, the boys turned from the spot where they had gathered and hurried for shelter, the brothers to their cottage, and Henry Burns to the hotel.

The tent, swayed by the fierce gusts of wind, tugged at its ropes; the reckless crew of the white sloop had found shelter, and those vessels that were out upon the bay eagerly sought the same.

But in that part of the bay which rolled between the northern end of the island and the mouth of the river, fifteen miles away, a greater piece of

recklessness was being enacted than was ever dared by Harvey and his careless crew. There was none on shore there to witness it, for the island at that extreme end was bare of settlement.

A mile from the nearest land, seemingly at the mercy of a wild sea which threatened every moment to engulf it, a small canoe slowly and stubbornly fought its way toward the island shore. At a distance one would have thought it a mere log, tossed about at random by the waves; and yet, one watching it would have seen it slowly draw ahead, glide from under the spray that broke constantly over its bow, and still make progress; sometimes beaten back by billows that tumbled fast one upon another, but gaining something through it all.

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There were two occupants of the craft, and, though but mere youths, none could have handled the paddles more skilfully. Yet it was a question of the great sea's strength against their endurance. What would happen should they find that there came a time when they made no gain? If they turned about, even supposing that were possible, the storm might drive them across the bay once more, but their strength and courage would be gone, and they could hardly hope to reach the shore. It was either the island goal or nothing.

One standing on the shore would scarce have seen them now. Darkness began to hide them. But the island loomed up, dim and shadowy, before them, and they struggled on against the storm.

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CHAPTER II. TO THE RESCUE

A person leaving the wharf at Southport would ordinarily take one of three roads: the one directly ahead leading up through the village and past the hotel; the one to the left passing by, though at some distance from, the cottages that were scattered irregularly along the south shore of the bay; the road to the right leading similarly to the cottages on that shore. The shore there, however, made a deep sweep, bordering on a cove of some considerable extent.

From the shore in all directions the land sloped back, with a gradual rise for about a mile. Cottages dotted the slope here and there.

To the right of the wharf and the farthest away from it of any dwelling was the Warren cottage. Somewhat hidden in a grove of spruce-trees, its broad piazza commanded a fine view of the bay and the islands in the distance.

On this particular evening, however, there was little inducement of wind or weather for one to linger there. The rain, driven by the wind through fluttering tree-branches, dashed itself against the cottage windows as though the drops were drawn, like moths, to the light which shone from within; then fell in pools and was swept away by driving gusts. Nought to be seen there

now but sea and sky in wild commotion; darkness in all the air, blackness over all the bay.

But, despite the dreariness of the storm outside, there was pleasing comfort within the cottage. The increasing darkness of the night, the dashing rain and the noisy wind, like unwelcome guests, came only to the threshold and gained no admittance. A fire of driftwood blazed in the big stone fireplace, and the soft rays shed by a lamp suspended from the ceiling further lighted up the cosy room.

There were four occupants of the room. Mrs. Warren, a sweet-faced, cheery little woman, and the three brothers, were seated about the fire. They were conversing earnestly, and, as the talk progressed, it seemed as though the influence of the storm was getting into the room.

"It's no use, mother," said George Warren, who stood in front of the fireplace, facing the others, "trying to make us think that Tom and Bob did not start to cross the bay. Ever since the boys were out in the big storm on Moosehead Lake they've been afraid of nothing. Tom Harris declares his canoe will stand as rough a sea as a dory,—and, what's more, the storm hadn't begun by the time they must have left the mouth of the river."

"Yes, but Captain Chase would warn them not to cross."

"I've no doubt he did, mother; and, if he did, that might make it so much the worse. If the boys had been in a sailboat they probably would have listened to him; but the captain would sneer at that canoe, and would like as not tell them it wasn't fit to cross the bay in at any time, much less in rough water. And that would be just enough to put them on their mettle. They'd make the attempt, even if they had to put back."

"Yes, and Tom said in the note that they would be here to-night," broke in young Joe. "And when he gave that to Captain Chase to bring, it showed he meant to start, anyway."

"But when the storm increased they would put back," urged Mrs. Warren.

"No," answered George, "they must have gotten two-thirds of the way across the bay before the worst of the storm broke. The storm seemed to hold up for an hour or two during the latter part of the afternoon, and then increased all of a sudden with the turn of the tide. The boys would have gotten so far across that it would be too late to turn back, and they would have to keep on."

"And yet you boys want to imitate their recklessness!" cried Mrs. Warren, impatiently. "Come, Arthur," and she turned to the boy who had remained silent thus far during the discussion. "Help me convince your brothers of their mistake. You don't agree with them, I am sure."

The boy thus addressed, though a year younger than his elder brother, was the one on whose judgment the mother more often relied. He was fully as active as the other two, but his was a calmer temperament than theirs. This

confidence in him really extended to his brothers, though they joked him on his moderate, studious ways, and called him the "professor," because he was a little near-sighted and sometimes wore glasses. He came forward now and stood by his mother's chair.

"I can't help thinking, mother, that George and Joe are right," he said, deliberately, while poor Mrs. Warren gasped with dismay. "You wouldn't have us play the parts of cowards while the boys may be in danger, and when we can perhaps save them. There isn't half the danger you imagine, either. The wind is blowing now squarely from the east, and once we have beaten out of the cove we can sail alongshore without heading out to sea.

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"Then, too," he continued, "the yacht is nearly new, and was fitted with new rigging this year. We'll promise to sail only a little past the head of the island and return, or run into Bryant's Cove and walk back. It's no more than we ought to do for the best friends we've got. There's not another sailboat in the harbour to-night that is as stiff as ours, except Jack Harvey's, and it's out of the question to ask him. The other boats went out to the races at Seal Harbour, or we would get Captain Sam to go in his yacht. We can't ask Jack Harvey to go—that's certain."

"Wouldn't he laugh at us, though!" said George. "He would offer to tow our boat along, too, or something of that sort, just to be mean, and then there'd be a nice row."

Besieged on all sides, Mrs. Warren could but yield a partial consent.

"You and George can go," she said, turning to Arthur, "but Joe must stay with me. I can't spare you all to take such an awful risk."

"I won't stay!" cried young Joe, hotly. "That is to say, I—I don't want to," he hastened to add, as Mrs. Warren looked reproachfully at him. "They need me to help sail the *Spray*,—don't you, fellows?"

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"There ought to be three to manage the boat in this wind," said George, somewhat reluctantly. "I guess you'll have to let him go, mother—"

But at this moment there was the sound of footsteps upon the piazza. Some one walked around the house, gave a premonitory knock at the door, and let himself in.

It was Henry Burns. He was equipped for the storm, in oilskins, rubber boots, and a tarpaulin hat. The water ran from his clothing in little streams and made a series of pools on the polished wood floor. Declining Mrs. Warren's offer of a seat, on the ground that he was too wet, Henry Burns stood by the mantel near the fireplace, and, with tarpaulin removed, still looked the pale and delicate student, despite his rough garments.

"Ahoy there, shipmates," he said, with great gravity, waving the tarpaulin at the group. "You weren't thinking of cruising for your health this evening, were you? Because, if you were, my health isn't as good as it might be, and I think a little salt air would do it good."

"Bravo!" cried George Warren. "You might know Henry Burns would be on hand if there was any excitement going on. Never knew him to fail,— Joe, you'll have to stay at home now and keep mother company. We don't need more than three. Come, Arthur, hurry! We mustn't lose a minute longer."

And while young Joe turned away, almost in tears at the verdict, the other two boys scrambled about, hastily donning reefers, oilskins, and heavy boots. Then they were gone with a rush and a bang of the door, and Mrs. Warren and Joe composed themselves as best they could to await their return.

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And could any of them have imagined then, looking forth through the darkness and the storm, an overturned canoe pounding helplessly upon the beach of that island shore, it surely would not have comforted the watchers nor have given courage to those who went forth to rescue.

Descending the bank to the shore of the cove, the boys quickly launched a rowboat, the tender to the yacht, and, with Henry Burns seated in the stern, tiller-ropes in hand, the brothers, about equal in strength, pulled vigorously across the cove, where the sloop lay at anchor under the lee of the bluff. It was no easy task to cross the cove in that sea; and often Henry Burns turned the boat from its course and headed out toward the entrance, to meet some enormous wave that, had it broken over the side of the boat, would have filled and swamped it.

The yacht *Spray*, sheltered as it was from the brunt of the storm, was tossing about uneasily as the boys climbed aboard and made the tender fast astern. It was a small craft, about twenty-five feet over all, with the hull painted black. It was trim and was able for its size, but, safe to say, not a fisherman in the village would have cared to put out in it this night. Still, the boat had been built on an outer island of the bay for fishing in heavy weather, and was seaworthy.

There were three sets of reefing-points in the mainsail, and, after some discussion, it was decided to reef the sail down to its smallest size. While Henry Burns hoisted the sail slightly, the brothers hastily tied in the reefs, and the halyards were then drawn taut at throat and peak and made fast. The tender was tied to the buoy. There was no use trying to tow it in that sea. Then, with George Warren at the tiller, Arthur and Henry Burns cast off, and the voyage was begun.

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When Mr. Warren purchased the boat for his boys, he had it rigged with especial care for an emergency. The main-sheet was rigged to run through a double set of pulleys, so that the mainsail could be hauled with comparative ease in a heavy gale. The sail he had cut down smaller than the boat had been carrying, so there was less danger of her capsizing. That very precaution was, however, to prove a source of trouble on this particular night.

Arthur Warren and Henry Burns now came aft, the iron centreboard was dropped, and the yacht was almost instantly under headway, standing out by the bluff and heading almost directly across the cove. Arthur Warren held the main-sheet, while Henry Burns seated himself, with

feet braced against the centreboard-box, ready for any emergency.

For a moment they were in comparatively smooth water, and then, as they emerged from the lee of the headland, it seemed as though they had been suddenly transported into another sea. The wind that struck them careened the boat over violently, as they were as yet under but little headway. Easing the yacht for a moment with the sheet, they righted somewhat, but the prospect was not pleasing. The *Spray* did not head into the wind well, and they soon found they could not make even a straight course across the harbour, with the slant of wind they had.

"We may make something on the next tack," said George, "but it doesn't look very encouraging."

"Supposing you see how she comes about before we run in near shore," suggested Arthur, after some minutes.

In answer, George put the tiller hard down, after giving the little boat a good headway. The yacht went sluggishly in stays, hung almost in the eye of the wind for a moment, and then, failing to make headway against the heavy seas, fell off once more and would not come about.

"There's only one thing we can do, boys," said George. "We must run in under the shelter of the wharf and shake out that last reef. The sail is too small to reef down so close. I'm sure she will beat under a double reef. It's the only thing left to do."

It was the work of but a few minutes to carry out this plan. The third reef was shaken out and the sail hoisted. Once more the yacht emerged from shelter. The change for the better in its working was at once apparent. It pointed higher into the wind, though careening over so that the water came unpleasantly near the top of the high wash-boards. But the yacht would stand this. The question now to be tested was, would she act and come about under the still small sail she was carrying against the force of such a sea.

"Now, then," said George, as they neared the bluff again, "we will try her once more. If she fails now we are beaten. We cannot carry more sail. That's sure."

He put the tiller down as he spoke, and the *Spray*, responding bravely, headed into the seas. They strove angrily to overwhelm the little craft, and dashed furiously against her bows, while the wind worried the flapping sails as though it would tear them from boom and mast; but the *Spray* held on and came about nobly, and they were away again on the other tack, standing across the harbour.

It seemed an hour before they had beaten out where they dared to stand past the bluff and head alongshore. They had left all shelter hopelessly behind; on one side of them a wilderness of foaming waves rushed upon them from the darkness; on the other side lay the lee shore, high and rock-bound for the most part, but now and then broken by small stretches of beach. Against the former, the seas broke with heavy crashings; upon the other, with an ominous booming.

But they headed off the wind a trifle, eased the sheet, made by the point, and stood along the shore as near as they dared to run. It was well for them that the little yacht was a good sea boat. Again and again, as some wave, lifting its white crest above the others, threatened to overwhelm them, the yacht was headed out to sea, and then the wave, lifting the boat high on its crest and rolling rapidly from beneath it till half the length of the yacht seemed poised in air, left it to fall heavily upon the next oncoming wave, or, worse still, to plunge into a watery gulf, there to be half-buried by the next big sea.

But the yacht lived through it all and kept bravely on its course. Henry Burns's arms ached with bailing out the cockpit, where the seas broke in over the quarter, or came aboard in clouds of spray as they headed into the wind.

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They dared not sail near the shore, and could see it but indistinctly, save when some larger wave broke upon the beach and carved out a white line of foam, which vanished as quickly as it appeared. So against the cliffs that they passed they could see a sudden blur of white as a big wave hurled itself to destruction. Beyond this all was blur and indistinct.

They were now within half a mile of the head of the island, and, looking ahead into the darkness, which, with the rain, had greatly increased within the last hour, like the beginning of a fog, they realized how useless was the search they had begun. They could see but the merest distance in any direction. The storm was steadily increasing, and already a new condition confronted them. The wind was shifting to the southeast, from east, so that their return was rendered impossible. It was worse than folly to think of beating back in such a head sea. The wind on their quarter was driving them along furiously. It was madness to dream of keeping on past the head of the island.

"We can't make Bryant's Cove any too soon to suit me," said George. "The *Spray* has got more wind now than she knows what to do with."

The little boat was, indeed, burying her bows under at every plunge, and trembled in all her timbers at the fearful strain. It was plain that she had reached the limit of her seaworthiness. Bryant's Cove was a short distance around the head of the island. Once there, they would be sheltered from the storm.

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The boys had ceased to speak of a possible rescue of their friends. It was a question of their own salvation now, and the instinct of self-preservation asserted itself. Henry Burns peered eagerly ahead, but looked only for the point of land behind which lay their safety. Suddenly he turned and uttered a shrill cry of fright, such as no one had ever heard from him before.

"Luff her, George! Luff quick—quick, for your life!" he cried, and, springing for the tiller, threw his weight against it ere the startled helmsman could find strength to act.

The yacht, with sails slatting, came into the wind amid a cloud of spray. The boom, striking a wave, had nearly snapped in two. But it was not an instant too soon.

A black object that looked enormous rose suddenly out of the sea in front of the *Spray*. The next wave lifted it high in the air, and hurled it down upon them. It was a ship's yawl-boat, of immense size, fully as large as the yacht itself. Down the watery declivity it shot, swift and straight, like some sea-monster in pursuit of its quarry.

But the little yacht had answered her helm well. There was a crash and a splintering of wood, and the yawl drifted rapidly past and was lost in the darkness. The yacht *Spray*, her bowsprit and fore-rigging torn away, once more fell off the wind and was driven on by the storm. It was an escape so narrow that a moment more and they had been dashed to pieces.

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Henry Burns was the first to regain his courage.

"It's better the bowsprit than the rudder," he said, coolly. And his courage gave them strength. A few minutes later they had passed the head of the island and gained the lee of the land, and in fifteen minutes more they had cast anchor in Bryant's Cove.

"I am willing to do whatever you boys think is best," said George Warren, as they lowered and furled the sail and made the yacht snug for the night. "But I think it's of no use for us to make any search for the boys along this shore. If they capsized in the bay to-night, neither they nor their canoe would come ashore here. The canoe would be blown across the bay; and they— Well, we're bound to believe that they didn't start, or, if they did, that they put back."

"I don't see but what we have done all we can to-night," responded his brother; "and, as we have got five miles of muddy road to travel, the sooner we start the better. We could stay in the boat to-night, but we must get back on mother's account. Depend upon it, she has worried every single minute we have been gone, and I don't blame her, either. Now it's all over, I don't mind saying I think we were fools to come out. But we meant well, so perhaps the less said the better. We'll have to leave the *Spray* to herself till the storm goes down. Nobody will harm her."

"I don't mind staying here to-night and looking after her," said Henry Burns. "To be sure, old Witham doesn't know I have left the hotel, but I tumbled my bed up before I came away, and he will only think I got up early in the morning, if he wonders where I am."

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"No, no, old fellow. We won't let you stay. We won't hear of it," said both brothers. "The sooner we all get home and get dry clothes on, the better. There's no need of any of us staying. The *Spray* won't sail out of the cove of herself, and every one on the island knows her."

So, as they had left the tender behind, they removed their clothing, tied it into bundles, slung them around their necks, and, slipping overboard, swam to shore.

"If I ever was more glad to get on land alive than I am at present," said Henry Burns, his teeth chattering with the cold, as he hastily scrambled into his clothes, "I don't happen to remember it just at this instant. I wonder if my aunt would send me down here again for my health if she

could see me now."

There was something so ludicrous in the idea that the boys could not help bursting into roars of laughter,—though they felt little enough like merriment.

"The more I think of it," said Henry Burns, "the more I believe the boys are snug ashore at Millville, and that they haven't been within ten miles of Grand Island to-night."

"I think you are right, Henry," responded Arthur.

"It must be so," said George.

And yet not one of them dared to believe absolutely that what he said was true. [30]

They started off across lots now, walking as rapidly as their wet and heavy clothing would allow, to strike the road which led to the harbour. Coming at length into this road, they had walked but a short distance, and were at the top of a hill at a turn of the road where it left the shore, when Henry Burns, pointing down along the shore, said:

"We ought to remember that part of the bay as long as we live, for we shall never be much nearer to death than we were right there."

"Sure enough," responded Arthur, "it was just about off there that the big yawl smashed our bowsprit off."

"The yawl must have been driven ashore by this time," said George. "Wait a minute and I will take a look." And he disappeared over the bank and was lost in the bushes. The two boys seated themselves by the side of the road to await his return, but started up with a horror in their hearts as a shrill cry came up to them from the shore. There was that in the cry that told them that George Warren had found other than the ship's long-boat. They scarcely dared to think what. Then they, too, dashed down the slope to the shore.

When they reached his side, George Warren could scarcely speak from emotion.

"Look! Look!" he cried, in a trembling, choking voice, and pointed out upon the beach where the tide had gone down.

There were two strange objects there that the sea had buffeted in its wild play that night, and then, as though grown tired of them, had cast upon the shore, among the rocks and seaweed. [31]

One was the long-boat, no longer an object of danger, for the sea had hurled it against a rock and stove its side in. The other was a canoe. The sea had overturned it and tossed it upon the shore. Two of its thwarts were smashed where it had been dropped down and pinioned upon a rock—and the rock held it fast.

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CHAPTER III. A SURPRISE

With hearts beating quick and hard, they lifted the canoe from the rock, fearful of what they might find beneath it; but there was nothing there. Then they searched along the beach in the darkness as best they could, peering anxiously into clumps of seaweed, and standing now and again fixed with horror as some dim object, cast up by the sea, assumed in shadowy outline the semblance of a human form. The shore was heaped here and there with piles of driftwood and ends of logs that had come down through countless tides and currents from the lumber-mills miles up the river, and this stuff had lodged among the ledges and boulders at various points along the beach. Here and there among these they hunted, groping amid the seaweed, cold and chill to the touch, and suggesting to their minds, already alert with dread, the most gruesome of discoveries which they feared to make.

That the boys had crossed the bay in the frail craft which they had just found there seemed to be no possible doubt. Furthermore, they were now led to believe that Tom and Bob, having once reached a point where they could have found shelter, had chosen to keep on past the head of the island in an effort to make the harbour of Southport. They must at least, as the wind had blown, have reached a point opposite where the boys had found the canoe, and have, perhaps, paddled some distance beyond.

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But it was clearly useless to continue the search further in the darkness and storm. They lifted the canoe and carried it up from the beach, and hid it in the bushes upon the bank. Then they went slowly back to the road.

"I tell you what we can do," said Arthur Warren. "I hate to go back to the cottage without making one more search. Let's get a lantern and come back. We shall not have to go far for one,—and we shall have done all we can, then, though it is a bad night to see anything."

The rain was, indeed, pouring in torrents and driving in sheets against their faces.

"Yes, we must do that much," said George. "And then—then we can come back in the morning—" His voice choked, and he could not say more. They went on down the muddy road in silence.

Shortly below the hill, upon the road, was a big farmhouse, arriving at which they turned into the yard. The house was in darkness, save one dim light in a chamber; but they pounded at the door with the heavy brass knocker till they heard the shuffling of feet in the entry, and a voice inquired roughly what was wanted. They answered, and the door was opened cautiously a few inches, where it was held fast by a heavy chain. An old man's face peered out at them. The sight of the boys was evidently reassuring, for, in a moment more, the man threw open the door and invited them to walk in.

"There be rough sailors come by some nights," he said, in a manner apologizing for his suspicion. "I'm here alone, and"—he lowered his voice to a husky whisper—"they do say that I have a bit of money hid away in the old house. But it's a lie. It's a lie. It's the sea and the garden I live on. There's not a bit of money in the old house. But what brings you out in such a

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storm? You haven't lost your way, have you?"

They told their story, while the old man sat in a chair, shaking his head dubiously. When they told him of the finding of the canoe, and their certainty that the boys had crossed in it, he declared that it could never have lived to get to the island.

"It must have come from down below," he said. "It could never have been paddled across the bay against this sea. Two boys, d'ye say, paddled it? No. No, my lads, never—upon my life, never. Two stout men in a dory, and used to these waters, might have done it; but two lads in a cockle-shell like that would never have reached the Head, let alone getting beyond it."

He seemed to regard them almost with suspicion, when they told him of how they had sailed up along shore in search of their comrades, and was perhaps inclined to believe their whole story as some kind of a hoax. Certain it was he gave them little comfort, except to say he would look alongshore in the morning. If any one had drowned offshore in the evening, they might not come ashore till the next day, he said.

But he got a battered lantern for them and handed it over with a trembling hand, cautioning them to be careful of it, and to leave it by the door on their way back. They heard him bolt the heavy door behind them as they turned out of the yard into the road. A clock in the kitchen had struck the hour of ten as they left the house.

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"Isn't it very probable, after all," said George, as they walked along, "that the man may be right, and that this canoe we have found is one that has been lost off some steamer?"

"It seems to me perhaps as probable," answered Henry Burns, "as that the boys should have attempted to keep on in the storm, having once reached a place of safety."

"I wish I could think so," said Arthur. "But I can't help fearing the worst,—and if the boys are lost," he exclaimed bitterly, "I've seen all I want to of this island for one summer. I'd never enjoy another day here."

"I won't believe it's their canoe until I have to," said George. "They are not such reckless chaps as we have been making them out."

And he tried to say this bravely, as though he really meant it.

They tramped along the rest of the way to the shore in silence, for none of them dared to admit to another that which he could not but believe.

By the lantern's dim and flickering light they searched the beach again for a half-mile along in the vicinity of where the canoe had come ashore. But nothing rewarded their hunt.

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"The old man must be right," said George Warren. "The canoe must have come ashore from some steamer. Let's go home, anyway. We've done all we can."

Heart-sick and weary, they began the tramp back to the cottage. At about a mile from the old farmhouse, where they left the lantern, they turned off from the road and made a cut across

fields, till they came at length to the shore of the cove opposite the Warren cottage. They could see across the water the gleam of a large lantern which young Joe had hung on the piazza for them; but the boat they had expected to find drawn up on shore was gone.

"Old Slade must be over in town," said Henry Burns; "and he won't be back to-night, probably. So it's either walk two miles more around the cove or swim out to the tender. We're all of us tired out. Shall we draw lots to see who swims?"

"I'll go, myself," volunteered George. "I'd rather swim that short distance than do any more walking. I'm about done up, but I am good for that much." And he threw off his clothing once more, and swam pluckily out to the tender and brought it ashore. They pulled across the cove to the shore back of the cottage, and, springing out, carried the boat high up on land.

They were at the cottage then in a twinkling; but, even before they had reached the door, dear Mrs. Warren, who had heard their steps upon the walk, was outside in the rain, hugging her boys who had braved the storm and who had come back safe. She was altogether too much overcome at the sight of them, it seemed, to inquire if they had found those in search of whom they had set out.

And then the dear little woman, having embraced and kissed them as though they had been shipwrecked mariners, long given up for lost,—not forgetting Henry Burns, who wasn't used to it, but who took it calmly all the same, as he did everything else,—hurried them into the kitchen, where young Joe had the big cook-stove all of a red heat, and where dry clothing for the three from the extensive Warren wardrobe was warming by the fire.

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A comical welcome they got from young Joe, who had been just as much worried as Mrs. Warren, but who hadn't admitted it to his mother for a moment, and had scornfully denied the existence of danger, and yet who was every bit as relieved as she to see the boys safe. He tried not to appear as though a great weight had been removed from his mind by their return, but made altogether a most commendable failure.

The big, roomy, old-fashioned kitchen—for the Warren cottage had originally been a rambling old farmhouse, which they had remodelled and modernized—had never seemed so cosy before. And the fire had never seemed more cheery than it did now. And when they had scrambled into dry, warm clothing, and Mrs. Warren had taken the teakettle from the hob, and poured them each a steaming cup of tea, to "draw out the chill," they forgot for the moment what they had been through and their sad discovery.

In fact, it seemed as though Mrs. Warren and young Joe were strangely indifferent to what had sent them forth, and were easily satisfied with the opinions expressed by the boys, who had agreed not to mention the finding of the canoe until something more definite was learned, that Tom and Bob had in all probability not left the river.

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So easily satisfied, indeed, and so little affected by the fruitless errand they had been on, that all

at once Henry Burns, who had been eying Mrs. Warren sharply for some moments, suddenly rose up from where he was sitting, and rushed out of the kitchen, through the dining-room, into the front part of the house. Wondering what had come over him, the others followed.

What they saw was a tableau, with Henry Burns as exhibitor. He had drawn aside the heavy portière with one hand, and stood pointing into the room with the other.

There, seated before the fireplace, were two boys so much like Tom and Bob, whom they had given up for lost, that their own mothers, had they been there, would have wept for joy at the sight of them. And then, what with the Warren boys pounding them and hugging them, like young bears, to make sure they were flesh and blood, and not the ghosts of Tom and Bob, and with the cheers that fairly made the old rafters ring, and the happiness of Mrs. Warren, who was always willing to adopt every boy from far and near who was a friend of one of her boys,—what with all this, there was altogether a scene that would have done any one's heart good, and might have shamed the storm outside, if it had been any other kind of a storm than a pitiless southeaster.

Then, though the hour was getting late, they all sat about the big fireplace, and Tom narrated the story of the shipwreck.

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But, just as he began, young Joe said, with mock gravity:

"We haven't introduced Henry Burns to the boys yet. Henry, this is Tom Harris, and this is Bob White."

"I don't think we need an introduction to one who has risked his life for us," said Tom Harris, heartily, as he and Bob sprang up to shake hands with Henry Burns. But Henry Burns, carrying out the joke, bowed very formally, and politely said he was extremely happy to make their acquaintance. At which Tom and Bob, unfamiliar with the ways of Henry Burns, stared in astonishment, which sent the Warren boys into roars of laughter.

The boys thus introduced to Henry Burns were handsome young fellows, evidently about the same age,—in fact, each lacked but a few months of fifteen,—thick-set and strongly built. The sons of well-to-do parents, and neighbours, they had been inseparable companions ever since they could remember. Tom Harris's father was the owner of extensive tracts in the Maine woods, from which lumber was cut yearly and rafted down the streams to his lumber-mills. In company with him on several surveying and exploring expeditions, the boys had hunted and fished together, and had paddled for weeks along the streams and on the lakes of the great Maine wilderness.

They had hunted and fished in the Parmachenee and the Rangeley Lake region, and knew a great deal more of real camp life than most boys of double their age. Further than this, they were schoolmates, and were so equally matched in athletic sports, in which they both excelled, that neither had ever been able to gain a decided victory over the other. Tom was of rather light

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complexion, while Bob was dark, with curly, black hair.

It was through their friendship with the Warren boys, who lived not far from them, in the same town, that they had decided to spend the summer camping on Grand Island.

As they all gathered around the cheerful blaze of the fire, Tom told the story of the day's adventures.

With so much of their camp kit as they needed for cooking along the river, they had started from the town of Benton at about four o'clock that morning, just as the tide began to ebb. Hardened as they were to the use of the paddle, by the time the tide had ceased to ebb and slack water ensued, they had left the city miles behind and were well down the river.

Then the flood tide began to set strong against them, and a wind arose that furrowed the river with waves that were not big enough to be noticeable to larger craft, but which seriously impeded the progress of the frail canoe. They kept steadily on, but made slow headway.

At Millville, a few miles above the mouth of the river, where it broadened out into the bay, they had met the steamer, and had hastily scrawled the note which Captain Chase had brought to the Warren boys.

Sure enough, Captain Chase had warned them of the impending storm, and, furthermore, had offered to transport them and their canoe across the bay; but they had declined his offer, wishing to paddle the entire distance to the island. They had set their hearts on making the trip of forty miles in one day; and partly for this reason, and partly because Captain Chase had looked askance at their canoe, and had assured them that it was not a fit craft for bay work in any weather, let alone in a heavy sea, they had set out, toward the latter part of the afternoon, to cross the fifteen miles of bay which lay between them and Grand Island.

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The storm which had threatened gradually closed in around them, but they held on stubbornly, until, when too far across the bay to put back, it rapidly gathered strength, and soon turned what had been a comparatively safe pathway across the sea into a wilderness of waves, that at one moment rose high above the bow of the canoe, dashing them with spray as the sharp canoe cleaved them, and the next dropped down beneath them, opening a watery trench, into which they plunged.

They had seen storms like this, that came quick and sharp upon the lakes, heaving up a sea almost in a moment, with squalls that swept down from the hills. They had been safely through them before; but at those times it had been a short, sharp battle for a half-hour at most, before they could reach a friendly shore. But here it was different. Here were miles of intervening water between them and the nearest land. This was no lake, to be quickly within the shelter of some protecting point of land.

But they had never for a moment lost courage nor despaired of coming through all right. They struggled pluckily on, and might have gotten

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safely to land without mishap, if they had been familiar with the shore of the island. To a stranger, the shore about the head of the island presented a sheer front of forbidding cliffs, rising abruptly from the water, and against which, in a storm, the sea dashed furiously.

There was apparently no place at which a boat could be landed; and yet, hidden behind the very barrier of ledge that sheltered it, lay Bryant's Cove, as quiet and sequestered a pool as any fugitive craft could wish to find. Had the boys known of its existence, they would have landed there, and have been at the Warren cottage before the *Spray* had left the harbour.

As it was, there seemed to them to be no alternative but to keep on to a point about half a mile farther along the shore, where they hoped to be able to make a landing upon the beach.

They had accomplished the distance, and were fast nearing a place where they could land in safety, when a most unexpected and disastrous accident happened. Suddenly, and without the slightest warning of its weakness, the paddle which Bob was using snapped in two in his hands. At the same moment a wave hit the canoe, and, with nothing with which to keep his balance, Bob was thrown bodily from the canoe into the sea, upsetting the canoe and spilling Tom out at the same time.

The boys were able to grasp the canoe and cling on for a few minutes. They were both good swimmers, and often, in smooth water, had practised swimming, with the canoe upset, and were able to accomplish the feat of righting it, bailing it with a dipper, which they always carried attached to one of the thwarts by a cord, and then climbing aboard over the ends. But it was useless to attempt such a thing in this boisterous sea.

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Indeed, it was more than they could do, even, to cling to the overturned craft, for soon an enormous wave struck it a blow broadside and tore it from their grasp. Then ensued a fight for life that seemed almost hopeless. They were near to shore, but the sea seemed to delight in mocking them; tossing them in at one moment, so that they could grasp at seaweed that lay above the ledges, and then clutching at them and drawing them relentlessly back.

It was then that their athletic training stood them in good stead. Less hardy constitutions and weaker muscles than theirs would have quickly tired under the strain. Refraining from useless struggles to gain the shore, they waited their opportunity, and strove merely for the moment to keep themselves afloat. In this manner they were, several times, almost cast up on shore.

All at once Tom Harris felt a sharp pain in his right hand. Then he realized, with a thrill of hope, that he had struck it upon a rock. It was, indeed, a narrow reef that made out some distance from shore. They had narrowly escaped being dashed upon it head-foremost. Tom waited and gathered his strength as the next wave hurled him on its crest in the direction of the ledge. Then, as the wave bore him with great force against it, he broke the force of the shock with his hands, was thrown roughly up against it, and managed to cling fast, with his fingers in

a niche of the rock, as the wave, receding, strove to drag him back again.

Then, holding on with one hand, he managed somehow to grasp at Bob as he was drifting by, and hold him fast and draw him in. Clinging to the ledge as each succeeding wave broke over them, they waited till they had regained their strength and recovered their wind, and then slowly worked their way along the ledge to shore, and at length were safe, out of the sea's fury.

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Then they had rested awhile, before setting out on foot. Their canoe they could see at some distance out from shore, tossing about at the mercy of the waves. It must of necessity come ashore in due time, but it might not be for an hour, and they resolved not to wait for it, but to push on to their destination, returning on the morrow to look for it. They followed the shore for about a mile down the island, till they met a fisherman, who told them how to get to the Warren cottage by the same route the Warren boys and Henry Burns had taken a few hours later.

They had crossed the cove in old Slade's boat, and, expecting to astonish the Warren boys by their appearance, in the midst of the storm, had found, to their dismay, that those whom they had expected to find safe at home were imperilling their lives for them out in the bay.

"Well, I must be up and moving," said Henry Burns, when Tom had concluded his narrative. "I don't mind saying I'm a bit tired with this night's work—and I guess you are, by the looks. I can sleep, too, now that I know that you are not down among the mermaids at the bottom of Samoset Bay."

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"Why don't you stay here with the boys to-night, Henry?" said Mrs. Warren. "You cannot get into the hotel at this hour of the night, without waking everybody up. Colonel Witham closes up early, you know."

"No one but Henry Burns can, mother," said Joe Warren. "Henry has a private staircase of his own."

"It's a lightning-rod staircase, Mrs. Warren," explained Henry Burns. "I use it sometimes after ten o'clock, for that is my bedtime, you know. Mrs. Carlin—good soul—sends me off to bed regularly at that hour, no matter what is going on; and so I have to make use of it occasionally."

Mrs. Warren shook her head doubtfully.

"You shouldn't do it, Henry," she said. "Although I know it is hard for a strong, healthy boy to go off to bed every night at ten o'clock. Well, that comes of being too strict, I suppose,—but do look out and don't break your neck. It's a bad night to be climbing around."

"Don't worry about Henry Burns, mother," said Arthur. "He wouldn't do it, if he wasn't forced to it,—and he knows how to take care of himself, if anybody does."

"Well, good night," said Henry Burns. "And don't forget, I hold my reception to-morrow night; and I extend to Tom and Bob a special invitation to

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be present." And, with a knowing glance at George Warren, Henry Burns took his departure.

As the boys went off to bed that night, George Warren explained to them that on the next night, the occasion being an entertainment in place of the regular Wednesday night hop at the hotel, he and Henry Burns had planned a joke on Colonel Witham, in which they were all to take part, and, with this prospect in view, they dropped asleep.

In the meantime Henry Burns, arriving at the hotel, and having learned by previous experience that a lock on a rear door of the old part of the hotel, which was not connected with the new by any door, could be manipulated with the aid of a thin blade of a jack-knife, crept up to the garret by way of a rickety pair of back stairs, and from thence emerged upon the roof through a scuttle. Then, carefully making his way along the ridge-pole to where the new part joined the old, he climbed a short distance up a lightning-rod, to the roof of the new part.

This was a large roof, nearly flat. He walked across, about midway of the building, to where another rod, fastened at the top to a chimney, came up. Clinging to this, Henry Burns disappeared over the edge of the roof, found a resting-place for his foot on a projection which was directly over his own window, and then lowered himself, like an acrobat, down the rod to a veranda. Raising the window directly beside the rod, he slipped inside, closed it softly, and in a few minutes more was abed and sound asleep.

While all Southport slept, the storm spent its force, and toward morning gradually subsided. In the place of the beating rain there stole up through the islands, in the early morning hours, great detached banks of fog,—themselves like strange, white islands,—which shut out the bay from the shore. They lay heavy over the water, and, as the boisterous seas gradually gave way to the long, smooth waves that rolled in without breaking, one might have fancied that the fog, itself, had a depressing and tranquillizing influence upon the sea.

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Yet old fishermen would have ventured out then, without fear, for there were signs, that might be read by the weather-wise, that a light west wind was soon to be stirring that would scatter the fog at its first advance, and sweep it back out to sea.

But, brief as was the visitation of the fog, it sufficed to hide all things from sight. And if a boat, in which one boy rowed vigorously, had put forth from the camp of Jack Harvey, down in the woods, and had come up along the shore to the wharf, and the box, which was a part of the belongings of Tom Harris and Bob White, had been lowered from the wharf into the boat and conveyed back to the camp and hidden away there,—if all this had happened, it is safe to say that no one would have seen what was done, nor would any one have been the wiser.

Perhaps some such a thing might, indeed, have occurred, for when Tom and Bob, Henry Burns, and the Warren boys met at the wharf the next fore-noon, they found the box gone. They hunted everywhere, ransacked the storehouse from one end to the other, but it was nowhere to be found.

"And to think that it's all my fault," groaned young Joe, as they stood at the edge of the wharf, after the unsuccessful search. "I might have known John Briggs would forget to lock it up! It was left in the open shed there, boys, protected from the rain, and he promised to look out for it; but he must have forgotten. I spoke to him about it the last thing last night, on our way home to the cottage."

"Was it very valuable?" asked Henry Burns.

"Ask Tom what he thinks," laughed Bob, while Tom tried to look unconscious, but blushed furiously.

"There's a pretty sister of mine," continued Bob, "that thinks so much of us that she spent a week cooking up a lot of things for us to start our camping with. There's a box full of the best stuff to eat you ever tasted, that somebody will gobble up, I suppose, without once thinking or caring about the one that made them. Pretty tough, isn't it, Tom?"

Tom turned redder still, and felt of his biceps, as though he was speculating what he would do to a certain person, if that person could only be discovered and come up with.

"I tell you what it is, boys," said George Warren; "things have had a strange way of disappearing here this summer, as they never did before; and, what's more, if Jack Harvey and his crew haven't stolen them, they have at least got the credit for taking the most of it,—and you may depend upon it, that box is down there in the woods, somewhere about that camp."

"Then what's to hinder our raiding the camp and getting it?" Tom broke in, angrily. "Bob and I, with two of you, could make a good fight against all of them."

"No doubt of that, Tom," answered George Warren; "but there are two things to be considered. First, we want to get the box back; and, second, we are not absolutely certain that they have it. If they have it, you may be certain that it is carefully hidden away, and we shouldn't recover it by making an attack on them. We must find out where it is hidden first, and then, if we cannot get it away otherwise, we will fight for it."

"So it seems that we have two scores to settle now," said Henry Burns, dryly. "We owe a debt now to Jack Harvey and his crew, and there's a long-standing account with Colonel Witham, part of which we must pay to-night. Be on hand early. The latch-string will be out at number twenty-one." So saying, Henry Burns left them.

Late that afternoon Tom and Bob, looking from the door of their tent across the cove, saw a sight that was at once familiar and strange. It was a canoe, in which were two occupants, and it was being paddled toward their camp. The long seas, smooth though they were, still rolled in heavily, and the light canoe tossed about on their crests like a mere toy. Still, it did not take long for them to discover that the canoe was their own. They had supposed it lost, though they had intended to set out in search of it on the following morning.

In the bow and stern, propelling the craft with paddles roughly improvised from broken oars, were George and Arthur Warren.

"Tom, old fellow," said Bob, as the canoe came dancing toward them, "we've lost the box, but we've got the luck with us, after all. Not only are we proof against drowning, but we own a canoe that refuses to be wrecked."

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And then the bow of the canoe grated on the sandy shore.

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CHAPTER IV.

A NIGHT WITH HENRY BURNS

Henry Burns, having neither father nor mother living, had been taken in charge several years before this by an elderly maiden aunt, whose home was in the city of Medford, Massachusetts. She was fairly well-to-do, and, as there had been a moderate inheritance left in trust for the boy by his parents, they were in comfortable circumstances.

But Henry Burns was made, unfortunately, to realize that this does not necessarily mean a home, with the happiness that the word implies. Good Miss Matilda Burns, a sister of Henry's late father, never having known the care of a family of her own, had devoted her life to the interests of a half a score of missions and ladies' societies of different kinds, until at length she had become so wrapped up in these that there was really no room in her life left for the personality of a boy to enter.

Henry Burns was a problem which she failed utterly to solve. Perhaps she might have succeeded, if she had seen fit to devote less of her time to her various societies, and more to the boy. But she deemed the former of far more importance, and felt her duty for the day well performed, in the matter of his upbringing, if she kept him out of mischief, saw that he went off to school at the proper hour, and that he did not fall ill.

To achieve two of these ends the most conveniently to her, Miss Matilda exercised a restraint over Henry Burns which was entirely unnecessary and altogether too severe. Henry Burns was naturally of a studious turn of mind, and cared more for a quiet evening with a book than he did for playing pranks about the neighbourhood at night. At the same time, he had a healthy fondness for sports, and excelled in them.

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He was captain of his ball team, until Miss Matilda found it out and ordered him to stop playing the game. She considered it too rough for boys, having had no experience with boys of her own. And so on, with swimming and several other of his healthful sports. They were altogether too risky for Miss Matilda's piece of mind. It came about that Henry Burns, in order to take part with his companions in their out-of-door sports, found it necessary to play "hookey" and indulge in them without her knowing it. He

won a medal in a swimming-match, but never dared to show it to Miss Matilda.

Withal a healthy and athletic youth, he had a pale complexion, which deceived Miss Matilda into the impression that he was sickly. He was slight of build, too, which confirmed in her that impression. When once her mind was made up, there was no convincing Miss Matilda. The family doctor, called in by her for an examination, found nothing the matter with him; but that did not avail to alter her opinion. The boy was delicate, she said, and must not be allowed to overdo.

Accordingly, she made life miserable for Henry Burns. She kept a watchful eye over him, so far as her other duties would admit of, sent him off to bed at nine o'clock, tried to dose him with home remedies, which Henry Burns found it availed him best to carry submissively to his room and then pitch out of the window, and, in short, so worried over, meddled with, and nagged at Henry Burns, that, if he had been other than exactly what he was, she would have succeeded in utterly spoiling him, or have made him run away in sheer despair.

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Henry Burns never got excited about things. He had a coolness that defied annoyances and disappointments, and a calm persistence that set him to studying the best way out of a difficulty, instead of flying into a passion over it. He had, in fact, without fully appreciating it, the qualities of success.

If, as was true, he was a problem to Miss Matilda, which she did not succeed in solving, it was not so in the case of his dealings with her. He made a study of her and of the situation in which he found himself, and proceeded deliberately to take advantage of what he discovered. He knew all her weaknesses and little vanities to a degree that would have amazed her, and cleverly used them to his advantage, in whatever he wanted to do. Fortunately for her, he had no inclination to bad habits, and, if he succeeded in outwitting her, the worst use he made of it was to indulge in some harmless joke, for he had, underlying his quiet demeanour, an unusual fondness for mischief.

What to do with Henry Burns summers had been a puzzle for some time to Miss Matilda. She was accustomed, through these months, to visit an encampment, or summer home, composed of several ladies' societies, and the presence of a boy was a decided inconvenience. When, one day, she learned that an old friend, one Mrs. Carlin, a fussy old soul after her own heart, was engaged as housekeeper at the Hotel Bayview, at Southport, on Grand Island, in Samoset Bay, she conceived the idea of sending Henry Burns there in charge of Mrs. Carlin.

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So it came about that Henry Burns was duly despatched to Maine for the summer, as a guest of Colonel Witham. He had a room on the second floor, next to that occupied by the colonel, who was supposed also to exercise a guardianship over him. As Colonel Witham's disposition was such that he disliked nearly everybody, with the exception of Squire Brackett, and as he had a particular aversion to boys of all ages and sizes, he did not take pains to make life agreeable to

Henry Burns. He was suspicious of him, as he was of all boys.

Boys, according to Colonel Witham's view of life, were born for the purpose, or, at least, with the sole mission in life, of annoying older people. Accordingly, the worthy colonel lost no opportunity of thwarting them and opposing them,—“showing them where they belonged,” he called it.

But this disagreeable ambition on the part of the colonel was not, unfortunately, confined to his attitude toward boys. He exercised it toward every one with whom he came in contact. Despite the fact that he had a three years' lease of the hotel, he took absolutely no pains to make himself agreeable to any of his guests. He looked upon them secretly as his natural enemies, men and women and children whom he hoped to get as much out of as was possible, and to give as little as he could in return.

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He was noted for his meanness and for his surly disposition toward all. Then why did he come there to keep a hotel? Because he had discovered that guests would come, whether they were treated well or not. The place had too many attractions of boating, swimming, sailing, and excellent fishing, winding wood-roads, and a thousand and one natural beauties, to be denied. Guests left in the fall, vowing they would not put up with the colonel's niggardliness and petty impositions another year; but the following season found them registered there again, with the same cordial antipathy existing as before between them and their landlord.

In person, Colonel Witham was decidedly corpulent, with a fiery red face, which turned purple when he became angry—which was upon the slightest occasion.

“Here's another boy come to annoy me with his noise and tomfoolery,” was the colonel's inward comment, when Mrs. Carlin, the housekeeper, informed him that Henry Burns was coming, and was to be under her charge.

So the colonel gave him the room next to his, where he could keep an eye on him, and see that he was in his room every night not later than ten o'clock, for that was the hour Mrs. Carlin had set for that young gentleman's bedtime.

Henry Burns, having in due time made the acquaintance of the Warren boys, as well as a few other youths of his age, had no idea of ending up his evenings' entertainments at ten o'clock each and every night; so he set about to discover some means of evading the espionage of the colonel and Mrs. Carlin. It did not take him more than one evening of experimenting to find that, by stepping out on to the veranda that ran past his own and Colonel Witham's windows, he could gain the ascent to the roof by a clever bit of acrobatics up a lightning-rod. Once there, he found he could reach the ground by way of the old part of the hotel, in the manner before described. It is only fair to Henry Burns to state that he did not take undue advantage of this discovery, but kept on the whole as good hours as most boys of his age. Still, if there was a clambake, or some other moonlight jollification, at the extreme end of the island, where Henry Burns had made friends among a little fishing

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community, he was now and then to be seen, sometimes as the village clock was proclaiming a much later hour than that prescribed by Mrs. Carlin, spinning along on his bicycle like a ghost awheel. He was generally known and well liked throughout the entire island.

On the night following the arrival of Tom and Bob, the sounds of a violin, a clarinet, and a piano, coming from the big parlour of the Hotel Bayview, told that a dance was in progress. These dances, withal the music was provided by the guests themselves, were extremely irritating to Colonel Witham. They meant late hours for everybody, more lights to be furnished, more guests late to breakfast on the following morning, and, on the whole, an evening of noise and excitement, which interfered more or less with his invariable habit of going to bed at a quarter after ten o'clock every night of his life.

They brought, moreover, a crowd of cottagers to the hotel, who were given anything but a cordial welcome by Colonel Witham. He argued that they spent no money at his hotel, and were, therefore, only in the way, besides adding to the noise.

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The guests at the Bayview were, on the whole, accustomed to the ways of Colonel Witham by experience, and really paid but little attention to him. They went ahead, planned their own dances and card-parties, and left him to make the best of it.

This particular evening's entertainment was rather out of the ordinary, inasmuch as it was given by a Mr. and Mrs. Wellington, of New York, in honour of their daughter's birthday, and, on her account, invitations to the spread, which was to be served after the dancing, were extended to the young people of the hotel. In these invitations Henry Burns had, of course, been included; but Mrs. Carlin and Colonel Witham were obdurate. It was too late an hour for him; his eating of rich salads and ices was not to be thought of; in short, he must decline, or they must decline for him, and that was the end of it.

"Never you mind, Henry," said good-hearted Bridget Carrington, who was Mrs. Carlin's assistant, and with whom Henry Burns had made friendship. "It's not you that'll be going without some of the salad and the ice-cream, not if I know it. Sure, and Mrs. Wellington says you're to have some, too. So just breathe easy, and there'll be a bit for you and a little more, too, a-waitin' just outside the kitchen window about nine o'clock. So go on now and say never a word."

So Henry Burns, with the connivance of Bridget, and by the judicious outlay of a part of his own pocket-money, in the matter of sweet things and other delicacies dear to youthful appetites, had prepared and planned for a small banquet of his own in his room, next to that of Colonel Witham.

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"But how will you manage so that Colonel Witham won't hear us, as he will be right alongside of us?" George Warren, who was a partner in Henry Burns's enterprise, had asked.

"Leave that to me," said Henry Burns.

The evening wore on; the strains of the music sounded merrily along the halls; dancing was in full swing,—everybody seemed to be enjoying the occasion, save Colonel Witham. He had at least conceded to the occasion the courtesy of a black frock coat and an immaculate white tie, but he was plainly ill at ease. He stood in the office, the door of which was open into the parlour, his hands twisting nervously behind his back, while he glanced, with no good humour in his expression, now at the blaze of lights in the parlour, and now at the clock, which, however, even under his impatient gaze, only ticked along in its most provokingly methodical fashion.

The outer door opened and in walked young Joe Warren, recognized by Colonel Witham as one of the plagues of his summer existence.

“Good evening, Colonel Witham,” said young Joe, with studied politeness, and in a tone that ostensibly anticipated an equally cordial response.

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“Good evening!” snapped the colonel.

“Good evening, Colonel Witham,” chimed Arthur Warren, close at his brother’s heels.

The colonel responded gruffly.

“Good evening, colonel,” came an equally cordial greeting from Tom and Bob, and from George Warren, smiling at Colonel Witham, as though he had extended them a hearty invitation to be present.

The colonel snorted impatiently, while the colour in his red face deepened. He did not respond to their salutations.

The boys seated themselves comfortably in the office chairs, and listened to the music.

“You needn’t think you’re going to get Henry Burns to go off with you,” the colonel said, finally. “It’s half-past nine now, and his bedtime is ten o’clock. I wonder where he is.”

Arthur Warren chuckled quietly to himself. He could have told the colonel just where Henry Burns was at that moment; that he was busily engaged in conveying a certain basket of supplies from outside the kitchen window, up a pair of back stairs, to his room on the second floor above.

“You go and keep an eye on Colonel Witham,” he had said to Arthur Warren, “and if he starts to look for me, you go to the door and whistle.”

Which accounted for the sudden appearance of all the Warrens and Tom and Bob in the presence of Colonel Witham.

Fifteen minutes elapsed, and one by one they had all disappeared.

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“Good riddance,” was the colonel’s mental ejaculation when he found them gone.

Great would have been his amazement and indignation could he have but seen them, a few minutes later, seated comfortably on the bed in Henry Burns’s room. It was approaching ten o’clock.

"Where's Bob?" asked Henry Burns, as the boys quietly entered, and he made the door fast behind them.

"Hm!" said Tom, shaking his head regretfully. "It's a sad thing about Bob. It's too bad, but I don't think he will be here, after all."

"Why, what's the matter?" exclaimed Henry Burns, with surprise. "He isn't hurt, is he? I saw him a few hours ago, and he seemed all right."

"No, he isn't hurt,—at least, not the way you mean, Henry. The fact is, he was dancing out on the piazza about half an hour ago with pretty little Miss Wilson,—you know, the one in the cottage down on the shore,—and the last I saw of Bob he was escorting her home. I'm afraid we shall have to give him up for to-night."

"That's too bad," said Henry Burns, solemnly, as though some grievous misfortune had come upon Tom's chum. "And the worst of it is, it may last all summer. Well, Bob will miss a very pleasant surprise-party to Colonel Witham, to say nothing of the spread. That, by the way, is stowed away in those baskets over behind the bed and the wash-stand,—but, first, we've got to clear the coast of Colonel Witham."

"We're yours to command, Henry," replied George Warren. "Tell us what to do."

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"Well, in the first place," said Henry Burns, opening one of his windows that led out on to the veranda, as he spoke, "the rest of you just listen as hard as ever you can at my door, while George and I make a brief visit to the colonel's room. If you hear footsteps, just pound on the wall, so we can get back in time. It's pretty certain he won't be here, though, until we are ready for him. He hasn't missed a night in weeks in getting to bed exactly at a quarter past ten o'clock. He's as regular as a steamboat; always on time. And he's a good deal like a steamboat, too, for he snores like a fog-horn all night long."

Henry Burns and George Warren disappeared through the window and were gone but a moment, when they reappeared, each bearing in one hand a lamp from the colonel's room.

"The colonel is always talking about economy," explained Henry Burns, "so I am not going to let him burn any oil to-night, if I can help it. My lamps happen to need filling,—I've borrowed an extra one for this occasion, and so, you see, I don't intend to waste any of the colonel's oil by throwing it away. I'll see that not a drop of the colonel's oil is wasted."

Henry Burns carefully proceeded to pour the oil from each lamp which he and George Warren had brought from the colonel's room into those in his own room.

"There," he said, "there's enough oil in each of those wicks to burn for several minutes, so the colonel will have a little light to start in on. But we don't want to return his lamps empty, and so I'll just fill them up again. I'm sure the colonel would approve of this economy."

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And Henry Burns carefully refilled the colonel's lamps from his water-pitcher.

"It won't burn very well," he said. "But I'm sure it looks better."

"Now, we'll just take these back again," he continued, addressing George Warren. "And there's another little matter we want to arrange while we are in there. The colonel is always finding fault with the housemaids. Now we'll see if we can't improve on their work."

Again the two boys disappeared, while the remaining three stood watch against the colonel's sudden appearance.

Once in the colonel's room, Henry Burns seized hold of the bedclothes and threw them over the foot-board. Then he snatched out three of the slats from the middle of the bed, replacing them with three slender sticks, which he had brought from his own room.

"Those will do to support the bedclothes and the mattress," he explained, "though I'm really afraid they would break if any one who was kind of heavy should put his weight on them." Then he carefully replaced the mattress and the bedclothes, making up the colonel's bed again in the most approved style, with his friend's assistance.

"You take notice," he said to George Warren, as he opened a closet door in the colonel's room, "that I am careful to destroy nothing of the colonel's property. I might have sawed these slats in two, and left them just hanging so they would support the bedclothes, and would not have been any more trouble; but, being of a highly conscientious nature, I carefully put the colonel's property away, where it can be found later and restored."

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"I'm afraid the colonel wouldn't appreciate your thoughtfulness," said George Warren.

"Alas, I'm afraid not," said Henry Burns. "But that's often the reward of those who try to look after another's interests. However, I'll put these slats in this closet, shut and lock the door, and put the key here on the mantelpiece, just behind this picture. It would be just as easy to hide the key, but I don't think that would be right, do you?"

"Certainly not," laughed George Warren.

"There," said Henry Burns, taking a final survey of everything. "We've done all we can, I'm sure, to provide for the colonel's comfort. If he chooses to find fault with it, it will surely be from force of habit." They took their departure by way of the colonel's window, closing it after them, and quickly rejoined their companions in the next room.

"I deeply regret," said Henry Burns to his guests, "that this banquet cannot begin at once. But we should surely be interrupted by the colonel, and, on the whole, I think it is best to wait until the colonel has taken his departure for the night from that room,—which I feel sure he will do, when the situation dawns fully upon him.

"It also pains me," he added, "to be obliged to invite you all to make yourselves uncomfortable in that closet for a short time. At least, you will hear all that is going on in the colonel's room,

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for the partition is thin between that and his room. So you will have to be careful and make no noise. I feel quite certain that the colonel will make me a sudden call soon after he retires, if not before, and he really wouldn't approve of your being here. He's likely to have a decidedly unpleasant way of showing his disapproval, too."

"I think we can assure our kind and thoughtful host that we fully appreciate the situation," said Arthur Warren, gravely, "and will be pleased to comply with his suggestion to withdraw. Come on, boys, let's get in. It's after ten now, and time is getting short."

"You take the key with you," said Henry Burns, "and lock the door on the inside. It's just an extra precaution; but I can say I don't know who has the key, if anything happens. I won't know which one of you takes it."

The four boys stowed themselves away in the stuffy closet, turned the key in the lock, and waited. Henry Burns quickly divested himself of his clothing, put a bowl of water beside his bed, placed a clean white handkerchief near it, set a lamp near by on a chair, turned it down so that it burned dim, unlocked his door so that it could be opened readily, and jumped into bed.

He did not have long to wait. Promptly at a quarter past ten o'clock the heavy, lumbering steps of the corpulent colonel were heard, as he came up the hallway. The colonel was puffing with the exertion which it always cost him to climb the stairs, and muttering, as was his custom when anything displeased him.

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"Suppose they'll bang away on that old piano half the night," he exclaimed, as he passed Henry Burns's door. "And every light burning till midnight. How do they expect me to make any money, if they go on this way?"

He opened the door to his room and went inside, locking it after him. Henry Burns pressed his ear close to the wall and listened.

The colonel, still talking angrily to himself, scratched a match and lighted one of the lamps. Then he divested himself of his collar and tie, threw his coat and waistcoat on a chair, and reseated himself, to take off his boots.

All at once they heard him utter a loud exclamation of disgust.

"What on earth is the matter with that lamp?" he cried. "That comes of having hired help from the city. Never look after things, unless you keep right after them. How many times have I spoken about having these lamps filled every day!"

The colonel scratched a match. "Hulloa," he exclaimed, "it's full, after all. Well, I see, the wick hasn't been trimmed. There's always something wrong." The colonel proceeded to scrape the wick. Then he scratched another match. The wick sputtered as he held the match to it.

"Confound the thing!" yelled the colonel, now utterly out of temper. "The thing's bewitched. Where's that other lamp? Oh, there it is. We'll see if that will burn. I'll discharge that housemaid to-morrow."

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He scratched still another match, held it to the wick of the other lamp, and was evidently satisfied with that, for they heard him replace the lamp-chimney and go on with his undressing.

In a few minutes more there came another eruption from the colonel.

"There goes the other one," he yelled. "I know what's the matter. Somebody's been fooling with those lamps. I'll make 'em smart for it." The colonel unscrewed the part of the lamp containing the wick, took the bowls of the lamps, one by one, over to his window, opened them, and poured the contents of the lamps out upon the veranda.

"Water!" he yelled. "Water! That's what's the matter. Oh, but I'd just like to know whether it's that pale-faced Burns boy, or some of those other young imps in the house. I'll find out. I'll make somebody smart for this. Wasting my oil, too. I'll make 'em pay for it."

The colonel set down the lamps, rushed out of his room into the hall for the lamp that usually occupied a standard there. He did not find it, because Henry Burns had taken the pains to remove it. The colonel made a sudden dash for Henry Burns's door, rattled the door-knob and pounded, and then, finding that in his confusion he had failed to discover that it was unlocked, hurled it open and burst into the room.

What the colonel saw was the pale, calm face of Henry Burns, peering out at him from the bed, as that young gentleman lifted himself up on one elbow. Around his forehead was bound the handkerchief, which he had wetted in the bowl of water. The lamp burning dimly completed the picture of his distress.

"Hi, you there! You young—" The colonel checked himself abruptly, as Henry Burns slowly raised himself up in bed and pressed one hand to his forehead. "What's the matter with you?" roared the colonel, completely taken aback by Henry Burns's appearance.



“WHAT’S THE MATTER WITH YOU?” ROARED THE COLONEL”

“Oh, nothing,” said Henry Burns, resignedly. “It’s nothing.”

The colonel little realized how much of truthfulness there was in this answer.

“Did you want me for anything?” asked Henry Burns, in his softest voice.

“No, I didn’t,” said the colonel, sullenly. “Somebody has been fooling with my lamps, and I—I thought I would use yours, if you didn’t mind.”

“Certainly,” replied Henry Burns. “I may not need mine again for the rest of the night.” Again he pressed his hand dismally to his forehead.

“I won’t take it!” snapped the colonel. “You may need it again. Why don’t you tell Mrs. Carlin you’ve got a headache? She’ll look after you. It’s eating too much—eating too much, that does it. I’ve always said it. Stop stuffing two pieces of pie every day at dinner, and you won’t have any headache.”

With this parting injunction, the irate colonel abruptly took his departure, slamming the door behind him.

Henry Burns dived beneath the bedclothes and

smothered his roars of laughter. The colonel, disappointed in his quest for a lamp, and not caring to search further in his present condition of undress, returned once more to his room and finished undressing in the dark.

"I'll make somebody smart for this to-morrow," he kept repeating. "Like as not that little white-faced scamp in the next room had some hand in it. I can't quite make him out. Well, I'll go to bed and sleep over it."

The colonel rolled into bed.

There was a crash and a howl of rage from the colonel. He floundered about in a tangle of bedclothes for a moment, filling the room with his angry ejaculations, and endeavouring, helplessly, for a moment, to extricate himself from his uncomfortable position on the floor. Then he arose, raging like a tempest, stumbling over a chair in his confusion, and nearly sprawling on the floor again.

He rang the electric button in his room till the clerk in the office thought the house was on fire, and came running up, breathless, to see what was the matter.

"Fire! Who said there was any fire, you idiot!" shrieked the colonel, as his clerk dashed into the room and ran plump into him. "There isn't any fire," he cried. "Somebody's been breaking the furniture in here; tearing down the beds, ruining the lamps. Get that room on the next floor, down at the end of the hall, ready for me. I can't stay here to-night. Don't stand there, gaping like a frog. Hurry up. Get Mrs. Carlin to fix that bed up for me. She's gone to bed, do you say? Well, then, get somebody else. Don't stand there. Go along!"

The clerk hurried away, as much to prevent the colonel seeing the broad grin on his face as to obey orders. The colonel, stumbling around in the darkness, managed to partly dress himself; and, five minutes later, the boys heard him go storming along the hall to the stairway, which he mounted, and was seen no more that night.

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The closet door in Henry Burns's room swung softly open, and there rolled out helplessly on the floor four boys, choking with suppressed laughter, the tears fairly running down their cheeks.

Henry Burns, calm as ever, quietly arose from bed, removed the bandage from his brow, slid into his clothes, and remarked, softly, "I feel better now."

"Oh, don't, Henry," begged George Warren. "If you say any more I shall die. I can't laugh now without its hurting me."

"You need something to eat," said Henry Burns. Pinning a blanket up over the transom to hide the light, and stopping his keyhole, to prevent any ray of light from penetrating into the hallway, and throwing down a blanket at the door-sill for the same purpose, Henry Burns lighted both his lamps, carefully locked his door, and made ready to entertain his guests.

"It's not just according to the rules of etiquette," he said, producing a package from the basket,

"but we'll have to start on the ice-cream first before it melts. Then we'll work back along the line, to salad and ginger ale."

He drew forth from the package, which proved to be a box filled with chopped ice, a small brick of ice-cream. It was beginning to melt about the edges, but they made short work of it.

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"Now," said Henry Burns, "if you please, we'll start all over again. Here are the sandwiches."

"It's the finest spread I ever had," said young Joe, appreciatively, as he stowed away his fourth sandwich and helped himself to an orange.

"Joe always goes on the principle that he may be cast away on a desert island before he has another square meal," said Arthur, "so he always fills up accordingly."

"It's a good principle to go on," responded Henry Burns. "George, you open the ginger ale."

So they dined most sumptuously, and had gotten down to nuts and raisins, when Henry Burns, whose ears were always on the alert, suddenly sprang up, with a warning "Sh-h-h," and, quickly stepping across the room, turned the lamps down, signalling at the same time for the boys to be silent.

Not one of the others had heard a sound; but now they were aware that soft footsteps were pattering along the hallway.

Presently some one came to Henry Burns's door, turned the knob, and rapped very gently.

Not a sound came from the room.

Then a voice said: "Henry, Henry."

There was no reply.

"Strange," said the person outside; "I could have sworn that I heard his voice as I came up. Well, I must have been mistaken. He seems to be sound asleep. I guess his headache is better."

They heard the footsteps die away again along the hallway.

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"Whew!" said Henry Burns; "that was a narrow escape. That was Mrs. Carlin. Somebody must have told her I was sick. She sleeps all night with one eye and one ear open, they say."

"Well," said George Warren, "I reckon we'd better take it as a warning that it's time to be going, anyway. It's eleven o'clock, I should say, and we have got to get up early and overhaul the *Spray*. She's up at Bryant's Cove yet, and we have got to bring her down and have a new bowsprit put in, and reeve some new rigging. We've had a great time, Henry. Count us in on the next feed, and give our regards to Colonel Witham. Come on, boys."

"Sorry to have to show you out the back way," said Henry Burns, "but the front way would be dangerous now, and my lightning-rod staircase seems to be the only way. It's a very nice way when one is used to it; but look out and don't slip."

By the time the last boy was on the roof, Henry

Burns was half-undressed; and by the time the last one had reached the ground, his light was out and he was half-asleep. That was Henry Burns's way. When he did a thing, he did it and wasted no time—whether it was working or playing or sleeping.

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CHAPTER V. A HIDDEN CAVE

It was a little after eleven o'clock when Tom left the hotel. His mind was so occupied with the events of the evening that he started at once toward his camp, forgetting an intention he had earlier in the night of visiting the locality of Jack Harvey's camp in search of the missing box. He stopped every few minutes to laugh long and heartily, as, one by one, the mishaps of Colonel Witham came to his mind.

All at once he remembered the missing box. He had nearly reached his tent by this time, but he stopped short. He called to mind the contents of the box; among other things, a certain big cake, with frosting on it, and, although he and Bob, as young athletes, were bound to hold such food in little regard, there was one thing about it which particularly impressed him just now, and that was the remembrance of how he had watched Bob's sister, with her dainty little fingers, mould the frosting on the top, and how she had slyly wondered—as if there could be any doubt of it—whether they, meaning Tom, would think of her while they were eating it.

The thought of that cake falling into the hands of Jack Harvey and of Tim Reardon and the others of Harvey's crew, and of the jokes they would crack at Tom's expense, made his blood boil. He started in the direction of Harvey's camp, then turned back to get Bob to accompany him,—and then paused and went on again, saying to himself that he would not awaken his chum at that hour of the night. He started off through the woods alone.

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The night was warm and pleasant, though it was quite dark, as there was no moon. He passed by the cottages, and then turned into a foot-path that followed the windings of the shore. The path led for some distance through a thicket of alders and underbrush, from which at length it emerged into an open field. Crossing this, Tom again entered a growth of wood, the path winding among the roots of some old hemlocks and cedars.

All at once he saw a light shining indistinctly through the trees, and knew that it must be in the immediate vicinity of Harvey's camp.

"So much the better, if they are up," muttered Tom. "If they're sitting around that fire they are sure to be talking." He hurried on in the direction of the light, still following the path.

The fire soon became plainly visible. At a point where the path divided he could see the white tent, lit up by a big fire of driftwood that blazed in front of it. He could hear the sound of voices,

and distinguished that of Harvey above the others. There seemed to be some insubordination in camp, for Harvey's tones were loud and angry.

Tom concluded not to take the path to the left, which was the one leading direct to the camp, but continued on for a distance along the main path. It was well he did so, for presently he heard some one coming toward him. The paths were at this point so near together that he could not distinguish which one the person was taking; so he drew aside and crouched in the bushes, which were very dense between the two paths. A boy, whom he recognized as Tim Reardon, soon came in sight, and passed close by the spot where Tom was concealed. He carried a pail in his hand, and was evidently going to a spring near by for water. He was grumbling to himself as he passed along.

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"I'm always the one!" he said. "Why don't he make some one else lug the water part of the time? I'm not going to be bullied by any Jack Harvey, and he needn't think I am."

He kept on to the spring, however. Tom remained where he was, and Tim soon returned, carrying the pail filled with water. Tom waited till he saw Tim arrive at the camp and deposit the pail of water near the fire, before he again emerged from the clump of bushes into the path that led past the camp. He followed this cautiously. He could not as yet see whether all the members of the crew were present about the camp-fire, and he knew that to encounter any one of them at that hour near the camp would not only put an end to all hopes of recovering the box, by revealing to Harvey and his crew that he suspected them of having stolen it, but that, once an alarm being given, he should have the whole crew at his heels in a twinkling.

Tom was sufficiently acquainted with the reputation of Harvey's crew to know that it would go hard with him if they found him there. He stole quietly along past the camp some little distance, and then, turning from the path, got down on his hands and knees and crept toward the camp through the bushes.

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Near the camp was a hemlock-tree, with large, broad, heavy branches, that grew so low down on the trunk that some of them rested on the ground. It offered a place of concealment, and Tom, at the imminent risk of being discovered, reached it and crawled in between the branches. If the campers had been expecting any one, and had been on the watch, he must surely have been discovered, for several times branches cracked under him, and once so loudly that he thought it was all up with him, expecting them to come and see what had made the noise. But they took no notice of it, either because they were accustomed to hearing noises in the woods, of cattle or dogs, or thought nothing at all about it.

From where he now lay, Tom could see the entire camp, and hear everything the boys said. It was a picturesque spot which Harvey had chosen. The land here ran out in one of those irregular points which was characteristic of the shores of the island, and ended in a little, low-lying bluff, that overlooked the bay. On the side nearer the village, the shore curved in with a

graceful sweep, making a perfect bow, and the land for some distance back sloped gradually down to the beach. The beach here was composed of a fine white sand, making an ideal landing-place for rowboats. On the side farther from the village, the waterfront was of a different character. It rounded out, instead of curving in, and the shore was bold, instead of sloping. It was not easily approached, even by small boats, as the water, for some distance out, was choked up with reefs and ledges, which were barely covered at high tide, and at low water were exposed here and there.

This apparently unapproachable shore had been taken advantage of by Harvey in a way which no one in the village had ever suspected. There was a channel among the reefs, which a small sailboat could pursue, if one were accurately acquainted with its windings. With this channel, which they had discovered by chance, the campers had become thoroughly familiar, at both low and high water.

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The point had been cleared of undergrowth, and most of the larger trees had been cut down for some little distance back from the water. In the rear of this clearing there were thick woods, extending into the island for a mile or more.

The campers had pitched a big canvas tent at the edge of the clearing, where they lived in free and easy fashion, cooking mostly out-of-doors. They scorned the idea of making bunks, as smacking too much of civilization, and at night slept on boughs covered with blankets. They lived out-of-doors in front of the tent when the weather was pleasant, and, when it was stormy, they went aboard the yacht and did their cooking in the cabin, over a small sheet-iron stove.

It was altogether a romantic and picturesque sight that Tom saw as he looked out from his hiding-place. At a little distance from the tent the fire was blazing, while the members of the crew either sat around it or lay, stretched out at full length, upon the ground. A pot of coffee was placed on a flat stone by the side of the fire, near enough to get the heat from it, and the delicious odour of it as it steamed made Tom hungry.

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The members of Harvey's crew were utterly without restraint, saving that which was imposed capriciously by Harvey himself. Harvey was not naturally vicious. His mind had been perverted by the books he had read, so that he failed to see that his acts of petty thievery were meannesses and acts of cowardice of which he would some day be ashamed.

He fashioned his conduct as much according to the books he read as possible, and, if he had been but trained rightly, would have been proud to do courageous things, instead of playing mean jokes, for he had at heart much bravery. He rarely wore a hat, and was as bronzed as any sailor. The sleeves of his flannel blouse were usually rolled up to the elbows, showing on his forearms several tattooed designs in red and blue ink. He was large and strong.

The boys around the fire were telling stories and relating in turn incidents of adventure that had taken place since their arrival on the island. At

the close of their story-telling, they arose and began making preparations for a meal. Near by the fireplace they had built a rough table, of stakes driven into the ground, and boards, with benches on either side of it, fashioned in the same way. Two of the boys went to the tent and brought out some tin dishes, and the steaming pot of coffee was taken from the stone and set on the table.

Then Joe Hinman, taking a long pole in his hand, went to the fire and proceeded to scatter the brands about, while a shower of sparks rose up and floated off into the forest. Presently Joe raked from among the embers a dozen or more black, shapeless objects. These he placed one by one on a block of wood and broke the clay—for such it was—with a hatchet. The odour of cooked fish pervaded the camp and saluted Tom's nostrils most temptingly. Inside of the lumps of clay were fish of some kind, which Tom took to be cunners. As fast as they were ready, Tim Reardon carried them to the table, where they were heaped up on a big earthen platter.

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The boys then fell to and ate as though they were starving. Tom wondered for some time if this could be their usual hour for supper; but remembered that he had seen the *Surprise* several miles off in the bay that evening, and concluded that the evening meal had been long delayed. The *Surprise* now lay a few rods offshore, with a lantern hanging at her mast.

The boys continued to talk, as they ate, of tricks they had played and of raids they had taken part in, down the island. In fact, the good citizens of Southport would have given a good deal for the secrets Tom learned from his hiding-place that night. Tom waited impatiently, however, for some mention of the missing box. Could he be mistaken in suspecting them of having taken it? No, he was sure not. That they were capable of doing so, their own conversation left no room for doubt. Tom felt certain the box was in their possession.

But he began to feel that his errand of discovery to-night would be fruitless. They must, he argued, have some sort of storehouse, where they hid such plunder as this, but no one had as yet made the slightest mention of it. It was clearly useless for him to grope about in the vicinity of the camp at night, and he began to think it would be better after all to wait until day and select a time for his search, if possible, when all the members of the crew were off on the yacht. But that might come too late, and Tom wondered what to do.

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All at once Joe Hinman made a remark that caused Tom to raise himself upon his elbow and listen intently.

"Boys," said Joe, "I've got a little surprise for you."

The crew, one and all, stopped eating, rested their elbows on the table, and looked at Joe curiously.

"I'll bet it's a salmon from old Slade's nets," said George Baker. "Joe's sworn for a week that he'd have one."

"He's all right, is Joe," remarked Harvey,

patronizingly. "There isn't one of you that can touch Joe for smartness."

Thus encouraged, Joe told how he had seen the box that had been a part of Tom's and Bob's luggage left on the wharf the night it arrived; how he had ascertained that it contained food, by prying up the cover; and how, early on the following morning, he had rowed up under cover of the fog, and had brought back the box to the camp.

"It's down in the cave now," said Joe. Tom gave a start. "There's a meat-pie in it that is good for a dinner to-morrow, and a big frosted cake, if you fellows want it to-night."

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"Hooray!" cried Jack Harvey. "You and I will go and get it." Whereupon he and Joe sprang up and made directly for the spot where Tom lay, passing by so close that he could have reached out and touched them, and hurried along the bank, down to the shore.

Tom allowed them to get well in advance before he ventured to crawl from his hiding-place and follow them. He saw them at length disappear over the bank at a point where there grew a thick clump of cedars. He turned from the path into the woods, made his way cautiously past the place where he had seen them disappear, turned into the path again, and then climbed down the bank, which was there very steep, holding on to the bushes, and looked for the boys, but they were nowhere to be seen.

Tom knew they could not have passed him. They had not reappeared over the edge of the bank, and they were nowhere in sight along the shore. There could be but one conclusion. The entrance to the cave must be located in the clump of cedars.

It seemed to Tom that he had waited at least a quarter of an hour, though, in fact, it was not more than five minutes, when he saw the boys reappear. Tom groaned as he saw the big cake in Joe's hand. Joe laid it down on the ground, while he and Jack picked up several armfuls of loose boughs lying about, and threw them up carelessly against the bank. Then Joe took up the cake again, and they emerged from the cedars, climbed up over the bank, and disappeared in the direction of their camp.

Tom lost no time in scrambling to the spot. The hiding-place was cunningly concealed. It was an awkward place to crawl to from any part of the bank, and no one would have thought of trying to land there in a boat. The entrance to the cave might have been left open, with little chance of its ever being discovered. Tom threw aside the boughs sufficiently to discover that beneath them was a sort of trap-door, made of pieces of board carelessly nailed together. Then he replaced the boughs and, without even attempting to lift the board door, regained the path at the top of the bank.

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"There'll be time enough to explore that later," he muttered. "I'm not the only one that will have lost something out of that cave before morning, though." He made his way cautiously past the camp once more, and then started on a run for his own camp. His hare and hounds practice at school stood him in good stead, and he did not

stop running till he had come to the door of his tent. He unfastened the flap and entered, panting for breath. Bob was sleeping soundly. He shook him, but Bob was loath to awake, and resented being so roughly disturbed.

"Wake up, Bob! Wake!" cried Tom, shaking him again.

Bob opened his eyes. "Why, is it morning, Tom?" he asked.

"No, it isn't, Bob, but it soon will be. I've found the box, Bob. Harvey's got it, and I know where it is hidden,—down near his camp in a cave."

Bob shivered, for Tom had pulled the blanket off the bed, and the moist sea air penetrated the tent. He dressed, stupidly, for he was not fully rid of his drowsiness.

The boys went down to the beach, and Bob washed his face in the salt water.

"I'm all right now, Tom, old fellow," he said, "but, honest, Tom, I feel ugly enough at being waked up, not at you, though, to just enjoy a fight with those fellows."

"There's little prospect of that, if we are careful," answered Tom. "What we want to do is to show them we are smart enough to get the box back, and, perhaps, play them a trick of our own."

Then they carried the canoe down to the shore, launched it, and set off. It was about one o'clock in the morning. They paddled away from the tent and down along the shore, noiselessly as Indians. Past the village and past the cottages, and not a sign of life anywhere, not even a wisp of smoke from a chimney. The canoe glided swiftly along, making the only ripples there were on the glassy surface of the bay.

As they came to the beach near Harvey's camp, they landed, and Tom crept up over the bank to reconnoitre. He came back presently, reporting that the crew were all sound asleep, and everything quiet around the camp. Then they paddled quickly by the end of the bluff and along the bold shore beyond, picking their way carefully among the reefs, as they could not have done in these unknown waters with any other craft than the buoyant canoe.

They disembarked at the clump of cedars, and made the canoe fast to the trunk of one that overhung the water. Tom took from the bow of the canoe a lantern, and they scrambled up the bank. Throwing aside the boughs, they disclosed the trap-door, which they lifted up. Tom lit the lantern and they entered the cave.

They found it much larger than the opening indicated. It was excavated from the hard clay of which the bank was composed, and, though not high enough for them to stand quite erect, it was about eight feet long and five feet wide.

It was filled with stuff of all sorts. There were spare topsails and staysails,—possibly from coasters that had anchored in the harbour,—sets of oars from ships' boats, several boxes of canned goods, that the grocer of the village had hunted for far and wide, coils of rope, two

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shotguns, carefully wrapped in pieces of flannel and well oiled, to prevent the rust from eating them, four lanterns, two axes and a hatchet, and odds and ends of all descriptions useful in and about a camp or a yacht.

The roof of the cave was shored up with boards, supported by joists. In one corner of the cave was the box for which they sought, broken into, and with the gorgeous cake gone; but that was all. The rest of the contents were untouched.

They took the box, carried it down to the shore and placed it in the canoe. Tom started to return to the cave.

"What are you going to do now, Tom?" queried Bob. "We don't want to take anything of theirs, of course."

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"Not a thing," answered Tom. "We don't go in for that sort of business, but I just want to show them that we have been here and had the opportunity to destroy anything that we were of a mind to. Perhaps it will teach them a good lesson. It will show them that we are as smart as they are, anyway."

So saying, Tom began to gather up the guns, the good sails, the boxes of provisions, and other things of value, and carry them outside the cave, setting them down on the bank at some distance from the mouth of it.

"We won't destroy anything of value," said Tom. "But here are some odds and ends of old stuff, some of these pieces of oars, empty crates, bagging, and that sort of thing, which will make a good blaze, and which would have to be thrown away some day. They are of no use to anybody. I propose to make a bonfire of these in the cave, just to show Jack Harvey that we have been here. He'll find all his stuff that's good for anything put carefully outside the cave, and no harm come to it. But he'll be just as furious to find his cave discovered and on fire, for all that."

"All right," said Bob, "here goes."

Bob was thinking of that cake.

Tom took one of the axes and chopped a small hole in the top of the cave, some distance above the door.

"That will make a draught," he said, in answer to Bob's inquiry.

Then he blew out the lantern and poured the oil with which it was filled over the pile of rubbish. There was still a small heap of stuff in one corner of the cave, some old boards, and a few pieces of sail, thrown carelessly in a pile, as though of no value. They did not stop to bother with these, as they seemed of no consequence, and they were in a hurry.

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Tom struck a match and set fire to the heap that he had accumulated.

"We can't get away from here any too soon, now, Bob," he said. "There'll be some furious chaps out here, when that fire gets to crackling and smoking. We don't care to be about here at that time. They are too many for us."

The boys scrambled down the bank, got into the

canoe, and pushed off. As they paddled away, the light of the fire gleamed in the mouth of the cave. As soon as they had gotten clear of the reefs, they did not stop to reconnoitre the camp, but pushed by at full speed. It was a race against fire—and they little dreamed of its swiftness, nor of the hidden force which they had let loose.

Along the shore they sped, speaking not a word till they had got the village in sight and their arms were cracking in the joints. Then they paused a moment for breath, for their little craft was out of sight of the camp now, in the dull morning light.

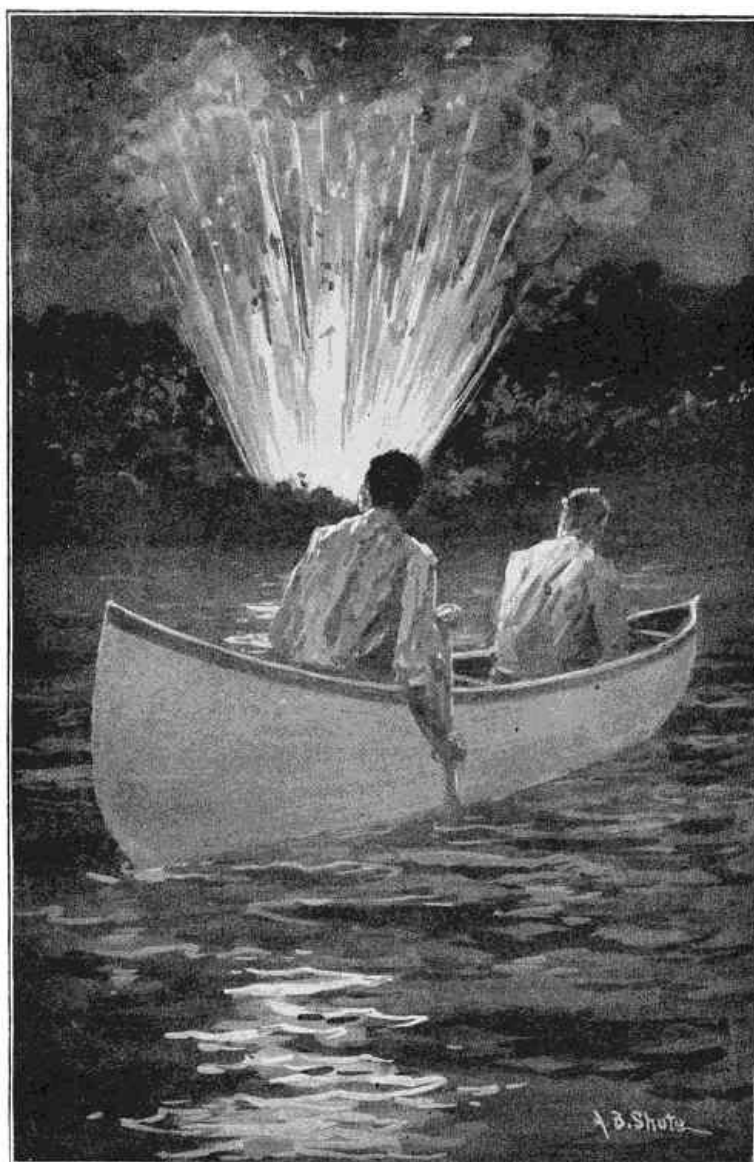
Tom, who had the stern paddle, had looked back from time to time, but if there was any light to be seen through the bushes it was very slight. The spot was hidden now, too, by the intervening point of land.

"I don't know whether I see a light or not," he said. "There's a lot of smoke, though, and I can imagine, anyway, that I see a gleam of fire in the midst of it."

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The words were scarcely out of his mouth before he swung the canoe around with one quick sweep of his paddle.

"Look, Bob! Look!" he cried. "What have we done?"



"LOOK, BOB! LOOK!" HE CRIED. "WHAT HAVE WE

The sight that met their eyes was amazing.

A sheet of flame shot suddenly into the sky. It looked like a tiny volcano, belching up fire and débris and pushing up through the midst of it a great black canopy of smoke. This was followed by the report of an explosion that echoed and reëchoed through the village, reverberating on the rocks across the harbour, and filling the whole country around with its noise—at once startling and terrifying. Then the light as suddenly went out, a shower of burning sticks and shreds of blazing canvas drifted lazily down through the air, and a cloud of smoke hung over the spot.

Tom and Bob trembled like rushes. It seemed as though every particle of strength had left them. There could be but one conclusion. They had blown up the camp. Harvey and all his crew were, perhaps, killed.

Bob was the first to speak.

"Come, Tom," he said. "We must get to camp before we are seen. Brace up and try to paddle."

Somehow or other they got to camp and dragged the canoe ashore. They carried the box up to the tent and locked it up in the big chest. Bob's hand trembled so he could hardly put the key into the lock.

Tom seated himself, dejectedly, on the edge of one of the bunks, the picture of despair.

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"I guess I may as well go and give myself up first as last," he said. "I suppose I'll have to go to jail, if they're killed. What can there have been in the cave? I didn't see anything to explode, did you?"

"No," answered Bob, "unless it was something over in that pile of stuff in one corner. I didn't examine it, but they must have had something stored or hidden underneath there, either kerosene or gunpowder. By Jove! Tom, I remember now hearing Captain Sam Curtis say he had missed a keg of blasting-powder that he had bought for the Fourth of July, and he said he thought some of the sailors down the island had stolen it. That's where it went to; it was hidden in that corner."

"That doesn't help matters much, if they're all dead," said Tom. "I'll be to blame, just the same. Oh, Bob, what shall I do?"

"Whatever you do," answered Bob, "I stand my share of it, just as much as you. I'm just as guilty as you are. But don't go to pieces that way, Tom. We don't know yet whether they are hurt or not. The best thing we can do is to get down there as quick as ever we can. Shall we take the canoe and make a race for it?"

"I can't do it," answered Tom. "I haven't got the strength,—and, to be honest, Bob, the courage. It's taken every bit of strength and nerve out of me. Bob, I tell you, I'm afraid we've killed them,—and I, for one, don't dare to go and look."

And Tom hid his face in his hands, while the tears trickled through his fingers.

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"I don't believe they're killed," said Bob, stoutly. "They were some distance away from the cave, you know. Come, we'll go with the crowd, for the whole town must be out by this time."

And so he half-persuaded, half-dragged Tom away from the tent, and they started for the hotel.

The explosion had, indeed, aroused every one. Men were running to and fro, and the greatest excitement prevailed. The news quickly spread that some frightful accident had happened at Harvey's camp, and Tom and Bob heard expressions of sympathy for them on all sides, from many who had been the victims of their tricks, and who had time and again wished the island rid of them. A rumour spread among the crowd of villagers—no one knew where it originated—that a keg of powder, which the campers had left to dry near the fire, had exploded, and blown them all to pieces. This was only one of a number of wild rumours that were noised about that morning in the confusion and uncertainty. It was generally believed that the crew must have been killed.

Tom and Bob hung on to the edge of the excited crowd, which had assembled in front of the hotel, and listened to these various expressions with horror. Then, when the crowd moved on for the camp, they followed, with sinking hearts.

It was a strange procession that went down along the shore that morning. There were cottage-owners, who had grievances against the crew; villagers, who had been tormented and tricked by them time and again; and fishermen, who had lost many a tide's fishing, because their dories had been found sunk alongside the wharf, with heaping loads of stones aboard. Yet, now that disaster had befallen the crew, they were one and all willing to condone the offences, and anxious to render what help they could.

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They went on rapidly. Tom and Bob soon heard a cry from those in advance that the tent was still standing. Then hope rose in Tom's heart, that spurred him forward.

He dashed ahead, rushed past the leaders, cutting through the woods where the path made a circuit. There was the tent still standing, and apparently uninjured by the storm of stones and débris that had rained down about it. But the crew! Not the sound of a voice was to be heard. Not a soul was stirring anywhere in the locality.

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CHAPTER VI.

JACK HARVEY INVESTIGATES

Tom's heart sank as he approached the tent, stepping over stones and fragments of wood that lay all about. Pulling open the flap of the tent, he looked anxiously inside. There lay the crew, to a man, stretched upon the ground, motionless. A sudden fear seized on Tom that the shock had killed them as they lay sleeping, and he reeled and clutched one of the guy-ropes to keep from falling.

The next minute the crowd of villagers had arrived, and several heads were thrust inside the tent. Just at that moment one of the crew slowly raised himself on an elbow and said, angrily:

“What’s all this fuss about? Aren’t you people satisfied with trying to blow us up, without coming around and making such a rumpus and keeping us awake?”

It was Jack Harvey. The others of the crew, taking their cue from him, made a pretence of rousing themselves up from sleep, yawned and rubbed their eyes, and asked what was wanted.

Then, perceiving for the first time that there were several stalwart fishermen in the party, and not daring to go too far, Harvey added, in a sneering tone:

“Oh, we’re obliged to you all for coming down here. It wasn’t curiosity on your part—of course not. You came down because you thought we were hurt, and we’re much obliged to you. Of course we are. We’re glad to see you, moreover, now we’re awake. Wait a minute, and we will stir up the fire and boil a pot of coffee.”

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This was maddening to the rescuers. Some of the fishermen suggested pitching in and giving the crew a sound thrashing; but, so Squire Brackett said, “there was really no ground for such a proceeding, though he, for one, would be more than glad to do it.” They could blame themselves for trying to help a pack of young hyenas like these. For his part, he was going back home to bed. “They’ll drown themselves out in the bay if let alone,” he commented. However, he ventured the query to Harvey: “Guess you boys had a little powder stored around here, didn’t you?”

“Guess again, squire,” answered Harvey, roughly. “Maybe we had a fort with cannon mounted on it,—and maybe we’d like to go to sleep again, if you people would let us. We’re not trespassing. We’ve got permission to camp here, so don’t try to go bullying us, squire.”

This was the satisfaction, then, that the rescuers got at the hands of the crew. They had come, burying their grievances, and with hearts full of sympathy and kindness for the unfortunate boys, and they had encountered only the same reckless crew, that mocked them for their pains. So they turned away again, angry and disappointed, and nursing their wrath for a day to come.

And then, as the sound of the last of their footsteps died away through the woods, Jack Harvey, chuckling with vast satisfaction to himself, said: “Wasn’t that fine, though? Wasn’t old Brackett and the others furious?”

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“Wild!” exclaimed Joe Hinman. “But I don’t think, after all, Jack, that it paid. We ought to have treated them better, after they had come all the way down here to help us.”

“Pshaw!” answered Harvey. “Don’t you go getting squeamish, Joe. For my part, I’m mad enough at somebody to fight the whole village. There’s our cave that it took us weeks to dig, and hidden in the only spot around here that couldn’t be discovered, gone to smash, with

everything we had in it. Those two guns that the governor bought me were worth a pretty price, let me tell you. They must have gone clear into the bay, for I can't even find a piece of the stock of either one of them."

"It looks to me as though somebody did discover the cave, after all," said Joe Hinman. "You can't make me believe that it blew itself up."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Harvey—and then he paused abruptly; for, of a sudden, there came sharply to his mind the white face of Tom Harris, peering in at the tent door, with a haggard, ghastly expression. He recalled how Tom had started back and nearly fallen at the sight of the crew lying still.

"He was the first one at the tent, too," muttered Harvey to himself.

"What's that?" asked Joe Hinman.

"Nothing," said Harvey. "But you may be right, Joe. You may be right, after all. Come, let's all go out and look over the ground once more. There may be a few things yet, to save from the wreck."

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The explosion, strangely enough, had not injured a single member of the crew. Not a piece of the wreckage had struck the tent. Pieces of rock and bits of branches and boards lay on every hand about the camp, and a stone, torn from the bank, had crashed down on the bowsprit of the *Surprise*, breaking it short off, carrying away rigging and sails. There was also a hole broken in the yacht's deck by a falling piece of ledge.

The crew, awakened from sound slumber by the awful crash and by the shower of earth and stones, had rushed out, frightened half out of their wits, and at an utter loss at first to know what had happened. The full discovery of what had occurred only served to deepen the mystery. How it had happened no one could tell. To be sure, they knew what had escaped the notice of Tom and Bob, that four lanterns in a corner of the cave were filled with kerosene oil, and that in another corner, in a hole under the floor, covered with a few pieces of board and a thin sprinkling of earth, were two kegs of blasting-powder.

It had been a narrow escape for them. A hole was torn in the bank big enough to hold several yachts the size of the *Surprise*. Not a vestige remained to show that a cave had ever been dug there. Several boulders had been dislodged from the bank and carried bodily down to the water's edge, besides the one that had hit the bowsprit of the *Surprise*. Of the stuff that Tom and Bob had placed carefully outside the cave, not a scrap remained. Every bit of it must have been blown into the sea. But not a rock nor so much as a stick had struck the tent. Beyond being dazed for some moments by the shock of the explosion, not one of the crew was hurt.

When they had made a second and unavailing search for anything that might have escaped the destruction, and some half-hour after the villagers had departed, the crew went back to the tent and laid themselves down again for a morning's nap. They were soon off to sleep, save one.

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As often as he closed his eyes, Jack Harvey could see, in his mind's eye, Tom Harris come again to the door of the tent; and he could see him start back and almost fall. Could Tom Harris have had anything to do with the explosion? And if so, how? It hardly seemed possible, but Harvey could not put the idea out of his head. Tom's frightened face looked in at him, in his troubled sleep that morning, and, long before his crew were awake again and stirring, he rose and stole out of the tent to the shore, where the cave had been.

And so, while Tom and Bob rolled in on to their bunks that morning, thankful in their hearts that no harm had come to the crew, Jack Harvey was down there by the shore, examining the ground over and over again, every inch of it, from the place where the entrance to the cave had been to the place where the canoe had been made fast. Much of the bank had been torn away there, but where the canoe had been moored there was a spot for some few feet that was undisturbed. Jack Harvey, after studying the spot carefully, went back to camp. If he had found anything that surprised him, he did not, for the present, mention it to his crew.

Jack Harvey was a curious mixture of good and bad qualities. His parents were wealthy, but uneducated and unrefined. They allowed him to have all the money he wished to spend, and permitted him to do pretty much as he pleased about everything. Harvey's father had been a miner, and had "struck it rich," after knocking about the California gold-fields for nearly a score of years. Because he had managed to get along well in the world without any education, and without the influence of any restraint, such as society imposes, he had a theory that it was the best thing for a boy to work out his own upbringing. As a consequence, his son was rarely thwarted in anything. Left to himself, Harvey, though not naturally bad, fell in with a rough, lawless class of boys, read only the cheapest kind of books, which inspired him to lead an idle, good-for-nothing life, and, as a result, went wild.

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He was strong and, among his associates, a leader. They gladly awarded him this distinction, as they were, for the most part, poor, and he spent his allowance freely. He was captain of a ball nine, for which he bought the uniforms and the necessary equipment; captain of his yacht's crew, and, in all things, their acknowledged leader. His companions came generally to be known as Harvey's crew.

Tom and Bob had a mere speaking acquaintance with him, as they all attended the same school at home,—from which, however, Harvey was more often truant than present. Beyond that association they had nothing to do with him. There were four members of the yacht's crew, although that term was applied by the people of the town to some dozen or more boys. Of these four, Joe Hinman was a thin, hatchet-faced, shrewd-looking boy, whose father was employed by a railroad in some capacity that kept him much away from home; George Baker and Allan Harding were cousins, whose parents had a rather doubtful reputation, as dealers in second-hand goods and articles pawned, at a little shop in an obscure quarter of the town. Tim Reardon

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had no parents that he knew of, and earned an uncertain living, doing chores and working at odd jobs through the winter. In the summer, he was usually to be found aboard Harvey's yacht, where he was fairly content to do the drudgery, for the sake of the livelihood and the fun of yachting and camping.

It was not the sort of companionship that a wise and careful parent would have chosen for his son, but they sufficed for Harvey, and no one interfered with him. These boys did as he said, and that was what he wanted.

Nearly every one in the entire village had gone down to Harvey's camp in the next hour following the explosion. Curiously enough, however, Henry Burns was not of this number. He had jumped out of bed at the crash and the shock, and had hastily dressed and rushed down-stairs, ready to go with the crowd. For once, however, Mrs. Carlin got ahead of him.

"Why, Henry Burns," she had exclaimed, catching sight of him as he dodged out of the door. "Where do you think you are going at this hour of the night, and you that was feeling so bad only a few hours ago. You're not going off through those woods to-night, not if I know it. You can just take yourself back to bed, if you don't want to be laid up with a sick spell."

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And Henry Burns, now that attention was thus publicly attracted to him, did not dare to steal out later and join the others, lest Mrs. Carlin should hear of it, and, perchance, become suspicious of him. So he went back unwillingly to bed, but not to sleep. He was wide-awake when the angry party returned. Listening from his window, he heard their description of the explosion and their impudent reception by Harvey's crew; and proceeded to draw his own conclusion from it all.

The more he thought of it, the more his suspicion grew that, in some way, Tom or Bob, or both, had had a hand in the thing. Tom, indeed, had expressed his intention to Henry Burns of spying on the camp in his hunt to find the missing box; and, although it seemed a most unlikely hour for him to have gone down there, Henry Burns wisely conjectured that that was what he must have done.

Accordingly, shortly after Henry Burns had arisen that morning, and after he had gathered from a few villagers who were abroad some fuller details of the night's adventures, he made his way to the camp on the point. There were no signs of life about the camp, and, softly opening the flap of the tent, he peered within. Tom and Bob lay stretched out, sound asleep.

Henry Burns stepped noiselessly inside. He called them by name in a low tone, but they did not awaken.

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"Last night's excitement was too much for one of them, at least, I guess," was his comment. And then he added: "If my suspicions are true, their fun lasted later than mine, and was far more exciting—but I'll find that out."

There was a camp-stool beside each bunk, upon which Tom and Bob had thrown their clothes before turning in. Henry Burns quietly removed

the clothing from these chairs, made them into a bundle, and, tucking the bundle under his arm, walked out of the tent and lay down on the grass, just outside.

It seemed to him as though another hour had passed before he heard a creaking of one of the bunks, and a voice, which he recognized as Bob's, said: "Hulloa, there, Tom, wake up!"

"Ay, ay," growled Tom, sleepily, but made no move.

Again Bob's voice: "Say, Tom?"

No answer.

"Tom—hulloa, old fellow—come, let's get up. It's late."

"All right, all right, Bob, so it is." And Tom roused up on an elbow and rubbed his eyes. Then he gave a prodigious yawn.

"Whew!" he exclaimed. "What a night I had of it. I don't wonder we slept late, do you?"

"Well, hardly," answered Bob. "My! But I can hear that explosion go off now, it seems to me. And wasn't that an awful sight when the flame shot up against the sky? I'll never forget it as long as I live."

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"We'll have to keep our eyes on Harvey after this for awhile," said Tom. "Hulloa!" he exclaimed, suddenly, as they tumbled out on to the floor. "Where are our clothes? We left them right here when we turned in, didn't we?"

The boys looked at each other and stared in astonishment.

"Of course we did," answered Bob.

"What can it mean?" gasped Tom.

"Hope to die if I can guess," said Bob. "It's plain enough, though, that some one has been in here while we were asleep and cleaned out our wardrobe. Not a thing left. You don't suppose that Harvey—"

"Nonsense," interrupted Tom. "It's that young scoundrel of a Joe Warren. He's always up to his monkey-shines. It's some of his doings. He was the one, mind you, that proposed yesterday that we carry our change of good clothing up to his cottage for safe-keeping. Here we are, now, without a rag to put on."

"I suppose he thinks we'll have to march up to his cottage in blankets, like Indians," said Bob. "Well, if it comes to that, I'll stay right here till night. You don't catch me parading around in a blanket in the daytime, to be laughed at by everybody."

"We'll have to pay him up for this," said Tom.

At this moment Henry Burns appeared at the doorway.

"I have some cheap second-hand clothes here," he said. "They're pretty well worn out, and you can have them for a small consideration, seeing that you need them so bad. I want the money for my poor mother, who's sick at home with the

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smallpox.”

“Scoundrel!” yelled Tom.

“Pirate!” muttered Bob.

They rushed fiercely at Henry Burns, who, however, smiling serenely, still held on tightly to the bundle of clothing.

“Pay me my price for them, and you can have them all,” he said.

“How much?” asked Tom.

“Wait till we try them on and see if they still fit,” said Bob.

“My price,” answered Henry Burns, depositing the bundle on a chair and seating himself upon an end of one of the bunks, “is that you tell me how you came so near to blowing up Jack Harvey’s camp last night.”

It was a long shot on his part, but it went straight to the mark. There was an awkward silence for almost a minute. Finally Tom said:

“There’s no use trying to keep a secret from him, Bob. He knows half already. We may as well tell him all, and see what he thinks of it.”

“Fire away, Tom,” said Bob. “No one was injured, anyway, so no great harm can come of it.”

So Tom related to Henry Burns the story of the night’s adventure. Henry listened with the greatest interest.

“I’d have given a good deal,” he said, “to see Jack Harvey when he found his cave blown up, with all their spoils along with it.”

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When the story was finished, however, he was inclined to treat the matter more seriously than they had supposed he would.

“I’m afraid it’s a bad scrape to be in,” he said at length. “From what I have heard about our friend Harvey, I judge he is not one of the kind to let a thing of this sort go without paying somebody back for it. And I believe he is as sure to find out who blew up that cave as I am that I am sitting here.”

“How can that be?” asked Bob.

“I can’t say,” replied Henry Burns; “but if you keep your eyes open, you will see that he suspects you. I’ll warrant if we could see Jack Harvey now, we should see him out examining every inch of the shore, looking at the rocks on the beach for any paint that might be scraped off your canoe, and all such things as that. He is a shrewd one, and, when he has once satisfied himself that you and Tom wrecked his cave, why, I wouldn’t give a fig for your camp here,—that is, unless you propose to stay at home all the time to guard it.”

Strange to say, if they could have seen Jack Harvey just then, they would have witnessed a most startling confirmation of Henry Burns’s words. For Jack Harvey, at that moment, was at the shore once more. He was examining every inch of it. He was scrutinizing every rock along

the beach. He was out among the ledges, looking carefully along their sides. He was searching here, and he was searching there,—but what he found he neither confided to his crew nor to any one else, but kept locked for the present in his own breast.

“I believe Henry is right,” said Tom. “And it isn’t the most pleasant prospect to think that our camp may be overhauled at any time, whenever we happen to be away, and perhaps disappear altogether some dark night, if we happen to be caught out on the bay or down the island. But what to do I don’t see, for the life of me,—except to keep as quiet as possible about it.”

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“I may not be right,” suggested Henry Burns, “but my advice would be to do just the opposite,—that is, when you once feel certain that Harvey is hunting for you.

“Tell Harvey,” continued Henry, “that you blew up his camp, and how you did it, and why. Tell him what you saw in that cave. Ask him point-blank if he would want the villagers to know what you saw in there. Strike a bargain with him to call it even. He will be glad to do it; whereas, if he finds you and Bob out, without your knowing what he is up to, he will watch night and day for a chance to harm you.”

“The fact is,” added Henry Burns, as he arose to go, “what with Jack Harvey and Colonel Witham on the war-path after you, you are likely to have quite a lively summer before you get through. So keep your eyes open and look out. And remember, when in trouble, always apply to H. A. Burns, care Colonel Witham—always ready to serve you.” And Henry Burns walked away, whistling.

Tom and Bob went about their breakfast preparations, looking rather serious for a time; but a hearty meal made them look at the matter somewhat less seriously.

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“Henry Burns is quite apt to be right about things, so the Warrens say,” commented Tom, after awhile, as they were finishing their meal. “But I guess he likes to talk some, too, just to make an impression. I don’t see how Harvey can find out who blew up his cave in a hundred years, if we only keep quiet and don’t give it away ourselves.”

“I’m not so sure,” answered Bob. “Those things do get out.”

Jack Harvey, in the meantime, having completed a careful survey of the shore, and either finding or not finding what he sought for, went back to his camp and crew. Toward noon, however, he left his camp, and a little later Tom saw him coming up along the shore.

When he came to where the canoe lay on the beach, Harvey paused and examined it closely. Then, as though to test its weight, he lifted it up on his broad shoulders, and then set it down on the beach again, this time bottom up.

Tom and Bob started down to the shore at this, but, before either they or Harvey had spoken, they had seen plainly that which, perhaps, Harvey had looked for, a long broad scratch upon the bottom of the canoe, near the middle,

where the fresh paint had been scraped off.

"Hulloa, there," said Harvey, as they approached. "That's a fine canoe you've got there. Guess I'll have to get the governor to buy me one. I saw your tent yesterday, but didn't have a chance to come around. You fellows got ahead of me, by coming over last night—with the crowd."

"Yes," answered Bob. "We expected to find you all blown into the sea. What was the matter over at your camp?"

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"Why, between you and me," replied Harvey, eying them cautiously as he spoke, "I think some one of the crew did it, as a joke. They're up to that sort of thing, you know. They'd just as lieve do it as not, any one of them. Like as not that young Tim Reardon did it, because I make him lug water, and don't let up on him when he has lazy spells. To tell you the truth, we had a little powder stored away in a hole under a tree, and I guess one of them touched it off."

Harvey tried to speak carelessly; but there was an angry light in his eyes and an expression around his mouth which would not be concealed, and which boded no good for somebody, and this was not lost on Tom and Bob.

"Come up to the camp, won't you?" asked Tom. Harvey first declined, as though it had not been his intention to stop, and then accepted, and the three went toward the tent. On the way there Tom found a chance to say to Bob, "I guess Henry Burns was right, wasn't he, Bob?" And Bob answered, "Yes."

"Snug quarters you have here," said Harvey, as they entered the tent. "Tight and dry,—and bunks, too. We can't beat these accommodations aboard the *Surprise*. And here's camp-chairs, like a steam-yacht or a cottage. You'll be having pictures on the walls next, and a carpet on the floor,—and then you won't allow each other to have mud on your boots."

Harvey was still watching them sharply as he spoke, and may have made the last remark with a purpose, inasmuch as the boots of both Tom and Bob were begrimed and smeared with the clay from the bank near Harvey's camp, and their clothes, for that matter, were muddy in spots.

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"Sure enough," answered Tom, "we have things as shipshape as we can. We've got a camp-kit here that can't be beaten on the island. Maybe you would be interested to have a look at it." So saying, Tom deliberately unlocked the big packing-case and threw back the cover.

"There," cried Tom, pointing to the box that had been stolen, "what do you think of that?"

Harvey drew back quickly, and looked as though he were about to strike Tom a blow, while his face flushed angrily. Bob sprang quickly from his seat on one of the bunks, and he and Tom stood confronting Harvey. If the latter had intended to strike a blow, he changed his mind and did not do it. Instead, he gave a half-laugh and said:

"That's what I came up to see you about. The fact is, I have known you fellows blew up our

cave ever since I saw your face”—looking at Tom —“at the door of our tent last night. Then I found, too, where your canoe had landed on the edge of the shore, and just where that big scratch was made. The paint is on the rocks yet. Now I don’t think you fellows used me square, though I know you did it because you thought we stole your box—”

“Which you did,” interrupted Tom.

Again the quick flush in Harvey’s face, and again the gesture as though he would strike Tom a blow; but he did not do it, as he had refrained before.

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“No, there’s where you are wrong,” he said; “though I don’t deny that one of the crew took it, —not knowing it was yours. They wouldn’t one of them take anything from you.”

“Which is not true,” said Tom, quietly.

This was more than Harvey could stand. With clenched fist, he rushed at Tom, aiming a heavy blow at his face, and crying, as he did so: “I lie, do I? Then take that!”

Tom partially avoided the blow by stepping back and guarding his face with one arm. The blow fell short, striking him near the shoulder. At the same time, however, he tripped over the packing-case, and that, with the force of the blow, sent him over backwards, so that he fell all in a heap in one corner of the tent.

Harvey darted for the door, to make his escape; but Bob sprang at him and the two clinched. Harvey was larger and more than a match for either one of them, and, with a quick twist, threw Bob violently to the floor. But the latter clung to him and brought him down, too. Then, before Harvey could break Bob’s hold, Tom had recovered himself and thrown himself upon him. He rolled Harvey over, and the next moment he and Bob had him securely pinned to the floor.

“Now,” said Tom, as they held him fast, “we are not going to hurt you, Jack Harvey, because we are no such cowards; but I’ve got something to say to you which it will be for your advantage to listen to.

“In the first place, let me tell you that you are a coward and as good as a thief. You didn’t steal our box because one of your crew did it for you and saved you the trouble; but you knew it was stolen from us, and would have taken it yourself if you had had the chance. You need not tell us that your crew would not steal from us, for we know better, and so do you. In the second place, I want to tell you that we blew up your cave without intending to do more than burn some of the things in it. The rest we took out,—though it doesn’t make much difference now what our intentions were.

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“And, last of all, let me tell you that neither you nor your crew are going to try to be revenged on us. Why? Because you don’t dare to. It wouldn’t be healthy for any of you, if it became known in the village what was in that cave, and nobody knows that better than you. Not that Bob and I intend to tell, ever, unless you give us cause to. But let me tell you that it won’t do for you to play any tricks on us.

"Please don't forget that neither you nor a single one of your crew dares to disturb so much as a rope around this camp. Now you can get up."

Harvey rose, white with rage, and stood for a moment, as though undecided whether or not to continue the unequal combat; but his better judgment prevailed, and he walked slowly out of the tent, pausing at the door long enough to say:

"You need not have any fear of our troubling you or your camp. You have been too smart for us, and we shall steer clear of you after this.

"In fact," he added, sneeringly, "any little thing we can do for you at any time, just let us know. We shall think a great deal of two such smart fellows as you, I assure you." And so saying, he left them.

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"Sorry we can't say as much for you," Bob called out after him, and was half-sorry for the words the next moment; for it was foolish to increase an enmity which could only lead to trouble.

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CHAPTER VII. SQUIRE BRACKETT'S DOG

The island got a respite of at least a week, after the explosion, from excitement of any sort. A calm like that of the primeval days before the "boom" pervaded all the settlement. But it was not to endure. One morning a little fishing-schooner, which had fallen into the hands of Squire Brackett, through a mortgage which he had foreclosed upon a poor skipper across the bay, and which was now lying at anchor in the harbour, was found painted with broad stripes of blood red, and flying the skull and cross-bones at the masthead, a veritable pirate craft.

The squire was never able to discover whether the authors of this piece of mischief were the boys or some of his own townsmen, who, indignant at his seizure of the only means of livelihood belonging to the unfortunate skipper, had roundly denounced Squire Brackett for his meanness. However, the incident resulted in the squire leaving on the boat one day for the city of Benton to make a purchase.

What the squire purchased he brought back with him the next day. And, as it is a matter of passing interest how his purchase arrived at the island and how brief a time it remained there, it shall be here recorded. By the same boat there came to the village an individual whose arrival made no stir, but who remained long enough to create the greatest excitement the village had ever known.

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The arrival of the steamer from Benton was an event of great interest daily, for it brought not only mysterious packages, bundles, and messages from fathers whose business kept them in the city, but now and then a new face, which was duly scrutinized and commented upon by the summer colonists before its possessor had crossed the gangplank.

So that on this day when Squire Brackett returned to his native isle there were many gathered upon the wharf, though, it is hardly necessary to say, not for the purpose of welcoming his return. Yet one might readily believe the squire thought otherwise; since, as the steamer neared the wharf, this self-important individual, arrayed in a suit of shining black, with a great deal of staring shirt-front, and with an enormous slouch-hat surmounting his ponderous head, seemed the most conspicuous person aboard.

The squire stood nearest the gangway, and, indeed, it looked from a distance as though the other passengers, in recognition of the greatness of this island magnate, had drawn respectfully back a little distance, to wait till he should have gone ashore ere they approached the railing.

As the steamer came nearer, however, the reason for this seeming deference on their part became apparent. It was plainly not due so much to any awe inspired by the squire as it was to fear,—fear of the squire's purchase. The squire's purchase was as ugly and vicious looking a bulldog as ever walked on four legs. The squire held the dog by a stout piece of cord, which was wound several times about his wrist.

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The dog and the squire, being each in equally ill-humour, may have found their companionship agreeable. Certain it was that the squire was the only person whom the dog did not snarl and snap at. It growled and snapped at every one, and even snarled and showed its teeth at the good-natured cook aboard the steamer, who had offered it a scrap of meat.

This surliness on the part of his new acquisition had particularly pleased the squire, who argued from it that here was an incorruptible beast, that would meet in the same spirit any such advances upon the part of strangers when it should be duly installed as guardian of his farmhouse.

The squire would be magnanimous on this occasion, however, and, despite the fact that the crowd on the wharf looked to him, as it always did in his eyes, like invaders of his domain, he gave a bow accompanied by a sweeping gesture of his hand, presumably intended to be a patronizing greeting, which should include everybody, and nobody in particular, at once.

Then the steamer made its landing. It was not always an easy matter here, for the tide at certain times ran swift, and seemed to strive fiercely to drive the boat away from the wharf. Therefore, when the steamer was as yet at some distance from the wharf, a deck-hand at the bow skilfully let fly a coil of small rope, which unwound in the air and was caught by a man standing on the wharf. To an end of this rope was attached the usual heavy hawser, which was then drawn on to the wharf by means of the small rope, and the bight thrown over a spiling. In like manner the other big hawser was drawn up astern on to the wharf.

When things were done shipshape, it was the rule of the steamer that the small rope should be coiled again and at once thrown back to the boat while one end was still fast to the wharf, so that when the hawser was cast off from the spiling it could be drawn aboard by the small rope,

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without its splashing down into the water and getting wet.

But things were more often done hurriedly than shipshape at the Southport landing. The steamer's crew had all they could do usually to land freight and get it out quickly enough, so that the boat could go on down the bay without losing time. The line thrown to the wharf was usually caught by the village storekeeper, who had little time to spare, or by whatever man or boy happened to be standing near at hand. The boat's rule was seldom obeyed. Scarcely any one ever took the trouble to coil up the small rope and throw it back. When the hawsers were cast off they fell into the water, regardless of the fact that they thereby got wet and became heavier, dragging the small ropes after them, and were hauled aboard as the boat steamed away.

The steamer having, on this occasion, been made fast to the wharf and the gangplank put out, Squire Brackett crossed it, dragging his purchase behind him,—the purchase skulking very unwillingly across the plank and showing its teeth at the crowd upon the wharf.

The squire hated and despised boys, and made it a point to ignore them whenever it was possible. For this very reason they delighted to annoy him by hailing him whenever they met him. Young Joe Warren had a way of driving the squire nearly into fits by pretending to mistake him for one Captain Kendrick, who was the bitterest enemy the squire had, and then always apologizing for his mistake by explaining to the squire that he could not tell them apart.

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"Good morning, Squire Brackett, glad to see you back again!" cried Henry Burns, in the heartiest fashion imaginable, as the squire stepped on to the wharf.

"Humph! Morning—morning," grunted the squire, as he eyed Henry Burns suspiciously.

Henry Burns smiled most affably, as though the squire had been his dearest friend and adviser.

"Why, how do you do, squire?" said George Warren, cordially.

Squire Brackett scowled angrily at him, but answered, "How d'ye do?" as short as he could.

Just then young Joe made his appearance.

"How are you, Captain Kendrick?" he bawled, loud enough to be heard all over the wharf.

The crowd began to smile, and young Joe added, hastily:

"Oh, I beg pardon, Squire Brackett—always take you for Cap'n Kendrick—strange how you do look so much alike."

"You little idiot," yelled the choleric squire, "I'd Cap'n Kendrick you with a rawhide, if I had the say of you,—insulting an honest man with a name like that,—every one of you ought to be in State prison. And you, you're the worst one of all, Jack Harvey," pointing to the latter, who had just come upon the wharf. "And you, too!" shaking his fist at Tom and Bob. "You're sly, but you'll get caught yet. You're a pack of young rascals, every one of you. Don't any of you come

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around my house, if you don't want to be chewed up. Here, you brute! Quit that!"



"YOU'RE THE WORST ONE OF ALL, JACK HARVEY"

The dog had snapped viciously at a child that ran past, causing her to scream with fear.

Just then the freight-agent called out to the squire:

"You'll have to come in here and see about this freight of yours," he said. "It's all mixed up. And don't bring that dog in here, or the crew may take him for a piece of freight and run a truck against him."

At one corner of the freight-house on the wharf was a big iron ring, to which the squire tied the dog.

"I wouldn't advise anybody to meddle with him," he said; but the advice seemed hardly necessary, for the dog showed its teeth and sprang savagely at any one who ventured to come near.

There were some expressions of indignation that such a dangerous brute should be brought to the island.

Every one did keep as far out of the dog's way as possible, excepting Tim Reardon, who, after a whispered consultation with Jack Harvey, after

which the latter disappeared behind the freight-house, seated himself just out of the dog's reach, and caused that animal to froth at the mouth and nearly strangle itself in trying to get loose, by pointing a finger at the dog and making a loud hissing noise between his teeth.

Not content with this form of annoyance, Tim Reardon varied it now and again by darting a hand out at the dog, as though in an attempt to seize him by the throat. To which the maddened animal, with true bulldog ferocity, responded with savage rushes as far as the rope would permit, his wide-open jaws fairly dripping with rage and disappointment.

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If there was any design on the boy's part to distract the dog's attention from what Jack Harvey was doing at the corner of the freight-house, to which the dog was tied, it succeeded admirably. Moreover, it is certain that, when Harvey reappeared, Tim stopped teasing the brute, and he and Harvey walked around to the rear of the freight-house.

The freight-house was situated almost at the end of the wharf on its seaward side, so near to the edge of the wharf that there was only room for a single person to walk along on the outside, and that at the risk of losing one's balance and falling off the wharf. The ring to which the dog was tied was on the side near the end, and was not visible to those standing on the front of the wharf. Any one going around to the further side of the freight-house at this moment might have seen Harvey and Tim standing there,—Harvey nearest the ring and holding a knife in his hand.

The steamer in landing had made a complete circuit in the harbour, and had come alongside the wharf with her head pointing out into the bay, so that now, as Captain Chase called out "All aboard," and gave orders to cast off bow and stern lines, the boat was ready to steam directly away from the wharf. The gangplanks were drawn in. There was a tinkling of bells; a great commotion as the steamer's wheels began to revolve rapidly; a general waving of handkerchiefs from the wharf to those who were bound farther down the bay; the steamer began to glide away from the wharf, when suddenly somebody shrieked:

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"The dog! The dog! Run! Run! He's broken loose."

And before the crowd had time to scatter, the dog, infuriated with the tormenting it had received at the hands of Tim Reardon, dashed toward it. Men, women, and children fled in terror. Squire Brackett, who came running out of the freight-house, did not dare face the dog, but dodged back into the freight-house and slammed the door shut, in a cold sweat of fear.

The boys, most of them, rushed for points of safety, clambering up the ends of the spiling that jutted above the floor of the wharf, and young Joe and Tom Harris, being at the very edge of the wharf, and having no other means of escape, and nothing to defend themselves with, dropped off the wharf into the water and swam to shore. Several of the other boys and some men scrambled about for clubs to ward off the brute's fierce rush.

Among these latter was Henry Burns. Realizing on the instant that to attempt to flee was worse than hopeless, he had glanced about for something to defend himself with, and had seized upon a broken piece of oar. Grasping it with both hands, he stood, calmly awaiting the attack. The dog, seeing him right in his path, rushed at him, and when within a yard of the boy suddenly gave a spring, as though to seize him by the throat.

Henry Burns, summoning all his strength, aimed a terrific sweeping blow at the dog, but it missed its mark. Meeting no obstruction, the force of the blow swung the boy completely around, so that he lost his balance and fell sprawling upon the wharf, while the piece of oar flew from his hands and landed far out in the water.

A strange thing had happened. The crowd, pausing breathlessly in the midst of flight, had seen with horror the dog spring at Henry Burns; but the animal's leap had a most extraordinary termination. All at once the dog was jerked violently backward through the air, and fell heavily on the wharf, yelping with surprise and fright. Then it was dragged rapidly across the wharf, and the crowd yelled with derision as they saw that the rope by which the dog had been tied to the ring had been unfastened or cut from the ring, and had been fastened to the rope which had been thrown from the steamer, and the other end of which was made fast to the steamer's hawser.

As the boat steamed away it drew the rope after it. There was no possible escape for the dog. Struggling as best it could, barking and yelping, and snapping madly at the rope, it braced itself for one instant on the edge of the wharf, and then was dragged over and fell, still struggling, to the water below. The steamer kept on its way a short distance, and then stopped. The rope was drawn in by a deck-hand and the dog hauled to the railing of the steamer, but it was not taken aboard, for nobody on board wanted a dead dog. The deck-hand cut the rope, and the body splashed into the water.

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Thus perished the squire's bulldog, unmourned, save for the squire himself, who raged about the wharf, looking for some boy whom he might accuse of the trick, and vowing untold vengeance upon the perpetrators of it. But, one and all, they had wisely dispersed, the guilty and the innocent alike, and the squire was soon left alone in his wrath.

Who had done the thing? The crowd did not know, for it had been too excited to notice that Jack Harvey and Tim Reardon had emerged from behind the freight-house just at the critical moment when the dog had sprung at Henry Burns.

As for Henry Burns, he was the hero of the hour.

There had been on the whole so much excitement attending the squire's arrival that few had noticed a stranger who had come ashore soon after Squire Brackett. He had not waited on the wharf, but had gone directly to the hotel. There Henry Burns met him later; for the man sat at Colonel Witham's table, as that was the only one then available.

The new arrival was the sort of guest to please the colonel, for he was extremely quiet. He walked only with the aid of a cane, and then, apparently, with great effort, stopping frequently to rest. He told them he had been very ill; that his health had broken down with overwork, and he had accordingly tried cruising along the coast. His friends had left him up the river some days before, and would call for him.

He was a man a little under middle age, of medium height and thick-set, with black hair and a pale, smooth-shaven face. He was evidently somewhat a man of the world and had travelled abroad, for, seated before the fireplace in the office that evening, he talked for some time of his travels.

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But there were other things of more interest to the boarders than this quiet, reserved stranger, who did not play cards and who hobbled about with a cane. There was, above all, a morning paper from town, which bristled with startling head-lines, descriptive of a robbery of the residence of one of the richest men in the town. It told how the thieves, three in number, had entered the house where Mr. Curtis, the owner, was sleeping alone, in the absence of his family; how they had put a pistol to his head and made him get up and open a safe, from which they had taken several hundred dollars in money and a jewel-case containing a diamond necklace and other gems to the value of several thousand dollars.

The jewels, it said, were the property of Mrs. Curtis, and most of them had been bridal presents. A reward of \$500 was offered for their return or for information leading to the arrest of any one of the robbers.

The article stated further that Mr. Curtis was positive he could identify the man who subsequently bound and gagged him, his mask having but partially concealed his face. He was, he said, a man of about medium height, with black hair, black moustache, and heavy black beard, broad-shouldered, thick-set, and unusually active and powerful.

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All this, as it was read aloud, threw the guests into the greatest possible excitement, as a great part of them were from the very town and knew the Curtis family, by reputation if not personally.

It did not, of course, interest the stranger guest, for he nodded in his chair and nearly dozed off several times during the reading. Still, when the guests had dispersed, he picked up the paper from a chair and took it with him to his room.

It was the very next night following that of his arrival that Henry Burns met with a surprise.

On the night in question there was a full moon about half-past ten o'clock, and, as Henry had agreed with Tom and Bob to meet them at their tent, he opened his window, stepped out on to the ledge and started to climb to the roof.

Mackerel had struck in at the western bay, and the boys had planned to paddle down the island that night, carry their canoe across the short strip of land that saved the island from being cut into almost equal halves by the sea, launch it again in the western bay, and paddle around to

where the Warren boys' sloop lay anchored in Fish Hawk's Cove. Then they were all to try for mackerel early in the morning.

Henry Burns stepped softly out, grasped the lightning-rod, and, with a quickness that would have amazed the worthy Mrs. Carlin, scrambled to the ledge over the top of his window. There he paused a moment for breath, and then climbed up the lightning-rod, hand over hand, and gained the roof.

He had proceeded then across the roof but a little ways, when he heard suddenly, almost directly beneath him, the sound of footsteps. Some one was coming up the stairs that led to the roof.

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Henry Burns had barely time to conceal himself behind a chimney when the trap-door in the roof was softly opened, and he saw the head and shoulders of a man emerge through the opening. Henry Burns lay flat on the roof, in the dark shadow cast by the chimney. The moon shone full in the man's face, and Henry Burns saw, to his amazement, that it was the stranger guest. The sickly, weak expression in the man's face was gone, and in its stead there was a sinister, bold look, which seemed far more natural to his powerful physique.

Suddenly the man, with the strength and ease of an athlete, sprang lightly out on to the roof. He still carried his cane, but he had no use for it, save to clutch it in one hand more after the manner of a cudgel than a cane.

Henry Burns, for once in his life, was afraid. It was all so strange and incomprehensible.

Once upon the roof, the man straightened himself up, threw out his chest and squared back his broad shoulders. He was erect in stature, without the suggestion of a stoop. He seemed to exult in the freedom of the place, like one who had been kept in some confinement. When he walked across the roof to the edge facing the sea, there was no suggestion of any limp in his gait. It was quick and firm, but noiseless and almost catlike.

What did it mean? Henry Burns thought of the robbery. Could the man have had anything to do with that? Why had he pretended to be weak and ill? Why had he come to this out-of-the-way place, pretending that he was an invalid? Surely he could have no designs upon any one on the island. There was no house there that offered inducement to a robber, if the man were one.

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It must be that his coming was an attempt to hide himself away—to secrete himself. But why? The description of the robber that had bound Mr. Curtis—did that tally with the appearance of this man? Broad shoulders, medium height, active, powerful,—all these agreed. But the black moustache and heavy beard. The stranger's face was smoothly shaven. That transformation, however, could have been quickly effected.

One thing was certain. It would not be well that this man, a pretended invalid, but strong, and armed with a heavy cane, that had suddenly become transformed from a cripple's staff to a cudgel, who could but have some dark motive in

thus disguising and secreting himself, should find himself watched and his secret discovered. Henry Burns crouched closer in the shadow of the chimney, and hardly dared to breathe. The evil that he had so accidentally uncovered in the man, his own helplessness compared with the other's strength, and the dangerous situation, there upon the house-top, made him afraid. If they had been upon the ground he would have feared less.

The man scanned the moonlit waters of the bay long and earnestly. His survey done, he paced a few times back and forth, swinging the cane, and then, stealing noiselessly to the doorway, disappeared down the stairs, closing the trap-door after him.

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Henry Burns lost little time in descending to the ground. On the way to the boys' camp that night he made two resolves: first, that he would keep to himself, for the present, at least, the stranger's secret; second, that, whatever that secret was, he would find it out if any clue was to be had upon that island. The second resolution, he thought, rather included the first, since, the greater the number of those who knew of the stranger's secret, the greater the chances of his suspicions being aroused.

Another thing that disturbed Henry Burns not a little was the knowledge that his excursions over the roof were now attended with greater risk than ever. It would not do to encounter the stranger there unexpectedly. What might not the man, suddenly aroused, and desperate, as Henry Burns believed him to be, do to him, if he found himself discovered? A fall from such a height must mean instant death, and who was there to suspect that he had not fallen, if he should be found next day lying upon the ground?

In the future he must know whether the roof were occupied or not before he ventured upon it, and especially must he be careful when returning late at night.

Henry Burns resolved to keep the man's secret for a time, for the reason that he was firmly convinced he had not come to the island to commit any wrong there, but to hide away. The island offered every advantage for the latter, and no inducement for the former. The man's design certainly was to secrete himself. Still, Henry Burns had no intention of letting the man escape from the island. He would watch also for those friends that the man had said were to come for him with their yacht, and he would make sure that they did not sail away again. Though but a boy, the stranger's secret was in dangerous hands, if he had but known it. And yet luck was to effect more than Henry Burns's scheming.

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Tom and Bob were waiting impatiently when Henry Burns arrived at the tent. They launched the canoe, the three embarked, and soon left the tent and then the village behind. They glided swiftly along the picturesque shore till they came at length to the narrows; here they carried the canoe across and launched it again in the western bay. In an hour from the time they had left the tent, they had come alongside the sloop *Spray* in Fish Hawk's Cove, and the Warren boys had sleepily made room for them in the cabin.

It was crowded for them all there, and it may have been for that reason that Henry Burns did not sleep soundly,—either that, or because of the figure of a man that he could not drive from his mind, and that appeared to him, half-dreaming and half-awake, as a figure that hobbled along, stooping and bent, but which suddenly sprang up before him, lithe and threatening, and brandishing in his hand a cudgel that looked like a cane.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

At four o'clock next morning, when Arthur Warren tried to rouse the other boys, they were loath to turn out. It was warm inside, under the blankets, and the sea air outside was cool and damp. Out in the cockpit Arthur lighted an oil-stove, which they always carried aboard, made the coffee in a big pot, and set it on to boil. Then he called the sleepers in the cabin again.

"Come you, Art, shut up out there! How do you expect any one can sleep, with you bawling out in that fashion?"

This was from George Warren, whose voice denoted that he was only about half-awake.

"Don't want you to sleep any more," answered Arthur. "Want you to get up and fish."

"Don't care to fish," said George, still only half-awake.

"Well," persisted Arthur, "may I inquire what you did come over here for?"

"Certainly you may. I came over here to sleep. I like the air over here. Now, please don't disturb us any more, Arthur. You can be decent, you know, when you've a mind to be." And with this request, drowsily mumbled, George pulled the blanket comfortably about him and settled back for another nap.

At this juncture, however, his brother poked his head in at the companionway and yelled at the top of his lungs:

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"Hulloa, there! Hulloa, I say! There's a school of mackerel breaking off the point. Wake up, every lazy lubber aboard!"

"Say, Art, you're a mean scoundrel," said George Warren, emerging once more from the blankets. "You know there isn't a mackerel in sight. I'll be just fool enough to look out of the window, though, so you can laugh, so get ready." And George looked sleepily out of the little cabin window.

He had no sooner done so, however, than he sprang up, exclaiming, excitedly:

"There they are, sure enough. Boys, get up! Get up! There's a school of mackerel breaking off the point, as sure as we're alive."

The boys needed no further urging. They

dressed and scrambled out on deck. Not far away from the sloop could be seen plainly that tiny chop-sea which is caused by the breaking of a school of mackerel. The calm surface of the water was broken there by a series of miniature ripples which could not be mistaken. The fish were there, but would they bite?

"They are coming this way," said Arthur. "We can soon reach them with the throw-bait. We shall not have to leave the sloop."

Hastily they got the bait out. It was a bucket filled with scraps of fish and clams, chopped fine and mixed with salt water. Taking a long-handled dipper, Arthur half-filled it with the bait and threw it as far as he could out toward the school of fish.

The mackerel seized upon it greedily. From the sloop the boys could see them dart through the water after it as it slowly sank. The water was fairly alive with fish, ravenously hungry.

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"Hurrah!" cried Arthur. "They're hungry as sharks. Get the lines out, quick."

In a twinkling every boy had a line overboard; but, to their disappointment, not a fish would bite. They still seized the throw-bait that was cast out, but not one of them would take a baited hook.

"If that isn't a regular mackerel trick, I'll eat my bait," said George Warren. "Cap'n Sam said mackerel would often act that way, though I never saw them when they wouldn't bite before. He says they will play around a boat for hours and not touch a hook, and, all of a sudden, they'll commence and bite as though they were starving."

The boy's words were unexpectedly verified at this moment by a sudden twitch at his line and by corresponding twitches at all the other lines. The fish had begun biting in earnest. The next moment the boys had three or four aboard, handsome fellows, striped green and black, changing to a bluish shade, and soon the cockpit seemed alive with them.

It was new sport for Tom and Bob, but they soon learned to tend two lines, one in each hand; to drop one and haul the other in at a bite, and to slat the mackerel off the hook with a quick snap, instead of stopping to take them off by hand.

The mackerel bit fiercely, sometimes at the bare hook even, like fish gone crazy. It seemed as though they might go on catching them all day long, for the water was alive with them; but all at once the fish stopped biting as abruptly as they had begun. They still played around the boat, but not a fish would touch a hook.

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"We may as well put up our lines, boys. They are through biting for this morning," said Arthur Warren. "Besides, we have more fish now than we know what to do with."

There was no doubt of that. They had caught several hundred of the fish—enough to supply the village.

"We'll make friends with every one in town," said George Warren. "These are the first

mackerel of the season, and we will give away all we cannot use."

"I feel as though I could eat about four now," said young Joe.

"I can eat at least six," said Henry Burns.

"We'll try you and see," said Arthur, producing an enormous frying-pan from a locker and a junk of pork from another. "Tom, you're the boss cook of the crowd. You fry the fish while the rest of us clean up the boat, make things shipshape, and get ready to sail."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Tom, rolling up his sleeves. "Let's see, four apiece is how many?"

And soon the appetizing odour of the frying fish, mingled with that of the steaming coffee, saluted most temptingly the nostrils of the six hungry boys.

It was several hours after this, when the yacht was bowling along in the western bay, near the head of the island, before a fresh southerly breeze, that young Joe said:

"I know how we can play a stupendous joke on everybody in the village."

Joe being the youngest of the brothers, and of the party, and it being therefore necessary that he should be occasionally squelched, George merely said:

"You don't think of anything, Joe, but playing jokes."

"All right," retorted Joe, "seeing you are all so wildly enthusiastic, I'll just keep it to myself."

"Nonsense, Joe, don't be huffy," said Arthur, whose curiosity was aroused. "Tell us what it is, and if it is any good we'll try it, won't we, boys?"

There being an unanimously affirmative reply, young Joe proceeded.

"Well," said he, "there's no risk at all about this. You know the old farmhouse on the bluff across the cove? Everybody in the village believes it is haunted. I found that out yesterday, when I was in Cap'n Sam's store. The house hasn't been lived in for two years, and not a soul in the village has dared to go near it at night in all that time. If any of them had to stay over there all night, they would sleep out in the woods rather than go into the house.

"You see, the house belonged to a man by the name of Randall, Captain Randall, who lived there with his wife. This was a little more than two years ago. He owned a little fishing-smack, in which he went short trips down the coast. One night in a storm he drove in on to the bluff; the smack was pounded to pieces, and he was drowned. His wife died not long after.

"Since then, the villagers have thought the house haunted. They hear shrieks from there during the night, and think they see strange lights in the windows. They were discussing it in the store yesterday. Cap'n Sam declared that, only a few nights ago, when he was coming across the cove from Billy Cook's, he saw the ghost of Captain Randall pass out of the back

door of the old house and disappear in the woods.

"Billy Cook, who lives up the cove, was in the store, too. He said he and his wife hear screams come from there often in the night, especially when it is storming; and two other villagers said they had seen lights in the windows long after midnight.

"That new boarder at Colonel Witham's was in there, too, Henry. He said he knew houses were haunted, and told several stories about ghosts, which he said were true. But I believe he knew they were lies, and he was only amusing himself; but that's nothing to do with the matter. The villagers seemed to believe all that he said.

"Now, what I propose is, that we manufacture some brand-new ghosts for them, some they have never seen before. There are some red and green lights up at the cottage, that were left over from the Fourth of July, which we can burn inside the house, after letting out a few screeches that will arouse the village. Then we'll wrap sheets around us and run past the windows, while the lights are burning. We'll have something wrapped in white to fling off the cliff, too, in a flare of light.

"Then we'll run down through the woods and take everything with us. And if we don't have some fun the next day listening to the ghost-stories about the village, why, my name isn't Joe, that's all."

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"That's not such a bad scheme, Joe," said George.

"It's a daisy," said Henry Burns, "and easily done. What's to hinder our going up there to-night and taking up the lights and the sheets and looking the place over? I never was inside the old house myself, though I have been close to it at night, and never saw or heard of any ghosts. We can carry a lantern up with us and light it after we get inside. If any one sees the light from the village he will think it's the ghosts walking again."

"I don't like so much of this running around in the night," said Tom, flexing his biceps. "A fellow must have sleep to keep in condition, but I guess they can count on us in this case, can't they, Bob? It's too good to be missed."

"You bet!" replied Bob. "We can turn in and sleep this afternoon. Count me in, for one."

"Then," said George, "suppose we all start from our cottage at ten o'clock to-night. We'll launch the rowboat from the beach and slip across and look things over."

So it was agreed.

The yacht had long turned the head of the island and was beating down alongshore in the eastern bay. Presently they rounded the bluff and came into the cove. It was nearly noon.

High up on the bluff, and several rods back from the edge of the cliffs, was the old farmhouse; it stood out conspicuously, though at some distance from the water-front, for the land rose quite sharply and the house occupied the top of

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the eminence. Around it, on all sides except that facing the village, was a dark, heavy growth of hemlocks and pines. It was a mysterious, shadowy place, even by day; but when darkness set in about it, standing off solitary and alone, as it did, from the rest of the village, with the waters lying between, it is little wonder that superstition inhabited it with ghosts and that it was a spot to be shunned.

At the outermost end of the cliffs that protruded into the bay, a ravine, where the ledge at some time had been rent apart, led from the water up toward the cottage, affording a precarious pathway. There was a natural stairway of rock for some distance from the water's edge, and at the end nearest the old house a series of clumsy wooden stairs led up from the ravine to the surface of the bluff. These were now old and rather rickety; but a light person, at some risk, could still use them.

The villagers, as a rule, avoided the house and this pathway to the bluff. If they had occasion to go ashore there, they usually landed farther up the cove at a beach, and walked through the woods at a distance from the house. No one cared to go very near it.

When the sloop had come to anchor in the cove opposite the Warren cottage, the boys took a boatload of mackerel ashore, besides a basketful in the canoe. They carried them around to every cottage in the village, and even to the hotel, though, as George Warren remarked, they would have to get Colonel Witham out of bed some night in a hurry to make up for it.

Certainly the village, supping that night on their catch, was inclined to forget and forgive them many a prank that had been stored up for future punishment.

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When Henry Burns made his exit across the roof that night, he made a careful survey before climbing out on it to see that the stranger was not there. There were no signs of him, and Henry got away safely. Tom and Bob were at the Warren cottage when he arrived. Everything was in readiness, and they all set out for the shore.

"These clouds in the sky are favourable," said Tom. "If it was as bright as it was last night, we might have to postpone our trip. This mackerel sky, through which the moon shines dimly, is just the thing."

"Everything seems to be favourable," added George, as they hurried down the bank to the beach.

And yet not quite everything, for, when they had reached the shore and came to look for the boat, it was not there.

"That's too bad," cried young Joe. "And we left it here at five o'clock, too, after washing it out thoroughly, because we had brought the mackerel ashore in it."

"Who could have stolen it?" asked Tom.

"No one," replied Joe. "Nobody ever has a boat stolen in this harbour. Some one who wanted to cross the cove has borrowed it. We shall find it

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all right in the morning,—but that don't help us out now. It's provoking enough, and strange, too, after all, that the one who took it didn't step up to the cottage and let us know, as the cottage is so near. But boats are almost common property here; any man in the harbour would lend us his boat in a minute."

"We must do the next best thing," said Arthur, "and take one from the slip at the wharf. No one will want his boat at this hour."

"Though some one does seem to want ours," broke in Joe. "Curious, isn't it, that whoever it is should come around into the cove and get our boat, when there are any number at the slip?"

It certainly was rather strange.

Following Arthur's suggestion, the boys proceeded to the slip and embarked in a big dory, the property of Captain Sam. Then they rowed quickly across the cove.

It took them but a few minutes to reach the other shore, for the cove was smooth as glass. They headed for the bluff, and pointed directly into the black, shadowy hole which they knew to be the natural landing-place. It was a peculiar, narrow little dock, completely rock-bound, except for the passage leading into it. It lay entirely in the shadow, but they had landed there before, and knew just where to steer for a shelf, or ledge, of rock that made a natural slip.

Still, their familiarity with the place did not prevent them from bumping suddenly into a rowboat that lay moored there. They pushed it aside to make a landing, and found to their amazement that it was their own.

"Hulloa!" cried George, springing out on to the broad, shelving ledge; "that is queerer still. Here's the old *Anna*, and what in the world is she doing here? Who can have brought her? And what for? There's something strange about it. Why, there isn't a man in the village that would dare go near the haunted house at night, and yet somebody is over here now, for some reason."

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If it were possible for Henry Burns to be excited ever, he was so now.

"Get in here, quick, George," he said, "and don't make any noise. I think I know what it means, and I'll tell you just as soon as we get out of here. We can't get away any too soon, either."

"Why not take the *Anna* out with us?" said young Joe, "and pay somebody off for running away with it? He would only have to walk a few miles around the cove to get back again—"

"No, no, leave the boat where it is," said Henry Burns. "And let's get out of here quick."

"Why, what's the matter with you, Henry?" asked George, jumping back into the boat and giving it a vigorous shove off. "Any one would think to see you that some one was being murdered up there."

Henry Burns's earnestness was sufficient to convince them, however, that something serious was involved in their actions, and they made haste to get out into the cove again.

"Row for the beach above, boys," continued Henry Burns, "and we will go up to the old house through the woods. I think I know who is up there in the house, and if I am right it means that we may make an important discovery. The man who I think is up there is Mr. Kemble."

"What! The cripple?" asked Tom.

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"This is another one of Henry Burns's jokes," said George. "You're having lots of fun with us, aren't you, Henry?"

"I tell you I am in earnest," said Henry Burns. "We won't burn any lights to-night, and you better make up your mind to that, right off. There's more serious business ahead of us."

And then, when they had landed on the beach and had drawn the boat noiselessly up on the shore, Henry Burns told them of the adventure he had had on the roof of the hotel. How he had seen the stranger throw off his disguise of weakness, and become, suddenly, a man of strength and action; how he believed the man to be somehow connected with the thieves who had committed the robbery, and how he believed that the man was now up there in the haunted house, though for what purpose he could not tell. It might be he had something to conceal there.

"Cracky!" exclaimed Tom, when Henry Burns had finished his story. "This beats ghost hunting all hollow; but we are by no means certain that it is this stranger who is up there."

"No, but I believe as Henry does, that it is he," said George Warren. "Who else would have any object in being up there this hour of the night? We know from what Henry saw that the man is dangerous, that he seems to be in hiding—"

"And that if he should catch one of us spying on him up there in the old house, he wouldn't hesitate to shoot," interrupted young Joe, who would rather have risked the meeting with a legion of ghosts than with one real live thief, armed and desperate.

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"That's true enough," answered Henry Burns; "but we must not give him that opportunity, if it is he, which, of course, we're by no means sure of. At any rate, we want to see and not be seen by whoever is there, and we cannot go any too quietly."

Then, as the tide was rising, and they might be gone some time, they lifted the dory and carried it up out of the reach of high water, after which they began the ascent of the hill. There was not a breath of wind stirring, and there was not a sound of life in the woods. The tide crept in softly, and not even a wave could be heard on the shore.

Out through the trees they could see, as they climbed, glimpses of the water, calm and placid as a mill-pond, lit up dimly by the moonlight shining through a patchwork of clouds that covered all the sky. Beyond this the darkness of the village was accentuated by a light here and there, glimmering from the window of some cottage.

Then they came to the brow of the hill, and could

see the haunted house through the trees. They approached cautiously. It looked gloomier than ever, with its sagging, moss-grown roof, its shattered window-panes, and the door in the side hanging awry from a single hinge.

In what once had been the dooryard there were a few straggling clumps of bushes, and thistles and burdocks grew in rank profusion.

It was a sight to dampen the ardour of stouter hunters than this band of boys. But when, added to all this, there suddenly flashed across one of the windows a ray of light, faint and flickering, but discernible to them all, and which the next instant disappeared, they halted irresolutely and debated what they should do.

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It was finally determined that Henry Burns and Bob White should go on ahead to the old house, while the rest waited at a little distance till they should reconnoitre. The two set off at once, while the others waited behind a clump of trees. They did not have to wait long, for the two returned shortly, telling them to come on softly. When within a few rods of the house they dropped on their hands and knees and crept along.

All at once the two ahead stopped and whispered to the others to listen. They heard noises that seemed to come from the cellar, which sounded as though some one was digging in the earth. Then, as they came within range of a long, shallow cellar window, they saw the rays of a lantern.

They crept up closely and peered in through the pane. There, in the damp, dingy, cobwebbed cellar of the haunted house, dimly lighted by the rays of a lantern, which stood on an old wooden bench, a man was working. He had his coat off and was digging in the ground with a spade, throwing up shovelfuls of the hard clay.

The rays of light from the lantern were not diffused evenly throughout the cellar, but shot out in one direction, toward the spot where the man was at work; and this because it was neither the ordinary ship's lantern, nor yet a house lantern, but a small dark lantern, such as a burglar might carry on his person, with a sliding shutter in front.

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The man's sleeves were rolled up, displaying arms that were corded with muscle, and on which the veins stood out as he worked. He handled the spade awkwardly enough, but made up in strength for his lack of skill. Presently he paused and looked up, and they saw that it was, as Henry Burns had prophesied, the stranger guest.

A curious occupation for one who was cruising for his health! Indeed, he looked so little like a man that was weak and ill, and so much like one that was powerful and reckless and devoid of fear, as the light of the lantern caused his figure to stand out in relief against the darkness, that, though they were six and he but one, had he seen them and sprung up, they would have fled in terror.

Then, as he stooped down to grasp the lantern, they drew quickly back from the window. It was well they did so, for, taking up the lantern, the

man flashed it upon the window-panes, and then, turning it in all directions, threw the rays of light in all parts of the cellar and out through a window opposite. Then he set it down again; and it was evident his suspicions had not been aroused, for he resumed his digging.

After a few minutes he threw down the spade and produced from the darkness a small tin box, which they had not seen before, which he deposited in the hole he had dug. Then he shovelled the earth back upon it, stamping it in with his feet, and so refilled the hole. The remaining loose earth he scattered about the cellar.

The boys waited no longer, but crept back to the edge of the woods. In a few minutes they saw a faint flash of light through one of the windows in the floor above, and presently they saw the man come out of the door in the front of the house. He had extinguished the lantern and was still carrying the spade. As he walked quickly down the path to the landing-place, he left the path and hid the spade beneath some underbrush, after which he disappeared over the edge of the cliff. Finally they saw him out in the middle of the cove, pulling vigorously for the other shore.

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"Well," said Henry Burns, as they watched him out of sight, "there are lots of sick men whom I would rather meet over here in the night-time than that same Mr. Kemble."

"He's as strong as a lion," said young Joe. "Did you see the veins stand out on his arms as he worked? I felt like making for the woods every time he straightened himself up, with that spade in his hand."

"I don't believe any of us felt any too comfortable," said Tom, "though I'm sure I shouldn't be afraid to meet him in the daytime, with Bob and one of the rest of us. It's the influence of the night-time that frightened us. And he seemed to be right in his element in it."

"Let's dig that box up and get away from here and discuss the matter afterward," said George. "It's getting late, and we don't want mother to worry. I'll get the spade." And he ran and brought it.

They went into the haunted house then, groping their way in the darkness, for they had left their own lantern in the dory. They made their way to the kitchen and found the cellar door, with some difficulty. Then, lest the old stairs should be unsafe, they went down one at a time.

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It was an easy matter to unearth the box, though they worked in utter darkness. When they had secured it, they refilled the hole and then stamped the earth down as they had found it. This being done, they were glad enough to get away from the house, to replace the spade beneath the underbrush, where the man had hidden it, and hurry down to the shore. Launching the dory, they embarked, Henry Burns carrying the box, and, with George and Arthur Warren at the oars, they had soon crossed the cove and landed on the beach.

There, too, was the *Anna*, drawn high up on shore, where the stranger had left it. It was a large and heavy boat, and it must have required

CHAPTER IX. SETTING A TRAP

When the boys had at length gathered around the table in the old-fashioned kitchen of the Warren cottage and had drawn the window-shades, they proceeded to examine the box. It was an ordinary shallow tin box, such as a business man might keep odds and ends of papers and cash in. It was fastened with a small padlock. After trying to unlock this with every key they could find in the house, and without success, young Joe produced a file, and with this filed through the small staple in the box.

When the cover was thrown back there was disclosed a layer of fine cotton, like jewellers' cotton, and when this was lifted out there came from the box a myriad of tiny flashes of light. The inside of the box was fairly ablaze. Countless little flashes of light danced and twinkled there.

"Hooray!" cried George Warren. "We have the stolen jewels, and no mistake. Just see how these sparkle." And he lifted up a necklace of diamonds, that blazed in the light of the lamp like a ring of fire. They sparkled and gleamed like little stars, as the boys passed them from hand to hand.

"Mercy on us!" cried a pleasant voice, all of a sudden; and Mrs. Warren, who had been awakened by the sound of their voices and had hastily dressed, entered the kitchen. "Is this den the cave of the forty thieves?" she asked, smiling, and then, as she caught sight of the glittering gems, she exclaimed, anxiously: "Why, boys, what on earth does all this mean?"

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"It means, mother," answered George, "that Henry Burns has done what the detectives have been trying to do ever since the robbery at Benton. Here are the stolen diamonds, and Henry will take them to town to-morrow and claim the reward."

"Only on one condition," interrupted Henry Burns. "I don't stir one step to secure the reward until it is agreed that it shall be evenly divided between us all. You fellows have just as much claim upon it as I, and, unless every one of you solemnly swears to take his share, I shall never take one cent of it."

And every one of them knew that he meant exactly what he said.

Early next morning Henry Burns and George Warren stood upon the wharf, awaiting the arrival of the boat for Mayville. The boat connected there with a train that would arrive in Benton during the forenoon. Henry Burns carried in one hand a small satchel.

"I had hard work to persuade old Witham to let me go," said Henry Burns. "He didn't see what I wanted to go poking off to Benton for. Said I

better stay here and save my money. As it is, I've got to go and call on an aged aunt of Mrs. Carlin and spend the night there. Well, I guess I can manage to amuse myself, even there. I'm likely to see a few other people before I get back, eh, George?"

"I know one man who won't turn you out-of-doors, when you produce those diamonds," answered George.

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"Well, George," returned the other, "you mustn't lose sight of this stranger, although I almost know he won't attempt to leave the island for several days. I remember that yesterday he got a letter, and I have no doubt it was from his confederates, saying when they would arrive. They are coming in a sailboat, for he has said so. Now, if they were coming to-night or to-morrow, he would not have hidden that box over there in the old house. You may be sure he did not expect them for a day or two,—but still you boys must keep him in sight, for one never knows what is going to happen.

"If he goes over to the bluff, you know what to do. You must get Captain Sam, the constable, to have him arrested at once. By to-morrow night I'll be back with everything arranged to capture the whole three. I think you and I will see lively times around this harbour before many days are over."

"Speak of the evil one and he appears," said George Warren. "And, as true as I live, here comes Mr. Kemble. You do the talking, Henry, for I feel as though I should give him cause for suspicion if I said a single word to him."

"Leave him to me," replied Henry Burns. "He's playing a bold game, and so must we;" and, as the stranger guest hobbled down to the wharf, groaning and wincing, as though racked with pain, Henry Burns gave him a cheery greeting.

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"Good morning, Mr. Kemble," said he. "I see you're out bright and early. I declare, you have begun to look better already than you did the night you arrived."

"Oh, I'm very miserable—very miserable," answered Mr. Kemble, most dejectedly. "My rheumatism is something awful. I'd give everything I possess in the world if I could run around and be as active as you young men."

"You will, I'm sure, in a few days," answered Henry Burns.

"How's that?" asked the man, turning upon Henry Burns sharply, while a strange look, that he could not conceal, stole over his face.

George Warren turned away precipitately, and, taking a fishing-reel from his pocket, dropped a line over the side of the wharf.

"There's something peculiar in this island air," continued Henry Burns, looking Mr. Kemble full in the eye, with the most innocent expression on his face. "No matter how bad a person feels when he first comes here, it puts new life into him. The first thing he knows he begins to feel like rowing boats, and going fishing, and all that sort of thing. I come here sick every summer, and I go away feeling strong."

"Well," replied Mr. Kemble, uneasily, but looking relieved, "I hope it may do as much for me. If it does, I'll buy a cottage here."

"You won't find any cottages to sell, I'm afraid," said Henry Burns. "But there are several old farmhouses that could be bought cheap, and they make over as good as new."

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"Humph! I'm not looking for old farmhouses," said Mr. Kemble, gruffly; and then, as the whistle of the boat sounded suddenly from behind the bluff, he added, "But I must be getting back to the hotel. I'm not feeling well today, at all."

"Any errand I can do for you in the city?" Henry Burns called after him.

But Mr. Kemble was hobbling away as fast as he could, and did not heed.

"I fancy he would feel worse if he could see what I've got in this satchel," chuckled Henry Burns, as Mr. Kemble went on toward the hotel, somewhat faster than he had come down. "Did you notice how suddenly he had to leave when he heard the boat's whistle?"

"Yes,—but what on earth were you thinking of, Henry, talking as you did to him?" said George. "It scared him in an instant when you told him he would be running around in a few days as lively as any of us. I almost believe he half-suspects something."

"How can he?" replied the other. "Perhaps my remark about his running around in a few days may have startled him at first. That was a sudden jolt to his guilty conscience. But, upon reflection, he decided it was only a coincidence. Then he did look a little queer when I spoke of farmhouses, didn't he?"

"He certainly did," said George. "What possessed you to do it? You might upset everything."

"No," answered Henry Burns. "He don't suspect us. By the way, do you remember how we got into this thing in the beginning?"

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"Why, what do you mean?"

"If I remember rightly," said Henry Burns, speaking with a slight drawl, "we started out last evening to have some fun. My little chat with our friend is the nearest approach to fun that this scrape has afforded me so far."

"That may have been fun for you," said George. "To my mind it was very much like playing with fire; but here's the steamer. You've got my note of introduction to father?"

"Yes, I've got everything all right. Now keep your eyes open and expect me to-morrow night." And Henry Burns crossed the gangplank to the steamer.

The train from Mayville to Benton reached its destination at eleven o'clock, and at that hour in the forenoon Henry Burns walked briskly out of the station. Half an hour later he stood in the waiting-room at the wealthy banking-house of Curtis & Earle.

"Well, what do you want, young man?" asked an important and decidedly officious attendant, bustling up to him.

"This is Mr. Curtis, I presume," answered Henry Burns, blandly, but with the faintest suspicion of a twinkle in his eye.

"No, it isn't," said the man, abruptly, and looking a little foolish as several other attendants tittered audibly. "And, what's more, you cannot see Mr. Curtis, for he is just preparing to leave for the day."

"But I must see him," insisted Henry Burns. "I've got some very important information for him. Have the kindness to take this in to him," and he handed the surprised attendant a card upon which he had written in a clear but boyish hand:

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Henry Allen Burns
Private Detective

The attendant took the card, read it with a grin, looked at the boy, as if puzzled what to make of him, shrugged his shoulders and left the room. Presently he returned.

"Mr. Curtis would be greatly obliged if you would call to-morrow," he said. "He is going out of town to-day."

"I must see him at once," said Henry Burns, firmly.

"Impossible—" but at this moment the door of the banker's private office opened, and a voice said: "Show Mr. Burns in."

Henry Burns entered. He saw before him a tall, well-built man, smooth shaven, with black, piercing eyes, and a firm, decisive mouth. He had on his hat and gloves, and carried a light coat on his arm, as though about to leave his office.

"You will oblige me by stating your business as quickly as possible, young man," he said, "as I am about to take a train out of the city."

"I see by your card," he continued, gravely, "that you are a private detective. I suppose you are aware that I am a busy man, engaged in important affairs, and have no time in office hours for pleasantries."

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"If I had said an amateur detective I should have been more correct, sir, since this is my first case," answered Henry Burns, calmly. "It is so very curious, however, that I feel certain it cannot fail to interest you."

"But will you tell me why it should interest me, and not keep me waiting?" exclaimed the banker, in a tone of impatience. Evidently he did not for a moment connect the boyish figure before him with any possible recovery of his lost jewels.

"I will," replied Henry Burns, speaking deliberately. "Last night some other boys and I watched a man bury a small tin box in the cellar of a deserted house. When the man went away

we dug it up. I have the box here; would you like to see it?"

Henry Burns calmly opened the satchel.

But the banker sprang up from the chair in which he had seated himself, and exclaimed, excitedly:

"What do you mean—let me see it—quick!"

Henry Burns passed him the box, and with nervous fingers the banker broke the twine with which the boys had secured it. The next instant he had drawn the necklace from the box and held it up, while his hands trembled.

"They're Alice's diamonds, as I hope to live," he cried, unmindful of Henry Burns's presence for the moment. "And the rings and the brooch—everything—everything is here."

"Why," he exclaimed, "the best detectives in this country are working on the case, but I had already begun to despair of ever seeing the jewels again. They are exceedingly valuable, but, besides that, as they were wedding presents to my wife from me, we both prize them far beyond their real worth.

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"But be seated. I shall postpone my trip out of town, you may be sure. And now let me hear the story of your discovery."

In the calm, graphic manner characteristic of him, Henry Burns told the story of the night's adventure.

"Splendid!" exclaimed the banker, as the boy concluded. "You have indeed acted as efficiently as the best detective could have done. We are bound to capture the robbers. Burton must know of this at once."

He rang for an attendant, and, after writing a note, dispatched him with it. At the expiration of about half an hour the attendant returned, and ushered into the room a man of medium height, of light complexion, with steel-blue eyes, and a face that impressed Henry Burns at once as denoting great daring and coolness. The banker introduced him as Mr. Miles Burton, of a secret detective bureau.

"Here's a young man, Burton," said the banker, smiling, "who, I take it, has some inclinations for your line of work. In fact, here is pretty convincing proof of it." And the banker pointed to the box of jewels.

Mr. Miles Burton looked nonplussed. He stared at the box in amazement for a minute, and gave a low whistle. Then he laughed and said: "I have always maintained that luck is a great factor in detective service, though I am ready to give a man his due for a good piece of work. In either case, you have my congratulations, young man, for a half a thousand dollars is just as good whether it comes by luck or shrewdness, or both."

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The detective listened with the keenest attention as Henry Burns repeated the story he had told the banker. He made him give the minutest details of Mr. Kemble's personality, at the same time suggesting features which Henry Burns corroborated.

"It's just as I thought from the start, and just as I told you, Mr. Curtis," he said. "The man is undoubtedly George Craigie, who is known among his class as the 'Actor,' because of his cleverness in impersonating one character, and then utterly dropping out of sight and appearing as some other person. We want him on a score of charges, two bank robberies, attempted murder, several house burglaries, and other things. His picture is in the Rogues' Gallery, but he has the art of changing his expression and appearance so completely that, although I have seen him twice since that was taken, at neither of those times did his countenance resemble his photograph. However, I feel positive from what this young man tells me that it is none other than he. And as for his confederates, I can readily guess who they are. They are two Boston men, and are, no doubt, on their way to the island now in the yacht. In this case, we cannot act any too soon; and I shall ask Detective Burns, who is familiar with the ground, to be my right-hand man in the expedition."

"You can count on me," replied Henry Burns, with a smile at the title conferred upon him, and who was, truth to tell, vastly flattered. "I can answer, moreover, for several good assistants, if you need them."

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"Well," said Mr. Miles Burton, rising to go, "I will meet you at the train that leaves here to-morrow afternoon. By to-morrow night I hope to have some men on Grand Island who will give a pleasant little surprise to Messrs. Craigie & Co.;" and, bowing courteously, he took his leave.

"There's a surprising lack of jealousy in that man Burton," remarked the banker, when he had gone. "He is disappointed to have the robbers slip through his hands, and a little chagrined, I know, to have them caught through the aid of a party of boys; but he took pains not to show it, and, what's more, he will always give you the credit for it when he speaks of it. That's the kind of a man he is. He is as smart as a steel trap, too, is Burton, and has done me good service twice before."

"But let us not wait longer. I am going to take you home with me to dinner, and have you spend the night at my house. We shall feel more secure, I assure you," he continued, smiling, "with a detective under our roof."

Henry Burns declined, saying he was not dressed for such hospitality, but the keen eye of the banker had long before taken note of his neat and gentlemanly appearance, and, moreover, liked the looks of the boy's clear-cut features, and the way he had of looking one fair in the eye, with a calm but manly and courageous glance. So he waived the boy's objections, and they entered the banker's carriage and were driven to the finest home Henry Burns had ever visited.

Perhaps they didn't make him at home there when Mr. Curtis had told the story of the finding of the jewels hidden in the cellar; and perhaps Henry Burns, to his confusion, wasn't embraced by the banker's wife, and perhaps he wasn't made a hero of by the banker's two pretty daughters, who shuddered at the story of the man in the cellar, and who made Henry Burns tell it over and over again.

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In short, he was treated with such wholesome and charming hospitality as to set him to wondering, after it was all over and he had gone to bed, whether he had not missed something in his solitary life, brought up without the love of father, mother, sister or brother, in a home where noise and cheerfulness were outlawed.

He was up bright and early the next day, and he and the banker went to see Mr. Warren, who was let into the secret, and the reward of five hundred dollars was, through him, placed to the credit of the boys. Then there was the aged aunt of Mrs. Carlin to call upon, and the time passed quickly till it was time for the afternoon train.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when Henry Burns boarded the train in the company of Miles Burton.

"Now," said the detective, as the train rattled noisily on its way, "I have been in Mayville and know several parties there, but the island is new to me. However, you can explain it to me from this map," and Mr. Burton unrolled a map of the bay and island from his pocket. "I shall pick up three of my men, whom I have ordered to meet us, in Mayville. One of them came all the way down from New York with me to help me work up this case. It is my opinion he traced this man Craigie to Mayville and lost track of him there. The man must have vanished, as he has done so often before.

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"We will go over to the island to-night in a launch. Then we shall need some one to guide us to what you call the haunted house."

"I will meet you in the road by Captain Hervey's house, right at the very head of the island," said Henry Burns. "It is the first house you come to on landing at the outermost point. You cannot miss it."

"But how will you get there? It is a long trip up the island."

"I will come on my bicycle."

"Capital! You will go direct to the island, then, by the night boat, arriving there, you say, at six o'clock. You will see just how the land lies, so you can tell us, when we meet again. And you will instruct your friends to keep close to Craigie, so he won't be over there at the house to meet us on our arrival. We want to do the welcoming for him, and not have him do it for us. Two of the men I shall bring are somewhat familiar with the island and know one or two parties there; though I am not sure they know where the haunted house is.

"One of you boys must have a boat always in readiness somewhere up the cove, on which you say this house fronts, so that, the minute this man meets his confederates aboard the yacht, one of you can slip across the cove and let us know of it, in case we have missed them.

"Act carefully, and everything will be well; but once give them cause for suspicion and they are dangerous men to deal with. I have a little score of my own to pay them,—but that's a long story, and I'll save it for another time. Now let's go over this map, so I'll be sure of my ground."

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When the train left Mayville, Miles Burton, with a hurried handshake, left Henry Burns. It was a little after six o'clock when the latter stepped ashore at Southport, where the boys were waiting for him, upon the wharf.

"Everything is all right," said George Warren, in answer to Henry Burns's question. "He was not on the roof at all during last night, for we divided up into watches and kept a lookout from Tom's tent. He evidently knows about what time his friends are to arrive."

"How is Colonel Witham?" asked Henry Burns. "Has he pined away any during my absence?"

"Not any to notice," replied Tom Harris, "but he has gone away, down the island, to be gone two days. You must stop with us to-night at the tent, and the boys are all coming over to the tent now to eat one of Bob's prime lobster stews."

So the crowd marched on Bob, and found him down on the beach to the right of the tent, presiding over an enormous kettle, which was hung over the glowing coals of a fire of driftwood, and from which there arose such a savoury odour of stew that, in a burst of enthusiasm, they seized upon the stalwart young cook, and, raising him on their shoulders, bore him with hilarious shouts three times around the fire, much to the apparent discomfiture of the quiet Bob.

Then they sat about the fire while Tom brought some tin plates and spoons from the tent and acted as waiter, and Bob produced a pot of hot coffee and some bread. It seemed as though nothing had ever tasted so good. They called for stew till Bob's stout right arm almost ached with wielding the long-handled tin dipper that served them for a ladle.

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The sun sank while they sat about the glow of coals, and, by and by, the moon rose slowly over the distant cape and poured a flood of soft light over the waters of the bay. They remembered that night long afterward, for its soft lights and its silent, mystical beauty. The moon was at its full, and the tide crept up on the beach almost to the bed of coals that remained from the fire and still showed red. The islands far off across the bay seemed to have drifted nearer in to shore, and showed clear and distinct.

Henry Burns's story of the day's adventures lost nothing of its interest, told down there on the shore by the firelight and under the stars. His account of his visit to the banker's, and how he had gained admittance to Mr. Curtis's private office, filled them with glee.

"I should have liked to see him when he opened that box," said young Joe. "Didn't he look surprised, though, Henry?"

"Rather," said Henry Burns.

"And the banker's daughters,—were they pretty, Henry?" asked Tom.

"I didn't notice particularly," said Henry Burns.

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"Henry never does notice those things," said Arthur, dryly.

"Oh, no, never!" said young Joe.

"You fellows will notice something, if you don't let up," said Henry Burns, getting a little red in spite of himself.

Then he told them all that he had learned from Mr. Miles Burton about the man Kemble, who was not Kemble at all, but one Craigie, and a desperate man; and all about the plans that were now to be put into operation to capture Craigie and whosoever should come to meet him.

The money, too, that had come to each one of them, as his share of the reward, seemed like a fortune, while no expedition that they had ever heard or read of seemed half so full of mystery and danger as that upon which they were now entering.

Sometime between ten and eleven o'clock Henry Burns left them, and, proceeding to the hotel, unlocked a door in the basement, got out his bicycle, and rode away. In a little more than half an hour afterward he had dismounted from his wheel at Captain Hervey's house, four miles from the hotel, on the western side of the island, near the head. The house was closed, as the captain and his family were away at sea. Down at the shore was an old boat-house, where Henry Burns left his bicycle. He sat on the edge of a bluff overhanging a landing-place for boats, and waited for the launch. He could see her lights already, out on the bay, and it was not long before the little craft had come to shore. Four men disembarked, and the launch steamed away again.

"Hello, Private Detective Burns," said Miles Burton, laughing, as he came up the ladder from the landing. Then he added, as he introduced the others to the boy, "This is a rival to Inspector Byrnes of New York."

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"We owe him a good turn, Mason," continued Miles Burton, "for finding Craigie for us."

The man addressed as Mason was the detective that had followed Craigie as far as Mayville.

"Yes," he replied, shaking hands with Henry Burns, "we've been after him a long time."

The other two men, whose names were Stapleton and Watkins, also shook hands with the boy. They were sharp-eyed, athletic-looking men, whose appearance on the island boded no good to one Craigie, alias Kemble.

Under the guidance of Henry Burns they all set off down the road for a distance, then turned from it and made their way through the fields and patches of woods toward the bluff. It was hard walking there in the darkness, through thickets and over little knolls, with which some of the pastures were dotted, and it was nearly one o'clock in the morning when they reached the old haunted house.

The house looked even less inviting than ever in the waning moonlight, with its sagging roof, dull and broken window-panes, and doors unhinged. Still, to those free from superstition and not fearful of ghosts, it offered a sufficient shelter on a summer night, and they entered at a rear doorway, after making a cautious reconnoissance to make certain that there was no one within.

Then, having shown them where the jewels had been buried, and pointing out the location of a spring of good water near the house, Henry Burns left the four detectives to accommodate themselves to their lodgings and went down to the shore. There in the shadow of a bluff he found Tom and Bob waiting for him in the canoe, as they had agreed.

When the canoe grated on the sand in front of the tent, Henry Burns, worn out with his travels, was fast asleep. So Tom and Bob, by way of a joke, lifted up the canoe with its sleeping occupant and carried it to the door of their tent. They thrust it inside as far as it would go, laid Henry Burns out flat in the bottom of it, made him comfortable with blankets, without waking him from his heavy sleep, and let him slumber on.

CHAPTER X. A MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE

The inhabitants of the peaceful town of Southport would have viewed the old haunted house with more concern than ever if they had known of the four ghosts that haunted it now, by day and night. They were stalwart, able-bodied looking ghosts, and their habits were strangely like what might have been expected of four live men. Sometimes, as they sat in one of the front garret rooms, by a window that overlooked the town and the whole expanse of the cove lying between it and the bluff, as well as the bay beyond, a well-worn pack of cards was produced by one of the spirits, and the four joined in a game. Or, again, a bag was brought forth, and the spirits ate heartily of the contents thereof.

It might have been noticed, too, that through it all a certain careful vigilance on the part of the ghosts was observed, as though they feared that if surprised by a chance visitor they would have some trouble in vanishing.

Every few minutes throughout the day they made by turns a careful survey of the cove and also of the bay, sweeping it with a powerful field-glass. No more than two of the ghosts ever took their sleep at the same time, and that, too, during the day. When night came they all redoubled their vigilance and remained awake and alert. As darkness shut down they left the house, one of them going out on the bluff and hiding in a cleft of the rock, where he could overlook the cove and the bay, the others hiding in the woods near the house, and keeping watch on all its approaches.

They were very patient and very careful; for two of them, who would have answered to the names of Burton and Mason, knew that the men for whom they watched, and who they knew would surely come within a brief time now, were the men for whom they had hunted for years, and by whose capture they should win other rewards and settle scores of long standing.

Curiously enough, for the next two days and nights a perfect contagion of watching seemed

to have spread through the village. Mr. Kemble, as he was known to all, was a most annoyed man, and concealed his annoyance only with difficulty. If, by chance, he hobbled up the road of an afternoon, and wandered off into the woods or fields, he was sure to come upon some one of the boys, who seemed surprised enough to see him, and was sure to remain with him till he returned to the hotel.

If he hired a horse and went up the island for a drive, he was sure to fall in most unexpectedly with Henry Burns, spinning along on his wheel, and could not shake him off. If he felt strong enough to get into a rowboat and start out, weakly, across the cove, groaning at the effort it cost him, he invariably fell in with Tom and Bob, gliding along quietly in their canoe, and they would insist on accompanying him, and pointing out to him the beauties of the scenery along the shores.

He would have considered far more seriously the attention they paid to his movements by night, if he had but known of them. If he could have seen six pairs of eyes, striving to discern him as he appeared on the hotel roof, or have known of the youths who watched lest he cross the cove under cover of night, to say nothing of those who awaited his coming on the bluff itself, he might have worried more than he did, and perhaps have played a shrewder game.

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But neither did he nor any one else, other than they who watched, know of it. And so it was that when, a little before sunset on the third day after the arrival of the ghosts in the haunted house, and while Mr. Kemble sat on the front piazza of the hotel, looking through a field-glass off on to the bay, admiring its beauties with Mrs. Carlin, who thought him such an unfortunate man,—and while, as he looked, he saw the very yacht for which he had waited anxiously for days, he surely believed that there was no one in the village who would regard it with other than the usual curiosity that fishermen and yachtsmen have for a strange craft.

In this, unfortunately for him, he was mistaken. There were others besides him who, on seeing the sail emerge from between the islands, regarded it with equal interest and even more excitement. Henry Burns, being deeply interested in it, came and sat down beside Mrs. Carlin long enough to hear Mr. Kemble remark that he believed the yacht was the *Eagle*, with his friends; in which case he should spend the night aboard with them, and leave the harbour early in the morning, if the wind availed.

Henry Burns then quietly took his departure, sauntering along until some cottages shut him out from the view of the hotel, and then starting off on a run as hard as ever he could toward the Warren cottage. He paused long enough at the cottage to communicate the news to young Joe, who was the first one he met, and then, calling out that he would return as quickly as he could, he ran through the woods down to the shore.

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Going up the cove some distance, Henry Burns launched a rowboat and pulled rapidly across, landing some ways above the bluff. Then he struck down through the woods for the haunted house.

When Henry Burns returned a few minutes later, two of the detectives were with him. The three rowed across the cove and proceeded to the Warren cottage. There the plan of operation, as it had been mapped out by Miles Burton, was told by Henry Burns. Burton and Mason were to make the arrest at the haunted house. It was extremely unlikely that more than two of the robbers would come for the box of jewels,—perhaps Craigie alone. At all events, the detectives would take chances against more than two coming, and, if the three came, it would make no difference to them. They would take them all by surprise, and could arrest a dozen if necessary. If two of the boys chose to go over to the bluff, they could do so, but Miles Burton would not advise them to take the risk.

The other two detectives were to wait in boats for the man who should be left in the yacht, and arrest him at the proper time. If any of the boys chose to accompany these men, they could do so at their risk, but Miles Burton had sent warning for them to take no chances. Needless to say, his advice on this score was thrown away. He might as well have advised the boys not to breathe till it was all over. Their blood was up, and they were one and all determined to take part in the capture.

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So it was decided that Bob and Henry Burns and George should go over to the bluff; that Tom and one of the detectives should take the canoe and lie in the shadow of the shore, in wait near the tent; while Arthur and Joe, with the other detective, should go around the bluff in a rowboat, on a pretence of fishing, and lie in concealment there behind the rocks.

During all this time the yacht, a white-hulled, sloop-rigged, trim vessel, was rapidly nearing the village. It came in fast, with a southeasterly breeze astern, which blew fresh and which bade fair not to die down with the setting of the sun. The yacht attracted some attention among the people of the town, where fishing-boats were more commonly seen than elegant pleasure-craft. Its topmast was uncommonly tall, and the club topsail, which was still set, was somewhat larger than usual in a craft of its burden. In fact, it was apparent to the experienced eye that, with all its light sails set, the yacht would be enveloped in a perfect cloud of canvas. It carried two jibs, besides the forestaysail, but these were now furled.

“That craft carries sail enough to beat the *Flying Dutchman*,” said Captain Sam, who had joined the group on the veranda that was watching the graceful yacht coming in, with a tiny froth of foam at its bows. “Looks as though she could stand up under it, though. Seems to be pretty stiff.”

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“Yes, she is considered pretty fast,” assented Mr. Kemble. “She has taken a few races around Boston and Marblehead way, against some yachts that carried even more sail. She belongs to a friend of mine, a Mr. Brooks of Boston. He’s a broker there, and can afford to have as fast a craft as there is made.”

“Fast!” returned Captain Sam. “Any one can see that with half an eye. Give her five minutes start, and nothing in this bay could ever come within hailing-distance of her again.”

Captain Sam little knew the relief and satisfaction that his remark afforded Mr. Kemble.

"She won't want all that sail to-morrow, though," continued Captain Sam. "The wind is coming around to the eastward for a storm of some kind. Looks more like rain than wind, but there will be wind, too,—enough to do all the sailing any one wants. You say you'll sail to-morrow, do you, Mr. Kemble, rain or shine? Well, that boat will stand it all right. She looks as though she would just like a good blow, and nothing better."

If Mr. Kemble knew of any instances where the yacht *Eagle*, alias *The Cloud*, alias *Fortune*, had proved her marvellous speed to the chagrin of certain officers of the law, and had demonstrated her ability to run away from pursuers in both light and heavy weather, he refrained, for reasons best known to himself, from mentioning them. He gave, instead, a quiet assent to the truth of Captain Sam's praise.

While tea was being served at the hotel, the yacht entered the cove, and, rounding to gracefully with a little shower of spray, dropped anchor about midway between the wharf and the bluff opposite. The sails were furled, with, strangely enough, the exception of the mainsail, which was not even lowered. She would doubtless drop this sail later, unless, by any chance, she should decide to put out again during the night.

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The men who had brought the yacht across the bay did not come ashore. A thin column of smoke that presently wreathed out of a funnel in the cabin indicated that the yachtsmen were cooking a meal in the galley aboard.

They were thorough yachtsmen, Mr. Kemble explained, as he paid his bill and said good-bye to Colonel Witham and Mrs. Carlin. They hardly ever left the yacht, he said, except to buy provisions, or some other errand of necessity. Mr. Kemble did not specify what other errands of necessity he had in mind.

The colonel saw just how it was, he said. He was sorry, moreover, to lose Mr. Kemble as a guest. In fact, he was the kind of guest that just suited the colonel, as he went early to bed, minded his own business, and was quiet. Good qualities in a summer boarder, in the colonel's estimation.

There was no one to bid Mr. Kemble good-bye, save the colonel and Mrs. Carlin, as he had made few acquaintances. Henry Burns would have bid him a pleasant voyage if he had been there, but Henry Burns was not to be found.

"He will be sorry not to have been here to say good-bye to you," Mrs. Carlin explained, politely. "He often expressed the greatest sympathy for your lameness. I cannot imagine where he is, and he has had no supper, either."

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"Bright boy, bright boy, that," responded Mr. Kemble. "Lives just out of Boston, does he? Must look him and his aunt up this fall, and see if I can't get my friend, Brooks, the broker, interested in him. Well, good-bye," and, hobbling away, quite briskly for him, Mr. Kemble followed

a boy who carried his satchel down to the wharf, and was rowed out to the yacht. A voice from the cabin bade him welcome, and he disappeared down the companionway.

Early that evening, and shortly after Mr. Kemble had gone aboard the *Eagle*, for such was the name painted freshly in gilt on the yacht's stern, Miles Burton and the three boys, Bob, Henry Burns, and George, held a consultation in the shadow of the woods near the haunted house. Mason, in the meantime, was hidden near the head of the rickety old stairs at the landing on the bluff, watching for any movement aboard the *Eagle*.

Miles Burton's commands were brief and explicit. "There is an old closet in the cellar," he said, "just about opposite where the box was buried. Mason and I will hide there. We have oiled the hinges of the door so that it moves noiselessly. You boys better keep close here in the woods till you hear from us. Then you can make as much noise as you want to and come in at the capture. There ought not to be so very much excitement about it, for we shall have them before they know what's the matter."

It certainly seemed as though the detective could not be mistaken, but the sequel would show.

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Mason remained at his post, and Miles Burton and the boys sat together in the shadow of the woods. It was wearisome waiting, and there was a chilliness in the night air which had crept into it with the east wind. When eleven o'clock had come and the moon should have shone over the cape, a bank of clouds drifted up just ahead of it and half-obscurd its light. As the moon arose these clouds drifted higher in the sky, still just preceding it, and the heavens grew but little brighter. Still it was not absolutely dark, for most of the stars were as yet unhidden.

Twelve o'clock came, and then one, and then a half-hour went by. At just half-past one o'clock by the detective's watch they saw the figure of Mason stealing swiftly up the path.

"It's time to make ready now," he said to Burton, as he joined the party. "They'll be at the landing soon. As near as I can make out, there's Chambers and French, besides Craigie. It's the men we want all right. Chambers is rowing, and he will probably stay in the boat while the other two come ashore."

Then, bidding the boys to preserve the utmost silence, the two detectives left them, and a moment later the boys saw them disappear through the doorway of the haunted house.

There was little need of warning the boys to make no noise. From what the detectives had said, they knew that the men they had to deal with were desperate adventurers, who would not balk at any means to escape capture.

So they lay close in the underbrush and peered through the trees down toward the landing. The night was still, save for the rustling of a light wind through the trees. The breeze had held through, as Captain Sam had prophesied, though it had abated somewhat, ready, however, to increase with the next turn of the tide a few

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hours later.

They could hear noises across in the village: a solitary cart rattling along the country road, the tinkle of a distant cow-bell in a pasture, and here and there a dog barking. Presently the sound of oars grinding in the rowlocks came to their ears, and a few moments later the sound of a boat gently grating on the edge of the stone landing. There was as yet no sound of voices.

"Whew!" muttered Bob White. "This waiting here for something to happen gives me a creepy feeling. I only wish we knew that they weren't armed to the teeth and could only pitch in and run the risk of a good fight. I'd like to try a good football tackle, just to keep my nerves from going to pieces."

"I wouldn't care much to be waiting for them down in that cellar," said Henry Burns. "They're likely to prove ugly customers when they find themselves trapped,—but I'll risk Miles Burton to keep his head. He's the kind of man for this sort of thing—"

"Sh-h-h," interrupted George Warren, softly. "I hear their voices. There's two of them, I think, talking. Yes, here they come. Lie low, now."

A head appeared at the top of the ladder, and then a man sprang up on to the brow of the bluff. It was the man whom they had known as Mr. Kemble, but whom they now knew as Craigie. He was followed by another man, somewhat taller than he.

The two came up the path together, talking earnestly. At a certain point in the path they paused, and Craigie stepped aside and found the spade where he had hidden it in the brush. Then they went on toward the haunted house. The boys' hearts beat fast and hard as the men passed close by where they lay hidden. Surely two men who would lie in wait in the old house for these two must possess good nerve and courage. For the boys' part, they were glad to be outside.

"Listen," whispered Henry Burns, softly; "the tall one is downright angry with our friend Kemble. He's pitching into him for something."

It was evident that Craigie's newly arrived friend was in a bad humour. He spoke angrily, and no longer in a low tone, but gruff and loud enough to be heard some distance away.

"What a fool you must have been, Craigie," they heard him say, "to hide the jewels away in this tumble-down old place, when you could have hidden them well enough on your own person. It's all well enough to say they're safer here, but such an act might have attracted attention."

"It might," whispered Henry Burns.

"And here we are," continued the tall man, "fooling away our time in this outlandish hole, climbing ledges and stumbling through woods, when we ought to be out in the middle of the bay by this time, clear of this place. There was the wind, holding on through the night, just opportune for us, and all you needed to do was to step aboard, if you had been ready, and off we should have gone, without dropping a sail."

"Well, well, French," answered Craigie, impatiently, but trying to mollify his companion, "we've got time enough. Don't worry about that. You would have blamed me bad enough if the jewels had been found on me. Supposing I had had to tell you they'd been stolen, what would you have done? Would you have believed it, or would you say I had stolen them from you myself?"

"Believe it!" cried the other. "Why, you know I wouldn't believe it. I know you too well for that. What would I do? What would Ed Chambers do? I tell you what we would do. After that job,—after coming way down here for you,—why, man, we'd hunt you to the end of the earth, if you got away with those jewels, but we'd have you and the jewels, too."

With this angry utterance, the tall man laid a heavy hand on the other's shoulder.

"Nonsense, man," returned the other, impatiently, shaking off his grasp. "What a way to talk about nothing. You're in a precious bad humour, seems to me. You know right well I wouldn't go back on you and Ed."

"I know nothing of the sort," snarled the other "I know you, I tell you. I know you left us when things got hot, and took the jewels that we risked our necks for. Don't I know that we shouldn't have seen or heard of you again till we had hunted for you—which we would have done—if that man Mason hadn't got so close up on to you that you didn't dare try to get out of here alone."

"Well, have it so, have it so, then, since you are bound to quarrel," said Craigie, sullenly; and the boys heard no more. The two men passed beyond hearing and entered the haunted house.

"I don't intend to miss this," whispered Henry Burns, for once thoroughly excited. "There's going to be the worst kind of trouble when that big black-looking fellow finds the box gone. Burton's going to let them dig for it—he told me so. Said he was curious to see what they would do."

"Rather he would have that sort of fun than I," said Bob. "It's a good deal like watching a keg of powder blow up. I say we'd better stay right here, as Burton advised, till we hear from them. We might upset the whole thing."

"I don't mind saying I'm scared clear down to my boots," said George, "but I'm going to see the thing through. I'll go if you will, Henry."

So the two left Bob in the woods, close by the path to the shore, and crept up on their hands and knees to that same cellar window through which they had before witnessed the hiding of the box.

By the light of a lantern placed on the cellar floor they saw the two men. Craigie had removed his coat, and was digging in the earth where he had hidden the box. He worked vigorously, throwing up spadefuls of the soil with quick, nervous jerks. His tall companion looked on with an expression of mingled anger and contempt on his face.

As the box failed to come to light after some minutes of hard work, the drops of perspiration stood out in great beads on Craigie's face, and he redoubled his efforts with the spade.

"It's down deeper than I thought I buried it," he muttered, with a sort of nervous laugh.

"You're a fool!" was all the other said.

"Have it so," said Craigie, and resumed his work.

The man was troubled, although he scarcely dared admit it, even to himself. He had already dug far deeper than he had before, and yet no signs of the box. The spade trembled slightly in his hands. He widened the hole and dug furiously.

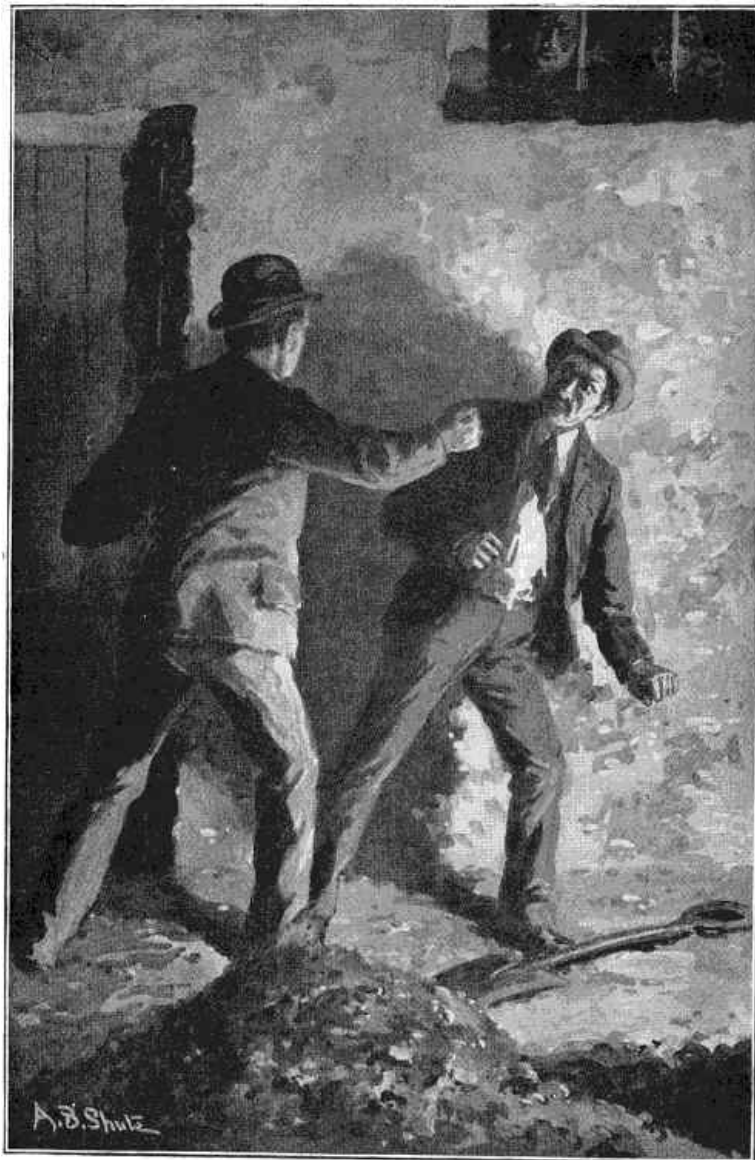
"Going to dig over the whole cellar, I suppose," sneered the other, and clenched his fists nervously.

Craigie did not reply. Perhaps the truth was beginning to dawn on his mind, for he half-paused and cast a quick, anxious glance at his companion. His face was ghastly white in the dim lantern light. He continued his digging.

All at once he uttered a cry. The boys, staring in with faces close to the window-pane, saw the tall man leap forward and deal him a heavy blow.

"Do you think I am tricked by you?" he cried. "You know it isn't there. You knew it all the time. But you don't fool me. You don't escape to enjoy it."

Craigie reeled under the blow and staggered back against the wall. If the other had followed up his advantage instantly, the fight must have been his; but one moment was enough for his companion. Still grasping the spade, he struck out with it as the man French rushed upon him again, and the other, receiving the full force of the blow, fell to the floor.



“CRAIGIE REELED UNDER THE BLOW AND STAGGERED
BACK AGAINST THE WALL”

The next instant, without waiting to see whether his companion were dead or alive, Craigie shattered the lantern with a single blow and darted for the cellar stairs. At the same moment the detectives threw open the door and rushed out into the cellar. They were just too late. One man, indeed, lay unconscious at their feet, but the other had already reached the cellar stairs, and was at the outer door in a moment more.

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Down in the woods, by the path to the landing, Bob saw a sight that sent the hot blood to his cheeks. He had heard shots from the cellar, fired by the detectives after the fleeing Craigie, and wondered what they meant. Now, to his dismay, he saw Craigie at full speed flying along the path toward him.

He scrambled to his feet, though his heart beat furiously, and he trembled so that for a moment he clung to a tree for support. Then he thought of Tom, and it gave him courage. Standing as he had stood often before on the football field at home, when, as right tackle, he had saved many a goal, he waited breathlessly. Then as Craigie dashed up, he sprang out, tackled him about the legs, and the two fell heavily to the ground.

He was half-stunned by the fall, but he had breath enough to cry for help, and clung like a

drowning man to his antagonist. Well for him then that, in his flight, Craigie had dropped the weapon he carried. They rolled over and over for a moment, and then the man had Bob in his grasp.

"Let me go!" he cried, fiercely. "Let me go, I say!" Bob felt his strength going, as the powerful arms tightened about him.

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All at once, however, the other's grasp loosened. Craigie felt himself borne backward, as two boyish figures rushed out of the darkness and threw themselves upon him. Then a weapon gleamed at his head, and Miles Burton stood over him.

"Hold on," cried Craigie. "You've got me this time, though you had to get a boy to do it for you."

"It's all the same to me," replied Miles Burton, coolly. "We've got you, that's the main thing. Here, Mason, here's our man."

Mason, running up, stooped over the prostrate form for a moment, there was the sharp snap of steel, and Craigie lay helpless with a pair of handcuffs fastened to his wrists.

"Where's French?" he asked, sullenly.

"Where you left him," said Mason. "It was a bad cut you gave him. He won't run away. That's certain."

"Serve him right," said the other.

"Hark! What's that?" cried Miles Burton, as the sound of two pistol-shots came up from the water. "They seem to be having trouble down there, too. You wait here, Mason, and I'll get down to the shore."

He ran to the steps, followed by the three boys. Down the rickety stairs they scrambled, and quickly stood on the ledge of the little landing, looking off on to the water.

What they saw was the yacht *Eagle*, not far from the bluff, under full mainsail, standing out of the cove. At some distance astern was the rowboat, in which were Arthur and Joe at the oars. The detective stood at the bow with a smoking revolver in his hand. Not far distant, across the cove, was the canoe containing the other detective and Tom. The detective also had just fired. Miles Burton and the boys could see no one aboard the sloop, but still it sailed steadily on its course. The canoe vainly tried to head it off, but the yacht, obedient to an unseen hand at the wheel, quickly came about and went off on the other tack, soon putting a hopeless distance between it and its pursuers.

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They could not see the man aboard, for the reason that he lay flat in the cockpit, and, with one arm upraised, directed the course of the yacht.

"What a pity! What a pity!" said Miles Burton, talking softly to himself. "How could it have happened? I would rather have lost the other two than that man Chambers. He's the most dangerous man of the three, and the man I wanted most."

His face showed the keenest disappointment, but he had learned self-control in his business, and refrained from speaking above his ordinary tone of voice.

"How did it happen, Watkins?" he asked, as the rowboat came in to the landing for them.

"It's all our fault, Burton," said the other, bitterly. "Stapleton and I should have closed in the moment we heard the first shots; and we should have got aboard the yacht and waited. But I was not sure but what Chambers would land and go up the bluff to the rescue of his comrades, and so I waited to see what he would do. I might have known him better. These fellows are always looking out for number one, and that's a safe rule to go by.

"All at once we saw him come out from the shadow of the bluff, rowing as hard as ever he could for the yacht. We were after him then, both Stapleton and I. And I'm certain of one thing. No one could have got us out to that yacht faster than these boys. They rowed like men. But, you see, he had but a few strokes of the oars to pull, compared with us. And he got to the yacht when we were still some rods away.

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"I never dreamed but what we had him then, for his anchor was down. But what did he do but spring aboard, not stopping to see what became of his rowboat, rush forward as quick as a cat, whisk out a knife, and cut his hawser before you could say 'Scat.' Then he jumped aft mighty quick, grabbed the wheel as cool as anything you ever saw, and had her under headway in no time.

"He took long chances, standing up when he went about, and dodging down again, at first. Then when we came close he got down in the bottom of the boat, just as you saw him, and the best we could do was to fire where we thought he ought to be. He dodged back and forth between our boats, tacking right and left as quick as anything I ever saw, and just slipped by us. He couldn't have done it in any ordinary boat, but that yacht just spun around like a weather-vane, and seemed to gain headway as she went about, instead of losing anything.

"I never saw anything so beautiful, if I do say it. Look at her now, just eating away there to windward and leaving this harbour out of sight."

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The yacht was, indeed, flying along like the wind. Chambers had got more sail on her now, and they could see him, coolly sitting at the wheel and waving a hand in derision back at them.

"Confound it!" said Burton. "Here we are on an island, with no way of getting a telegram started till the morning boat lands over at Mayville. That will be many hours yet, and I fear he'll give us the slip for good and all. What luck, that it should have been he, the only seaman of the three, who was left with the boat. Neither of the others could have done what he did. He's probably studied these waters some, enough to find his way down here, and it will be a hard task ever picking him up again."

"Yes, but a man can't conceal a yacht," said George Warren. "I'd know her anywhere. You

can telegraph a description, and the whole coast will be on the watch. You can describe exactly how she looks."

"Can I?" laughed Miles Burton. "Yes, I can, but that's all the good it's likely to do. He'll have her so changed over, if he gets a day to himself down among those islands, that the man who built her wouldn't recognize her. It won't be the first time he has done it. He carries a full equipment aboard, a different set of sails, different fitting spars, different gear of all kinds, and paint to change her colour. Once let him get in near a sheer bluff, where he can lay alongside, with some trees growing close to the water's edge, so he can rig a tackle and heel her way over, and he will have a yacht of a different colour before she's many hours older. He did the thing up in Long Island Sound for several years, and changed her name a half a dozen times into the bargain. He's done some smuggling up along the Canadian border, too, I'm told, and there isn't a better nor a more daring seaman anywhere in this world. However, we'll do the best we can. Lend a hand, now, all of you; we've got to get that wounded man down over the bluff, or down through the woods, and row him across the cove, where we can get a doctor to dress that wound of his. He's not dangerously hurt, I believe, but he's faint and sick, and we must work spry."

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A half-hour later, at the wharf across the cove, before the eyes of an excited crowd, composed of villagers, cottagers, and hotel guests, who had gathered hurriedly at the sound of the firing, there was landed a strange boat-load,—the strangest that had ever come ashore at the harbour. Imagine the amazement of Colonel Witham upon beholding his favourite guest, Mr. Kemble, bundled unceremoniously out of the rowboat, with manacles upon his wrists. Imagine the concern of the villagers when the man French, his wound clumsily swathed in bandages and his face pale and distressed, was lifted ashore and carried bodily up the slip to the nearest shelter. Nothing like it had ever happened before, not in all the island's history.

"And you say you knew that man was a burglar for two or three days, and let him stay in the house and didn't tell us?" demanded Mrs. Carlin, wrathfully, of Henry Burns.

"Yes'm," said Henry Burns.

"Well, if you're not the worst boy I ever had the care of. Here we might all have been murdered and robbed, and you'd be as guilty as he. And to think I sat and talked with him there, and shook hands with him when he went away. Henry Burns, you'll go to bed an hour earlier for a week for this. And you deserve worse punishment than that."

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Henry Burns assumed his most penitent expression.

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CHAPTER XI. AN UNPLEASANT DISCOVERY

Two weeks had passed by. Craigie and French were in jail awaiting trial, and the sensational arrest had run its course in the papers. Messages had sped here and there, and the police of many cities and towns were watching day and night for the missing Chambers. But watchers' efforts were futile. If the sea had opened and swallowed him up, the man could not have disappeared more completely. Not one of the harbours along the coast sighted him, nor did he run to any for shelter. It had come on stormy the morning he sailed away, and something like a gale had set in the next night. So that there were some who believed it more than likely that the yacht *Eagle* had foundered, with only one man to handle her.

Be this as it may, yacht and man had utterly disappeared. Several times it was thought she was sighted by some pursuer, but it always turned out to be some other craft. Chambers had made good his escape. And he alone knew to what use he intended to put that freedom.

The bright August sun glared in through the canvas tent on a hot afternoon. It fell warm upon Tom, who, divested of his jersey and bared to the waist, stood in the centre of the tent, performing a series of movements with a pair of light wooden dumb-bells. A fine specimen of sturdy young manhood was Tom, lithe and quick in action. A skin clear and soft, bright eyes, muscles that knotted into relief when flexed and rounded into nice proportion when relaxed, quick, decisive movements, all told of athletics and an abstinence from pipes and tobacco.

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"It's your turn," he said, presently, to Bob, after he had counted off several hundred numbers. Tossing his chum the dumb-bells, he slipped on his jersey again, and, reclining at ease on one of the bunks, watched Bob go through the same drill.

"Bob, I'm envious of you," he said. "You are blacker by several shades than I am. I'll have to take it out of you with the gloves."

"It's pretty hot," said Bob, "but come on."

"Heat doesn't bother a man when he is in training," said Tom. "It's the flabby fellows that get sun-strokes. Sun does one good when he's hardened to it."

He fished out a pair of old boxing-gloves, that looked as though they had seen hard service, from the chest, and then he and Bob went at it, as though they had been the most bitter enemies, instead of the most inseparable of friends. They led and countered and pummelled each other till the perspiration poured down their faces and they had begun to breathe hard.

"Time!" cried Tom. "That's enough for to-day. I think you had just a shade the better of it, old chap. Now let's cool off in the canoe. You know what's on the programme this afternoon."

"I should say I did," answered Bob; "and I'll be hungry enough for it by the time things are ready."

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They carried their canoe down to the shore, and in a moment were paddling down the island toward the narrows. But they were not destined

to go alone. Turning a point of ledge some little distance below Harvey's camp, they came all at once upon Arthur and Joe Warren, walking along the beach.

"Take us in there, Tom," cried Joe.

"I can take one of you," answered Tom, pointing the canoe inshore with a turn of his paddle.

Arthur caught the end of the canoe as it came up alongside a ledge on which the boys stood, and steadied the frail craft.

"Might as well let us both in," he said. "The more the merrier."

"The more the riskier, too," said Tom; "but if you fellows will take the chance of a ducking, I'm willing. Water won't spoil anything I've got on. Climb in easy, now, and sit cross-legged, so if we tip over you'll slide out head-first, clear of the thwarts."

The canoe was brought to within nearly an inch of the water's edge by the addition of the two to its burden. Tom gave a strong push with his paddle, and the heavily laden craft glided away from the shore.

There was an extra paddle, which Arthur wielded after a fashion, and it did not take long to come within sight of the narrows. There upon the shore were gathered some fifty or sixty persons. Over against a ledge a fire of driftwood blazed. When they had gotten in nearer they could see a smaller fire at a little distance from the other. Over this was hung a monster iron kettle, and bending over it and superintending the cooking of its contents was a familiar figure. It was Colonel Witham, and he was making one of his famous chowders.

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At the same time that the occupants of the canoe discerned the colonel, he in turn espied them, and also noted a circumstance which they did not. A half-mile or more distant from them a big, ocean-going tugboat was passing down the bay, without a tow and under full steam.

"There come those mischief-makers," said the colonel, muttering to himself. "I'm blessed if the canoe isn't filled with them. If there's an inch of that canoe out of water, there's no more." Then, as he noted the tug steaming past, an idea came to him that made him chuckle.

"Kicks up a big sea, that craft does,—as much as a steamboat," he said. "Perhaps they'll see it and perhaps not. If they don't just let one of those waves catch them unawares. There'll be a spill." The colonel, chuckling with great satisfaction, went on stirring the chowder.

The possibility of a wave from a chance steamer had, indeed, not been thought of by Tom or any of the others. The water was motionless all about them, but rolling in rapidly toward them were a series of waves big enough to cause trouble, if they did but know it.

The colonel watched the unequal race between the waves and the heavily-laden canoe with interest. He looked out at them every other minute from the corner of his eye. He was afraid lest others on shore should see their danger and

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warn them.

"Let them spill over," he said. "They can all swim like fish, and a ducking will do them good." So he stirred vigorously, watching them all the while.

"That stuff won't need any pepper if he cooks it," remarked young Joe, looking ahead at the colonel.

"Lucky for us it's not his own private picnic," said Tom, "or we shouldn't get much of it. Even as it is, it sort of takes my appetite away to see him stirring that chowder."

"I'll risk your appetite—" The words were hardly out of Arthur's mouth when precisely what Colonel Witham had been hoping for came to pass. All at once Tom, seated in the stern, saw the water suddenly appear to drop down and away from the canoe. The canoe was for an instant drawn back, then lifted high on the ridge of a wave and thrown forward, with a sharp twist to one side. Tom gave one frantic sweep with his paddle, in an effort to swing the canoe straight before the wave, but it was too late. The canoe was overloaded, and as the weight of the four boys was thrown suddenly to one side the sensitive thing lost its equilibrium and capsized.

In a moment the four boys were struggling in the water. Thanks to Tom's precaution, they all went out headforemost, and came to the surface clear of the canoe, blowing and sputtering. A cry went up from the shore, and for a moment Colonel Witham was seized with a sudden fear. What if any of them should be drowned, and he, to vent a petty spite, had given no warning? In his excitement he failed to notice that he had spilled some pepper into the ladle which he held in one hand.

Two rowboats were hastily started out from the beach, and, impelled by strong arms, surged toward the canoe.

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Tom was prompt to act. He and Bob had had many a drill at this sort of thing. Each of the boys was a good swimmer, and soon they were all clinging to the canoe, which had completely overturned. The boys were in about the same positions as they had occupied in the canoe, Tom at one end, Bob at the other, and the other two clinging each to one side.

"Quick, boys, let's right her before the boats get here," cried Tom.

Under his directions the two Warren boys now took their positions both on the same side of the canoe, with himself and Bob at the ends. Then all four took long breaths, treaded water vigorously, and lifted. The canoe rose a little and rolled over sluggishly, two-thirds full of water.

While the others supported it, Tom bailed the canoe nearly dry with a bailing-dish, which he always kept tied to a thwart for just such an emergency. Then he climbed in over one end, and Bob followed over the other. The Warren boys clung to the gunwales until one of the boats from the shore picked them up. The paddles were recovered for Tom and Bob, and the three craft proceeded to shore.

There, stretching themselves out on the hot sands before the blaze, they waited for their clothing to dry on them. They were much liked by the boys and girls of the village, and were at once a part of a jolly group, each of which party had a separate detail to recount in the capsizing of the canoe as they had seen it.

All at once the picnickers were startled by a howl of rage from Colonel Witham. All eyes were turned upon him. He was executing the most extraordinary contortions and dance-steps that could be imagined. An Indian chief, excelling all his tribe at a war-dance, could not have outdone the grotesque movements of the colonel.

"What ails the man?" cried Captain Sam. "He must have gone clean crazy." And he started for the colonel on the run.

But before he could reach him another accident happened. In his dancing about, the colonel trod most unexpectedly on a small log of wood, his heels flew out from under him, and down he came with a mighty splash in a little pool of seawater that had been left in a hollow of rock by the last receding tide.

There the colonel lay, like an enormous turtle, helpless for a moment with rage and astonishment, and all the while sputtering fiercely and crying out.

"What on earth ails you, colonel?" asked Captain Sam, hurrying to his assistance. "You haven't gone crazy, have you?" And he helped the colonel to his feet with a great effort.

"Pepper!" roared the purple-faced colonel. "Pepper!"

"Pepper!" cried Captain Sam. "What about pepper?"

"Everything about it!" sputtered the colonel. "It's in the chowder! Taste it and see."

"What's that?" cried Captain Sam. "If those young scamps have peppered the chowder I'll thrash every one of them myself. Here, let me see," and, picking up the ladle which the colonel had dropped, he cautiously tasted the chowder.

"Why, there's no pepper in it," he said. "It's just right. I don't taste any pepper."

As, indeed, he did not, the colonel having got it all.

"You must have a strong imagination, colonel," he said.

"Imagination!" bellowed the colonel. "Imagination! I just wish your tongue was stuck full of a million red-hot needles and your mouth was filled with hornets, that's all I wish. Where's the boy that put that pepper into that spoon? Where is he? Show him to me and I'll make an example of him right here. I'll put him head first into the chowder by the heels."

As no one had put the pepper into the ladle, no culprit could be found to show to the colonel; and as the colonel could not select a victim out of a score or more of boys who were present, he could only vent his rage to no purpose, while the villagers, who had laughed themselves nearly

sick over the colonel's antics, gave him what sympathy they could feign.

It ended in the colonel's taking himself off in a great fury, declaring that any one who pleased could make the chowder, and he hoped it would choke them all, and that fish-bones innumerable would stick in the throats of whoever ate it.

The colonel's departure, however, far from putting any damper on the occasion, seemed rather to afford the party a relief; and his mishap made no small part of their amusement, as they went on with the preparations for the feasting.

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Captain Sam, who could turn his hand to anything, took the position left vacant by the colonel, and declared he could bring the chowder to completion in a way vastly superior to the colonel's. And indeed it was a decided improvement in the appearance of things to see the good-natured captain standing over the steaming kettle and cracking jokes with every pretty girl that went by.

The preparations for the clambake went merrily on. A huge pile of driftwood was brought up from the shore and heaped on the fire by the ledge. There were pieces of the spars of vessels, great junks of shapeless timber that had once been ship-knees and pieces of keels, timbers that had drifted down from the mills away up the river, now thrown up on shore after miles and miles of aimless tossings, and crates and boxes that had gone adrift from passing steamers and come in with weeks of tides. The flames consumed them all with a fine roaring and crackling, and, dying down at length after an hour or two, left at a white heat beneath the ashes a bed of large flat rocks that had been carefully arranged.

Several of the boys, with brooms made of tree branches, swept the hot stones clean of ashes; clean as an oven they made it. Then they brought barrels of clams, big fat fellows, with the blue yet unfaded from their shells, and poured them out on the hot stones, whence there arose a tremendous steaming and sizzling.

Quickly they pitched damp seaweed over the clams, from a stack heaped near, covering them completely to the depth of nearly a foot. Then on this, wherever they saw the steam escaping, they shovelled the clean coarse gravel of the beach, so that the great broad seaweed oven was nearly air-tight.

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Then they heaped the hot ashes in a mound and buried therein potatoes and corn with the thick green husks left on it.

The women, meantime, had not been idle, for in a grove that skirted the beach they had spread table-cloths on the long tables that always stood there, winter and summer, fastened into the ground with stakes driven firm. If all that great steaming bed of clams and the chowder in the mammoth kettle had suddenly vanished or burned up, or had some other catastrophe destroyed it, there would still have been left a feast for an army in what was spread on the snowy tables from no end of fat-looking baskets.

There were roast chickens and ducks, sliced cold

meats, and country sausages. There were pies enough to make a boy's head swim,—apple, mince, pumpkin, squash, berry, custard, and lemon,—in and out of season; chocolate cakes and raisin cakes and cakes of all sizes and forms. There were preserves and pickles and a dozen and one other messes from country cupboards, for the good housewives of Grand Island were generous souls, and used to providing for a hearty lot of seafaring husbands and sons and brothers, and, moreover, this picnic at the Narrows was a yearly event, for which they made preparation long ahead, and looked forward to almost as much as they did to Christmas and New Year.

Never were tables more temptingly spread, and when, late in the afternoon, the benches around these tables were filled with expectant and hungry picnickers, it was a sight worth going miles to see.

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Captain Sam pronounced the chowder done, and the great kettle, hung from a stout pole, was borne in triumph by him and Arthur Warren to the grove near the tables. Somebody else pronounced the clams done, and the gravel was carefully scraped off from the seaweed, and the seaweed lifted from the clams, and the great stone oven with its steaming contents laid bare. The very fragrance from it was a tonic.

Bowls of the chowder and big plates of the clams were carried to the tables. There were dishes of the hot corn piled high; potatoes that came to table black as coals, and which, being opened, revealed themselves white as newly popped corn. There was a mingled odour of foods, piping hot, and over all the grateful aroma from half a dozen coffee-pots.

"Cracky! do they expect us to eat all this?" exclaimed young Joe, as he surveyed the prospect. "I wonder where it is best to begin—and what to leave out."

"Don't try to eat it all, Joe," said Arthur. "Give somebody else a chance, too. You know the night you went to Henry Burns's party you ate so many nuts and raisins you woke up dreaming that somebody was trying to tie you into a square knot, and when you got fully awake you wished somebody would, and I had to get up and pour Jamaica ginger into you. Don't try to eat more than enough for three ordinary persons this time, Joe, and you'll be all right."

Young Joe tried to smile, with a slice of chicken in one hand and a spoonful of preserves in the other, and a mouthful of both. His reputation at the table had been made long before that day, and had gone abroad, and here was the opportunity of a lifetime, for every good-hearted motherly-looking housewife within reaching distance was passing him food.

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"I hope there's a seat for me," said Henry Burns, who came hurrying up. He and George Warren had made the run down the island on bicycles.

"Come on, both of you," cried the crowd. "There's always room for you," and made places for them at once.

"It seems too bad not to invite those other campers up on the shore," said one of the

women. "I'm sure they haven't had anything as good as this for all summer."

"What! Harvey's crew?" queried a chorus of voices, in astonishment. "Well, you don't live near enough to where they are camping to be bothered by them. If you did, you wouldn't want them."

"We don't mind some kind of jokes so much," continued one of the villagers, at which Tom and Bob and Henry Burns and the Warren boys tried to look unconscious, "but when it comes to taking things that don't belong to them and continually creating a disturbance, we think it is going a little too far. Perhaps it might do them good to get them over here and repay them with kindness, but some of us are not just in the mood for trying it."

"Besides," said another, "it's too late now, if we wanted to, for I saw them starting out about half an hour ago in their yacht, and wondered where they could be trying to go, with wind enough to barely stir them. Some mischief, like as not, they're up to. No good errand, I'll be bound."

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Which was quite true.

However, in most surprising contradiction to the speaker's assertion, there suddenly appeared along the shore Harvey and all his crew, walking close to the water's edge, but plainly to be seen.

"Well, those boys must have changed their minds quickly," said the man who had spoken before. "It is not more than half an hour, surely, since I saw them all starting out in the yacht. I guess they found there was not enough wind."

Perhaps, however, there had been wind enough for the purpose of Harvey and his crew. There was enough, at all events, to carry them up past the village and back again to their mooring-place. If they had had any object in doing that, there had been wind enough to satisfy them. They seemed, moreover, in high spirits when they returned from this brief voyage, and laughed heartily as they made the yacht snug for the night.

Now they went whistling past the picnic party, all of them in line, and went down along the shore till they were lost to view in the woods.

"Hope they're not going down my way," said some one. "They're up to altogether too much mischief around here; that is, I know well enough it's them, but I can't ever succeed in catching them at it. I'd make it hot for them if I could."

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But Harvey and his crew had surely no designs on the property of any one down the island, for they had not gone far in the grove of woods before Harvey called a halt, and they all sat down and waited. It was rapidly growing dusk, and they waited until it had grown quite dark. Then they arose, cut across through the grove toward the Narrows again, but keeping out of sight all the while, both of chance villagers who might be passing along the road, and of the crowd about the picnic fire.

When they had come to the Narrows, Harvey again called a halt, and stole ahead to see if the

coast was clear. The island was a narrow strip of land here, with the bay on either hand coming in close to the roadway, but by keeping close to the water's edge, and dodging behind some low cedars, provided the campers were all about the fire, they might pass unobserved. This they managed successfully, for, the driftwood fire having been renewed, the picnic party were seated about it, singing and telling stories.

Harvey and his crew went on up through the woods to their own camp, where two of them remained, while Harvey and George Baker and Allan Harding took their yacht's tender and rowed rapidly on up toward the town. After they had started, Joe Hinman and Tim Reardon stole down through the woods again, and kept watch for a long time on the group about the fire. They did not return to their camp till the sound of a horn, some hour and a half later, signified to them that Harvey and the others had returned from their mission, whatever it was.

The driftwood fire began to blaze low as the evening wore on, and by nine o'clock the greater number of the picnickers had said "Good night" and started on their journey home. Some of them had come from away down at the foot of the island, and still others from the little settlement at the head. These now harnessed in their horses, which had been allowed to feed near the grove, and drove away, their flimsy old wagons rattling along the road like so many wrecks of vehicles.

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Around the fire, however, there still lingered a group of fishermen and village folk, telling stories and gossiping over their pipes.

"I wonder whatever became of that fellow Chambers," said one. "He was the slickest one of the lot, so that Detective Burton said. Do you recall how he sailed away that morning, as cool as you please, with the pistols popping all around his head?"

The subject had never ceased to be the one great topic of interest in the village of Southport.

"I reckon he'll never be seen around these parts again," remarked another. "Like as not he's up in Long Island Sound long before this. Or maybe the yacht's hauled up somewhere, and he's got clear out of the country. There's no telling where those fellows will travel to, if they're put to it, according to what I read in the papers."

"It's mighty mysterious," said Captain Sam. "For my part, I think it's queer nobody's sighted him somewhere along the coast. A man don't sail for days without somebody seeing him. He ought to be heard from along Portland way, that is, if he ever left this bay, which I ain't so sure of, after all."

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This remark seemed to amuse most of the group.

"Seems as though you expected you might see him and that crack yacht some night sailing around here like the *Flying Dutchman*," said one, at which the others took their pipes out and chuckled. "You'll have to get out your old *Nancy Jane* and go scouring the bay after him, Cap'n Sam. If he ever saw her coming after him, he'd haul down his sail pretty quick and invite you to

come aboard."

"Well," replied Captain Sam, good-naturedly, "there's no accounting for the strange things of the sea, as you ought to know, Bill Lewis, with the deep-water voyages you've been on. Still, I'm free to say I don't see how that 'ere craft can have got out of here and gone clear up Boston way or New York, without so much as a sail being sighted by all them as has been watching for her. I don't try to explain where he may be, but I stick to my idea that there's something mighty queer about it."

"He may be at the bottom of this 'ere bay," said the man addressed as Bill Lewis. "Stranger things than that have happened, and he was but one man in a big boat on a coast he couldn't have known but little of. There's many a reef for him to hit in the night, and the day he escaped was stormy. For that matter, I give it up, too. He was a slick one, that's all I can say."

And so they rolled this strange and mysterious bit of gossip over, while the fire burned to coals and the coals died away to ashes.

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"Tom," said Bob, as they launched the canoe from the shelving beach some time after ten o'clock, "it's too glorious a night to go right home to bed. What do you say to a short paddle, just a mile or so out in the bay, to settle that terrible mixture of pie and clams that we've eaten? We'll sleep all the sounder for it."

"Perhaps 'twill save our lives," replied Tom. "I ate more than I've eaten in the last week. Let's take it easy, though. I don't feel like hard work."

So they paddled leisurely out for about a mile, enjoying the brilliant starlight and watching the dark waters of the bay flash into gleams of phosphoric fire at every stroke of the paddle. It was like an enchanted journey, gliding along through the still night, amid pools of sparkling gems.

It was nearing eleven when they drove the bow of their canoe in gently upon the sand at their landing-place and stepped out upon the shore.

"One, two, three—pick her up," said Tom, as each grasped a thwart of the canoe, ready to swing it up on to their shoulders. Up it came, fairly on to the shoulders of Bob, who had the bow end, but Tom, who never fumbled at things, seemed somehow to have made a bad mess of it. His end of the canoe dropped clumsily to the ground, twisting Bob's head uncomfortably and surprising that young gentleman decidedly.

"What's the matter, Tom?" he asked, laughing good-naturedly, as he turned to his companion. But Tom for a moment answered never a word. He stood staring ahead like one in a dream. Bob, amazed, looked in the same direction.

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"Bob," whispered Tom, huskily, "do you see—it's gone—it isn't there. Do you see—the camp—the old tent—it's gone, as sure as we're standing here."

They rushed forward to where the tent had been but a few hours before that afternoon, and stood there dismayed. There in the open air were their bunks, their camp-stools, their camp-kit, and the

great chest; but the tent that had sheltered them had disappeared. Around about the spot were holes where the stakes that had held it had been hastily wrenched out, but not a scrap of canvas nor a piece of rope that had guyed it were to be seen. Only the poles that had been its frame lay upon the ground. Their tent had utterly vanished.

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CHAPTER XII.

A CRUISE AROUND THE ISLAND

"Well, Bob," said Tom, as they seated themselves on the bunks to collect their wits and think the situation over, "we know who did it, of course. The next thing is to prove it."

"It won't be so easy," responded Bob. "Jack Harvey hasn't done this thing without first planning out how he could dispose of the tent without attracting the slightest attention. He planned it in a good time, too, when half the village was away at the clambake."

"Yes," said Tom, "and that's what he sailed out on that short trip for, to look in at our tent without exciting any suspicion. He found out that there wasn't anybody around it, and then he and the others came down past our fire on purpose for us to see them and to prove by every one there that they were in another part of the island when our camp was stolen. He did it, though, and he's covered it up well. We'll have hard work to prove it against him."

"I'll be madder to-morrow, when I'm not so sleepy," said Bob. "Let's go on up to the Warren cottage now, and wait till to-morrow before doing anything. It isn't going to rain to-night, and the stuff will not be harmed out here without a covering."

So they travelled up to the Warren cottage, greatly to the surprise of the Warren boys, who had gone to bed and were sound asleep when they got there, and greatly to the concern of good Mrs. Warren, whose indignation did more to comfort them than anything else in the world could have. There was always room for more in the spacious old cottage, and they were soon stowed away in bed, quickly forgetting their troubles in sleep.

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"You'll stay right here for the rest of the summer," said Mrs. Warren the next morning at breakfast. "You can bring your camp stuff up and store it in the shed, and I guess it will be safe there from Jack Harvey or anybody else. It's a crying shame, but you're welcome here, so don't feel too bad about it. I don't think the boys will be sorry to have you here."

"I guess we won't," cried the Warren boys, in chorus. "But we'll get that tent yet, I think," said George Warren. "I don't believe Jack Harvey would dare destroy it. He's got it hidden somewhere, depend upon it. And we must find out where that place is."

"I wish I could believe it," said Tom, "but I'm

afraid his experience with our box taught him a lesson. It is my belief that he has taken the tent and sunk it out in the bay, weighted with stones, so it will never come to light. However, we will start out after breakfast to see if any one in the village saw him or his crew anywhere near the tent while we were away."

The search through the village for a clue proved, unfortunately, as fruitless as Tom had feared. Not a soul had seen Harvey or any one of his crew about the camp during the evening, nor, for that matter, anybody else. The disappearance remained as mysterious as though the wind had borne the tent away out to sea.

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"Say the word," said Captain Sam, when he heard of it, "and I'll go over to Mayville and get warrants for the whole crew. We'll have them up and examine every one of them. We can't have things of that sort going on around this village."

"I don't want to do it," said Tom. "At least, not yet awhile. I don't like to suspect Harvey or any of his crew of actually stealing the tent. It may be they have taken it just to annoy us for a night or two, and we shall get it back again. I'd rather take it as a practical joke for a few days, at any rate, than to have any boy arrested. I can't believe they would steal it for good, intending to keep it. Let's wait and see."

"You'll never see your tent, then, I'm thinking," said Captain Sam, "for I don't believe Harvey has the least idea of bringing it back. And the longer we wait the harder it will be catching him. However, do as you think best. I'll go down to-morrow and look their camp over, anyway, on my own hook. I have the right to do that. I'm a constable, and I'll look their camp over on general principles."

"You'll not find anything, I fear," said Tom.

"Fellows," said George Warren, as they all sat around the open fire that evening, "we haven't been on a cruise for a long time. What do you say to starting out in the *Spray* to-morrow for a trip around the island? It will take one, two, or three days, according to the wind, and Henry Burns says he can go. We'll take along a fly-tent and some blankets, and part of us can sleep on shore, so we won't be crowded."

"Great!" cried Bob. "It comes in a good time for us, when we're without a home—oh, I didn't mean that," he added, hastily, as Mrs. Warren looked reproachfully at him. "This is a better home than our camp was, to be sure. I mean, while our affairs are so upset, while we don't know whether we shall be camping to-morrow or living here. It may help to straighten matters out, and, if by chance Harvey and his crew feel like putting the tent back, this will give them the opportunity."

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"Then we'll get the lines ready," said George. "There's lots of small cod at the foot of the island,—and we might take a run across to the islands below, where there's lots of bigger ones. We'll plan to be gone two days or a week, just as it happens, and put in plenty of flour and biscuit and some canned stuff, in case we can't get fish."

"How happens it that Henry Burns can get off so easily?" asked Tom.

"Oh, they've let up on him a good deal since the capture of Craigie," answered George. "Now that the papers have said so much about him and the rest of us, and the people at the hotel have made so much of him, Mrs. Carlin has come to the conclusion that he isn't so much of a helpless child as she thought he was. She lets him do pretty much as he likes now, and so Colonel Witham don't bother him, either. He will be over by and by, and we'll make sure he can go."

Henry Burns put in an appearance soon after, and the subject of the voyage was duly discussed in all its phases, and settled. The next forenoon found them all aboard the little yacht *Spray*, getting everything shipshape and storing away some provisions and water.

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"Looks as though we were going on a long voyage," said young Joe, as his eyes rested fondly on several cans of lunch-tongue and two large mince pies which Mrs. Warren had generously provided, besides several tins of beef and a small keg of water.

"Well, Joe," said Arthur, "you know, having you with us to help eat up stuff is equivalent to going on a long voyage. And then, one never knows on a trip of this kind when he is going to get back."

Which was certainly true, if anything ever was.

They made a great point aboard the *Spray*, these Warren boys, of having every rope and sail and cleat in perfect condition; no snarled ropes, no torn canvas, and no loose bolts nor cleats to give way in a strain; and they began now, as usual, to see that everything was in shipshape condition before they cast off from their moorings and headed out of the harbour.

The little yacht was, therefore, as trim as any craft could be when they set sail on their voyage, with Mrs. Warren waving good-bye to them from the front piazza.

"I never feel as free anywhere in the world as I do out aboard the *Spray* on a trip like this," said George Warren, stretching himself out comfortably on the house of the cabin, while Arthur held the tiller. "It's the best fun there is down here, after all."

"Well, I don't know, a canoe isn't so bad," said Bob. "You can't take so many, to be sure, but when Tom and I get off on that and go down among the islands for a day or two, sleeping underneath it on the beaches at night and cooking on the shore as we go along, we feel pretty much like Crusoes ourselves, eh, Tom?"

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"Indeed we do," answered Tom. "It's the next best thing, surely, to sailing a boat."

"By the way, Tom," asked Arthur, "where did you leave the canoe? Not where any one could get that, I hope."

"No, that's safe and snug," replied Tom. "It's locked up in your shed, and your mother has the key. That's one thing we shall find all right when we get back."

The wind was blowing lightly from the northwest, and, as they were starting out to make the circuit of the island by way of the northern end first, they had to beat their way up along the coast against a head wind.

"This little boat isn't such a bad sailer," said George Warren, admiringly, gazing aloft at a snug setting topsail. "For a boat of its size, I guess she goes to windward as well as any. There's only one thing the matter with her. She's small, and when she's reefed down under three reefs, with the choppy seas we have in this bay, she don't work well to windward, and that's a fault that might be dangerous, if there were not so many harbours around this coast to run to in a storm."

"I suppose some day we'll have a bigger one, don't you?" queried Joe.

"Yes, when we can earn it, father says," replied George. "That don't look so easy, though. A fellow can't earn much when he's studying."

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"What's that up there on the ledges?" interrupted young Joe, pointing ahead to some long reefs that barely projected above the surface of the water.

"They are seals—can't you see?" replied Arthur. "The wind is right, and we'll sail close up on to them before they know it. We can't shoot, because we haven't any gun aboard, but we'll just take them by surprise."

The little *Spray*, running its nose quietly past the point of the first ledge and sailing through a channel sown with the rocks on either hand, came as a surprise to a colony of the sleek creatures, sunning themselves on the dry part of the ledges. They floundered clumsily off the rocks and splashed into the water, like a lot of schoolboys caught playing hookey, and only when the whole pack had slipped off into the sea did they utter a sound, a series of short, sharp barks, as here and there a curious head bobbed up for a moment, and then dived quickly below again.

"They have as much curiosity as a human being," said George Warren. "Just watch them steal those quick glances at us, and then bob under water again. The fishermen around here shoot them whenever they get a chance, because they eat the salmon out of the nets, but I never could bear to take a shot at one. They seem so intelligent, like a lot of tame dogs. I don't believe in shooting creatures much, anyway, unless you want them for food, or unless they are wild, savage animals."

"That don't apply to ducks, I hope," said Tom. "We want to take you up into the woods with us some fall, and have you do some shooting of that kind,—ducks and partridges and perhaps a deer or two."

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"No, I'd like that first rate," answered George. "It's this senseless shooting of creatures that you don't want after they are shot that I don't believe in. I don't believe in shooting things just for the sake of killing them. Actual hunting in the woods for game that you live on is another thing. It's a healthful, vigorous sport that takes one into clean surroundings and does one good."

They chatted on, discussing this and that, till the yacht at length turned the head of the island and ran along past Bryant's Cove.

"We won't forget that harbour in a hurry," they said, as they sailed by.

The wind was gradually dying down with the sun, and would not carry them much farther that night, though they were soon running before it, as they rounded the uppermost point and headed away for the foot of the island, some thirteen miles away.

"We'll have just about wind enough to run along to Dave Benson's place," said George. "It's two miles down, but the wind and tide are both in our favour,—what there is of them. We can buy some green corn of Dave, and he will let us pull his lobster-pots and charge us only five cents for each lobster. Things are cheap down here, if you buy them of the fishermen. A little money means a good deal to them. A little flour and tea and sugar at the village store, and they live mighty comfortably on what they catch and what they raise on their farms. They don't know what it means to be poor, as the poor in our city do."

"Yes, and they live a happy life, for the most part," said Henry Burns. "They get a good share of their living out of the sea, and I've always noticed that seafaring people are generally very well contented with their lot. You never hear them grumbling, as men do that work hard on farms. The sea seems to inspire them more; at least, it seems so to me."

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"What does 'inspire' mean, please, Henry?" queried young Joe, winking at Bob. "It sounds like a very nice word."

"Inspiration means a strong desire and ambition to do something, and a conviction that one cannot fail," answered Henry Burns. "For instance, I might feel myself inspired to knock an idea into your head, just like this." And Henry Burns administered a sound cuff on that young gentleman's head. "That's a very crude example," added Henry Burns. "Perhaps I can give you a better one, if you would like."

"No, I thank you," said young Joe. "That will do very well for the present. I think I understand."

Dave Benson's place was a weather-beaten old house set in the midst of a corn and bean patch, close by a little creek that ran in from the western bay. It had an air of dilapidation, but, withal, of comfort about it. There was a little garden, some hake were drying on flakes beyond the house, a rowboat and a dory were pulled up on the beach a little way up the creek, and the indispensable sailboat, built by Dave himself in the winter months, was lying a little offshore in the shelter of a projecting hook of land.

"Hulloa, Dave," shouted George Warren, as a tall, sunburned figure, gaunt but powerful, emerged from the door of the house and peered out across the water at them.

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"Hulloa," he said, laconically. "You all ain't been over much to see us lately."

"No, but we thought we would make a call to-day," said George. "Will you come out and get

us? We left the tender behind. We're going around the island."

For answer the man shoved his dory off the beach, stepped in, and sculled out to them with one oar out over the stern.

"Climb in here sort of easy like, now," said he, "and I guess I can take the whole of you ashore at one load. If you two ain't used to this craft," he added, addressing Tom and Bob, "you want to look out some, for its tippery and no mistake, though there ain't no better boat when you know how to behave in it."

"I guess it's something like our canoe," said Tom. "We're used to that, so I think we'll manage. Perhaps you never saw a canoe."

"Not as I know of," returned the other. "Though I do recall seeing what I thought must be one, from what I've heard, going along the shore down below here about an hour ago."

"It couldn't have been a canoe," said Bob, "for ours is the only one on the island, and that is locked up safe at home in the Warren's shed."

"Mebbe not," replied Dave Benson. "I ain't sure at all. I just noticed there was two boys in it, and they were on their knees and pushing it along with what you call paddles, I think."

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Tom and Bob looked at each other blankly.

"It can't be possible," said Tom, at length. "I left ours locked up safe enough. Dave's made a mistake."

"Got any corn?" asked Arthur.

"Yes, there's some growing out there, I reckon. You can go out and pick what you want and gimme what you like for it. It's good and sweet, I reckon."

"And lobsters, how about them?" asked young Joe.

"Well, I haven't pulled the pots to-day," said Dave. "You can go and do that, too, I reckon. There ought to be some there. I baited them all fresh with cunners and sculpins last night."

"Let me go and pull them," said Bob. "I never caught a lobster. Come on, Joe, you can show me how and I'll do the work."

"Did you ever handle a dory?" asked Dave.

"No," answered Bob, "but I'm used to a canoe."

"And did you ever pull a lobster-pot?"

"No, never saw one."

"Then you want to look out," said Dave, and took himself off into his house, leaving the boys to themselves.

Bob got another oar, and, with young Joe in the stern, rowed out a few rods toward some ledges, where Dave had indicated that the lobster-pots were set.

"Did you ever pull a lobster-pot, Joe?" asked Bob, as they came in sight of half a dozen small wooden buoys, about as big as ten-pins, floating

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at a short distance from one another, with ropes attached.

“No, I never did,” replied Joe; “but I’ve seen it done and it looks easy. You just lift the pot aboard the boat and open a trap-door and take out the lobsters. Only you want to look out how you take hold of one of them, that’s all. It’s all right if you take him by the back.”

On shore, seated on a huge stick of timber, washed ashore long ago and half-imbedded in the sand, the other boys watched the proceedings with interest.

“Bob will do it all right, of course,” said George, winking slyly at Arthur. “It’s a simple enough trick, only it is harder in a dory than in a boat with a keel to it, for a dory slides off so.”

“Just like a canoe,” said Tom.

“By the way,” he added, “is a lobster-pot heavy?”

“That’s the deceptive part of it,” replied George. “It’s a great big cage made of laths with a bottom of boards, and it comes to the surface easy because the water buoys it up. It’s the lifting it out that fools one. It’s got three or four big stones in it to weigh it down, and you have got to bring it out of water with a sudden lift or it will stick half-way.”

In the meantime, Bob, having grasped one of the floating buoys, proceeded to haul in the slack of the rope, which was quite long, to allow for the tide, which was now low.

“It comes up easy,” he said to Joe, as he drew it up slowly to the surface, hand over hand. “Here she comes now. Wait till it lands on the gunwale and then lean over on the other side, so we won’t capsize.” Bob grasped the slats of the big cage and lifted manfully.

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The lobster-pot came up all right, as George had explained, till, just at the point where it should have left the water, it stopped suddenly and stuck like a bar of lead. Unluckily, Bob had not counted on that extra weight of stone inside, nor on the loss of the buoyancy of the water. At the same instant, moreover, young Joe, seeing the cage strike the gunwale, shifted over to the other side of the dory. This settled the matter. The pot lodged half-way over one gunwale, hung there for a moment, long enough to careen the crank thing down on its side; Bob and Joe both lost their balance and slid the same way, the dory filled with water, and boys and lobster-pot slumped into the sea.



"BOYS AND LOBSTER-POT SLUMPED INTO THE SEA"

The boys on shore set up a roar at the mishap of their comrades, while long Dave Benson, emerging once more from his cabin door, was heard to chuckle as he strode down to the shore and shoved off his rowboat.

"It's just like a canoe, exactly," he muttered, "just like it—only it's so different." And he doubled up at the oars and laughed silently.

Bob and Joe, coming to the surface, puffing and blowing water, were pleased to note the sympathy displayed for them in four boyish forms, rolling off the log and holding on to their sides with laughter. Nor did the keenness of this sympathy abate the whole evening long, for every now and then one of them might be heard to repeat the language of Dave Benson, as he glanced significantly at the others, "It's just like a canoe—only it's so different."

However, Bob and Joe, being duly scrubbed down and invested in a change of duck clothing from the locker of the *Spray*, did not relish any the less the supper that awaited them, of broiled live lobster, cooked over a glowing bed of coals on the beach, and corn that was as sweet as Dave Benson had promised. They took their chaffing as good fellows and comrades are bound to do, only vowing inwardly to bide their time for revenge.

Then, as night was coming on, they set up their fly-tent on a clean, dry part of the beach, well beyond the reach of the tide, spread down their blankets, and Tom and Bob and Henry Burns turned in to sleep there, leaving the little cabin of the *Spray* for the Warren boys.

"Bob," said Tom, "did you hear what Dave Benson said as he brought in the capsized dory, with the lobsters, too?"

"He said it was 'just like a canoe, only—'"

"Oh, you dry up, Tom," exclaimed Bob. "Your turn will come next, so don't rub it in."

And they went off soundly to sleep.

The next morning, when they awoke, they found that the wind had altered and was beginning to blow up from the southward. They must, therefore, beat their way down to the foot of the island, some ten miles distant, against a head wind and sea, for a southerly always rolled in more or less of a sea after it had blown for an hour or so.

"Come again," called out Dave Benson, as they left his cabin astern, and he stood waving them farewell with his weather-beaten hat.

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"I'd just like to know what he meant when he said he saw a canoe out here," said Tom. "I know ours is all right, but he certainly did describe a canoe, when he spoke about its being paddled, and ours is the only one I know of around here."

"Yes, and he saw it last night, or, rather, yesterday afternoon," said Bob, "and nobody would have disturbed ours in broad daylight, at any rate."

But about an hour later, they came suddenly to the conclusion that Dave Benson knew what he was talking about, when Henry Burns exclaimed all at once: "Why, there it is now. Dave Benson was right, after all. That's a canoe, down about a mile ahead, just off that white line of beach, and there are two paddling it."

The boys looked in amazement. There could be no mistaking it. Henry Burns had surely spied a canoe. They could make it out quite plainly, pitching slightly in the sea, with apparently some one at either end.

"Quick, get the glass, Joe," cried George Warren, who had the tiller. "It's in the locker in the cabin, you know. That will show us just who it is."

Young Joe dived below and reappeared the next instant, bringing a small telescope.

"Here," he said, handing it to Tom, "take a look at them."

Tom adjusted the focus of the glass and sighted the craft ahead, then exclaimed, excitedly: "Yes, it's them, sure enough. It's Harvey and Joe Hinman and it's the canoe. We've got them, too, if the *Spray* can only catch them. We're sure to get the canoe, at any rate, for they can't run far or fast with that on their shoulders, if they see us and take to the shore. We know what it is to try to hurry with that."

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"That we do," returned Bob. "Let me have a look, Tom."

"Cracky!" he exclaimed, as he put the glass down almost as soon as he had sighted it. "Who'd have thought they would have had the nerve to get that in broad daylight? They must know they are sure to be seen in it, too. What on earth can Harvey be thinking of?"

"We'll set the club topsail and the other jib in a hurry," said George, "and perhaps we can overhaul them before they see us."

They got the extra sail on in a twinkling and laid the course of the *Spray* a little closer into the wind. Fifteen minutes went by, and they had made rapid progress in overhauling the canoe. They made short tacks, so as not to be seen by the paddlers, if possible, by keeping so far as they could in a line with the stern of the canoe.

Presently, however, the boy who was wielding the stern paddle turned and looked back, and they could see plainly that it was Harvey.

He must have seen them, too, and been vastly surprised, for, carrying across the strip of land at the Narrows, he had surely expected to meet no familiar yacht in the western bay. The occupants of the canoe turned their craft more in toward shore, though not directly, and, at least so it seemed to the boys, began paddling desperately, as though they hoped to escape.

If they had thought they could run away from the *Spray* in this way, they soon found out their mistake, for the *Spray* continued rapidly to overhaul them.

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Turning squarely in toward the shore, Harvey and Joe Hinman soon reached it, jumped out, and drew the canoe far up on the beach. Their next move surprised the crew of the *Spray*. Leaving the canoe in full sight on the beach, Harvey and Joe Hinman walked deliberately away, without so much as looking back at their pursuers.

"That's a mighty strange performance," exclaimed George Warren. "I don't understand that at all."

There was no place to run the *Spray* in close to shore, so they rounded to some thirty feet out, and Tom and Bob, hastily throwing off their clothes, dived overboard and swam to the beach.

Tom was the first to reach the canoe; but, as he came upon it and turned it over, he uttered a cry of astonishment.

"They've fooled us this time, sure enough," he said to Bob, who came panting up. "It isn't our canoe."

The canoe, in fact, was new.

It was enough like theirs to be its mate, both as to size and colour, but there was not a scratch upon it nor upon the paddles. The canoe could not have been used more than once or twice since it had left the maker's hands.

"The joke is on us," cried Bob to the boys in the *Spray*. "It's another canoe. Harvey's 'governor,' as he calls him, must have bought it for him and

sent it down on the boat yesterday. He doesn't seem to be afraid to trust us with his property, which is more than we would do with him."

"Perhaps he would rather trust the canoe with us than to trust himself with all of us just at this time," replied Tom. "I feel like taking it along with us, to make him give up our tent, but I'm afraid that wouldn't do. We can't prove that he has it, either."

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Harvey and Joe Hinman had clearly left the canoe to its fate, so there was nothing to do but to swim aboard the *Spray* again, and the voyage down the island was resumed.

"There's one thing about it," said Tom, as he scrambled into his clothing once more, "if Jack Harvey is as reckless and as careless in that canoe as he is in his yacht it will be washed up on shore some day without him. Not that I hope it will happen, but I look to see it."

"I don't think he was born to be drowned," said Henry Burns.

Toward noon they came in sight of the southern extremity of the island, or the extremities, to speak more accurately, for the end of the island here was divided into a succession of thin points of land of various shapes, affording a number of small, rockbound harbours, snug and secluded, and each making good shelter for small vessels.

They selected one of these, and, as they knew the waters to be filled with a species of small cod, they determined to lay up here for the afternoon and night, starting out again the next morning. They brought the *Spray* well in to the head of the harbour which they selected, so that it was almost wholly land-locked when they dropped anchor and furled their sails.

Toward evening the wind decreased, dying out almost entirely. Big banks of clouds piling up in the northwest told them that they might expect the breeze from that quarter in the morning.

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It was getting dusk and they were cooking their supper in the little cabin of the *Spray*, when young Joe, looking out of the companionway, exclaimed: "Why, here comes company; another yacht's going to lie in here for the night, too."

Looking out, they saw a big black sloop coming slowly into the harbour. She had come up from the southward before the wind, and had only her mainsail set. There was hardly breeze enough to bring her in. She drifted in slowly, with one man at her wheel, and, as she came within hailing distance, young Joe, going forward, swung his cap and shouted, "Ahoy."

The man at the wheel did not respond, but, strangely enough, at the sound of young Joe's voice the yacht slowly turned again, heading completely about, and stood out of the harbour again.

"Doesn't seem to like our company," said Henry Burns.

"Guess he'll have to have it, whether he wants it or not," said George Warren. "There's not wind enough to take him out again, as he will find when he gets the set of the tide at the entrance."

If the helmsman aboard the strange yacht had really intended to quit the harbour again, he found the tide to be as George Warren had said. After vainly trying to make out for a few moments, he left the wheel, ran forward, and the next moment they heard the splash of his anchor. Then the sail dropped and the man went below.

"Whoever they are aboard there, they don't seem inclined to be sociable," said Henry Burns. "Well, they don't have to be, if they don't want to."

"Guess they're afraid we'll keep them awake," said George Warren. "They are fishermen, by the looks. See, she carries no topmast, so she is not a pleasure yacht, though she looks from here like a fast boat. They make them good models now, since Burgess began it."

"I guess that's so," said Arthur Warren. "Those fishermen like to sleep nights, after a hard day's work, without being disturbed. I remember one night we laid up in a harbour and began singing college songs, and a crew of them rowed over to us and threatened to lick us if we didn't keep quiet. This fellow doesn't want to be disturbed."

"I'll hail him, anyway, if he comes on deck again," said Henry Burns, "and find out where he is from. I like to know my neighbours."

But the man aboard the strange yacht was not inclined to be neighbourly. He did not appear on deck again. A thin wreath of smoke curled out of the funnel in his cabin, and they knew he was getting a meal. That was the only sign of life aboard.

Sometime that night—he did not know the hour—Henry Burns awoke, conscious of some sound that had disturbed his light slumbers. Presently he became aware that it was the sound of a sail being hoisted. Getting up softly without disturbing his companions, he crept out of the cabin and looked across the water. The moon was shining, and he could see a lone figure aboard the strange yacht, getting the boat under way.

Henry Burns saw him go forward and labour for awhile at the anchor rope. Then, for a wind had arisen, the man ran aft to the wheel, and Henry Burns saw the strange yacht go sailing out of the harbour.

"That's a queer thing to do," muttered Henry Burns. "There's something strange about it. He tried to get out before, the minute he saw us. Cracky! You don't suppose— No, that's nonsense. I'm getting altogether too suspicious ever since I came across that man Craigie upon the roof of the hotel."

And Henry Burns went back to his bunk again.

CHAPTER XIII.

STORM DRIVEN

When they awoke next morning the wind was

blowing heavily from the northwest, and, while the sun was as yet shining brightly, the sky was darkened here and there with banks of clouds, which moved with great rapidity, driven by violent currents. Inside the snug harbour the water was calm, but, looking out beyond on the bay, they could see its surface broken already into big waves.

"Looks like a nasty day outside," remarked George Warren. "I wonder whether we ought to lie in here to-day, or take the chance of clearing the foot of the island before it gets heavier."

"I'd hate to stay here another whole day," said Joe.

"Do you think it's going to blow much harder, George?" inquired Tom.

"I can't say for certain," replied the other, "but it looks as though the wind was going to increase right along."

"But don't you think we could get around the foot of the island before it got much worse?" asked Arthur. "There is only about a mile to run before we get under the lee of the islands in the other bay."

"Of course, if we can reach the eastern bay all right, we shall be in smooth water then," said George, "for the island will shut off the wind to a great extent, and there won't be much sea. Well, if you fellows are willing to take the chance, I am. I guess it won't get any worse than the night we ran to Bryant's Cove. The *Spray* stood that all right."

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Breakfast being finished, they double-reefed the mainsail of the little yacht, and did not set the jib, as they would be running with the wind about on their quarter and would not need it. Then they stood out of the harbour into the bay.

They were almost immediately in rough water, and the very first plunge of the yacht into the heavy sea sent the spray flying over them. Young Joe and Arthur went scurrying into the cabin for the oilskins, of which they had a good supply, and the boys prepared themselves for wet weather.

"We'll get it right along now," said George, "until we can clear that point about a mile ahead there. The *Spray* does the best she can, but she does throw the water bad in a heavy sea. It isn't her fault. And there's one good thing about her; you can't tip her over. She will stand up till the mast and sail are blown out of her."

The boys now realized how deceptive wind and water viewed from a distance always are. Gusts of wind that were seen from shore to blacken the water and send the spray flying from the crests of waves, were found now to be of far greater violence than they had supposed. Viewed from the harbour, the waves had not seemed to be of unusual size, but, now that they threw the little yacht about like a toy, they assumed a more terrific aspect.

The wind increased, and the *Spray* rolled dangerously in the seas.

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"She won't stand this," said George, at length.

"We have got to put the third reef in and do it quick."

They got the yacht into the wind for a moment, lowered the sail, and tied in a few reef-points; but the yacht would not hold in the wind, and they had to be content with a few knots tied at twice or three times the usual distance.

"We're blowing offshore at a great rate," exclaimed George, "but I can't help it. I can't hold her up any higher. She won't stand it."

"Then we cannot make the point," said Arthur.

"I am afraid not," returned George. "I don't like the prospect of getting out into that bay, either, but I'm afraid we are in for it. I had no idea there was any such a sea running, nor anything like this wind."

The prospect was, indeed, not encouraging. Across the wide stretch of bay for some eighteen miles the sea was one mass of whitecaps, a tumbling confusion of waves, which already broke aboard the yacht, covering the boys with spray and necessitating the use of bailing-dish and boat-sponge to keep the water from standing in the cockpit.

"We've got to get that topping-lift up higher, Arthur," said George Warren, as the yacht rolled heavily, bringing the boom down dangerously near the waves.

His brother sprang to the halyards at the warning, but it was a moment too late. At that instant a wave, rolling higher than any they had yet encountered, raised the *Spray* on its crest and hurled it forward, at the same time causing the little craft to yaw so that the boom was buried for a moment deep in the seas. That moment was enough. There was a sharp snap as the boom, splintered in two in the middle, emerged from the waves, a useless thing. The yacht nearly broached to, while the next oncoming wave broke fairly aboard, filling the cockpit half-full of water.

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They thought it was all over with them then, but they kept their heads and saved themselves. Henry Burns and Arthur Warren, at the risk of going overboard, managed to get the broken boom aboard, after they had let the halyards run, and lashed it astern, so that the yacht was utterly without sail. At the same time Tom and Bob, who knew little about handling a yacht, but were ready for any emergency, bailed furiously with pails to clear the boat of water.

Fortunately, the hatch had been shut, and the deluge of water had not gone into the cabin, or the boat must have foundered. As it was, she rolled heavily till they had bailed the cockpit dry again.

"That does settle it, with a vengeance," said George Warren, when they had recovered a little from the shock. "We have got to run for it now, clear across this bay. I think we can do it all right, but you fellows will have to bail lively. That won't be the only sea we take aboard."

"Where do we run to?" asked Henry Burns.

"That's the worst of it," replied George Warren.

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"I'm not sure, by any means, whether we get blown out to the shoals, or whether we can head over to the eastward any, ever so slightly, and strike the Gull Island Thoroughfare. If we can land under the lee of Gull Island, we may be able to do something. The first thing, though, is to get there."

It was no easy thing to hold the yacht on its course, even with no sail to drive it up to windward. Every wave threatened to throw it broadside on, and it required now and again the united efforts of George and Arthur Warren to steady it. Then a wave would come aboard astern, rolling in and nearly filling the cockpit. Several times it did this, and at each and every time it seemed as though the little yacht was going down. They bailed desperately then, every one of them falling to except George Warren.

To their credit, though, not one of them lost his courage. Their faces were drawn and set, but they had confidence that the little *Spray* would somehow bring them through.

Toward the middle of the afternoon they had got the Thoroughfare well in sight, big Gull Island lying nearly dead ahead and the smaller Gull Islands lying away to the eastward.

"If we can manage to get a scrap of sail on her just as we pass the end of Gull Island," said George Warren, "I think we can swing her in and not capsize. We've got to keep headway on, though, or one of these big rollers will get under us and tip us over. We shall have a few rods to run broadside on, for, as we are running now, and the best we can head, we cannot come nearer than that to the island."

"I'll give her a scrap of sail that she can carry," exclaimed Arthur, and dived into the companionway, shutting the door quickly to keep the seas out. He returned in a moment, bringing a hand-saw. With this he severed clean the broken half of the boom, tying the ends of the rigging to the short stub that was left. This left the sail a huge, clumsy bag, that would evidently not hoist up but a foot or so on the mast, but might possibly be of some service in the emergency.

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A torrent of rain now began to pour, falling so dense as almost to shut out the islands ahead. Their outlines became obscured, making the effort to run into the Thoroughfare a more difficult and dangerous one. Moreover, the wind continued to increase.

"Now, fellows," said George Warren, as they came abreast of the end of Big Gull Island, "everybody up to windward and hold on hard. She's going to lay over when she gets these seas broadside. Hoist the sail, Arthur, just as we begin to head in."

Arthur sprang to the halyards, but they were tangled and did not pull true. Try as best he could, the sail would hoist but a little ways on the mast. It bagged out like a huge balloon, holding the wind and nearly capsizing them. Henry Burns, handling the main-sheet, let it run just in time to save them. Still the sail gave them headway, and, carefully managed, would answer to fetch them in.

Twice they had to head off fairly before the wind again, at the onrush of some enormous wave, but they got quickly on their course again, and, rolling frightfully, with the boys clinging far out to windward, the little yacht all at once felt the relief which the sheltering extremity of Gull Island afforded from the awful strain. Almost before they knew it, they were in smooth water once more, riding easily at the entrance to the Thoroughfare.

"Whew!" cried George Warren, as he dropped the tiller and shook his hands, which were numb and aching from the strain and the cold rain. "That was a ride for life that I don't care to repeat again in a hurry. Didn't the little *Spray* do well, though, eh, Arthur? She had a good excuse to founder if she hadn't been staunch. If she was only a little larger she wouldn't have minded this at all."

"We did come flying across that bay and no mistake," said Tom. "I thought we were going to founder twice or three times, though."

"Looks as though we were stranded here for some days, that's the worst of it," said George Warren. "This storm has just begun, by the looks of it. It's a lonesome hole, too, down in this reach. Nobody ever comes here, except a few fishermen in the fall and spring. The Thoroughfare is all right, but it doesn't lead to any particular place in the course of vessels, so it isn't a regular thoroughfare really, like those over to the eastward more. Now and then a yacht goes through, just for the sail, but one has got to know the channel very well, for it isn't charted accurately,—at least, so Cap'n Sam says."

"Well," returned Arthur, "we are not making a race against time, so I don't see as it matters much whether we stay here or some other part of the bay. We'll just lie snug aboard here to-night, and then to-morrow we'll get out and explore. There are some fishermen's shanties around on the other side of some of those smaller islands, and we ought to be able to build up a fire in one of them and live there till the storm is over, so we won't have to stay in this little cabin all the time."

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"I'll be glad enough to go down there for awhile now," said Henry Burns, "and get dry and warm. Come on, Bob, let's you and me start some coffee and biscuit going. You do the cooking, because you know how, and I'll look on. I'll get the dishes out, anyway."

There was scarcely room in the cabin of the *Spray* for more than four of them to sit and eat, so they threw the mainsail over the stub of the boom and made a shelter out of it against the rain. There, just outside the cabin, Tom and Bob sat as they all ate supper, with the rain pouring down all around and spattering in under the edges of the canvas. It was uncomfortable and dreary at best, and they were all glad when time came to turn in, which they did by all crowding into the cabin, where they could at least keep dry, although stowed away like sardines.

"Ouch!" exclaimed Henry Burns, as he awoke next morning, feeling stiff and sore. "I feel as though I was creased and starched and ironed, and every time I move I take out a crease. It will

take me half a day to straighten out again, I've got so many kinks in my neck and back."

They were all cramped and lame from the uncomfortable positions in which they had lain, for on fair nights they had been accustomed to make up two bunks just outside the cabin, in the cockpit. It was still raining hard, but as soon as they had had breakfast they set out to seek for new quarters.

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With the scrap of a sail set, and with the use of the sweeps with which the yacht was provided, they worked their way about a quarter of a mile along into the Thoroughfare, till they got abreast of one of the smaller of the Gull Islands. The shores of this were very bold, the rocks going down sheer, without any outlying reefs or ledges, so that they were able to run the yacht close alongside, making her fast at bow and stern with ropes carried out on land.

"It seems good to stretch one's legs again," said Bob, as they all sprang out on to the rocks. They were indeed glad to be on land once more.

The island on which they now were was about three-quarters of a mile long and about half a mile wide, quite densely wooded with a growth of spruce and young birches. From a little elevation they could look out to sea toward the southward.

"The shanties are on the other side, if I remember rightly," said George Warren. "I was down here once in the fishing season. We may as well strike directly across to the south shore. That's where the fishermen build their weirs for the salmon that run in along the islands."

They tramped across through the woods in the pouring rain. It was a relief to get even the shelter that the trees afforded from the driving storm. Presently they came in sight of the fishermen's cabins, a cluster of four standing in a clearing at the edge of the woods, facing the sea. One of the huts was somewhat larger than the other three, and toward this they directed their steps.

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"I don't just like to break into other people's property," said George Warren, advancing toward the door, hatchet in hand, "but it only means forcing a staple, and we can replace that without any harm being done. It's the only—hulloa! Why, somebody's been here before us. The door is ajar."

Somebody had, indeed, forced the door, and had not taken pains to refasten it. The staple, which had been drawn, lay on the ground by the door, just where it had been dropped. The boys threw open the door and stepped inside.

The one room, for a shanty of the kind, was fairly commodious. Along the two ends were ranged tiers of bunks, three at either end, making just enough for them.

"Looks as though they were built expressly for us," remarked Henry Burns.

The bunks were rough, clumsily made affairs, a few boards knocked together, with a thin layer of hay thrown in at the bottom of each; but with the blankets from the yacht they would be

comfortable.

In the centre of the room was a large sheet-iron stove, with a funnel running up through the roof. In one corner of the room—there was only one room in the cabin—was a sort of cupboard, on the shelves of which were piled a few tin dishes. A rusty axe was apparently the only tool left on the premises.

There was a scrap of kindling and one or two dry sticks of wood beside the stove, and with this they started a fire. Driftwood lined the shore, and a number of dead spruces, which had not yet rotted, furnished them with an ample supply of fuel. They piled the stove full, and soon had a fire roaring that turned the stove red-hot and which sent out a grateful warmth throughout the cabin.

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“That will dry us out in good shape,” exclaimed Arthur, as the steam came from his wet clothing. “We’ll have this old shanty as comfortable as a parlour. This is a better house than Crusoe ever had.”

It was, in fact, a comfortable shelter against the storm. The roof and sides were shingled, so that it kept out the rain, and though the wind, which by this time was blowing a gale, shook it till it rattled, it stood firm.

After the boys had brought in a supply of firewood, enough to last them through the evening, and had stowed it near the stove to dry, they set out again for the yacht, and brought back each a blanket, the yacht’s two lanterns, and a supply of food.

“It’s lucky we put a good supply aboard,” said young Joe, as they stowed the stuff away on the cabin shelves. “Looks as though we were in for a couple of days here, at least. It wouldn’t have been any fun to have to fish for our suppers in this storm.”

“You would never have survived it, Joe,” returned Arthur, “though you did eat enough at that picnic to last you several days.”

“Well, here’s a funny thing,” cried Henry Burns, who had been rummaging about in the cupboard. “The parties who were here before us didn’t believe in starving. And they didn’t believe in living on fishermen’s fare, either.” And Henry Burns brought forth three empty wine-bottles and a half-emptied jar of imported preserves. “Here are some tins that contained turkey and some kinds of game,” he added. “The fishermen don’t buy that sort of canned stuff. It must have been a party of yachtsmen that used this place last.”

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“They might have had the fairness to fasten the door after them, whoever they were,” said George Warren.

“Perhaps the wine accounts for that,” said Henry Burns.

“I’m glad they left us some preserves,” said young Joe.

They slept soundly in the shanty that night, with the wind howling about their ears and the rain dashing against the single window and beating

like mad upon the roof. Nor did the storm abate the following day, nor the next night. Not till the third morning did the sunlight welcome them as they awoke, but then it poured through every chink and crack in the shanty, as though to make amends for the length of its absence.

When the woods had dried sufficiently so they could venture abroad, they set out to hunt for a young spruce that would do for a boom for the *Spray*. After cutting several and finding they had been deceived in their length, they finally secured one which would do. Then they brought up the stub of the boom from the yacht and got the exact measure of the old one from the sail, which they disentangled from the snarl of rigging, and spread out.

"I am afraid Captain Sam would laugh at this spar-making effort of mine," said George Warren, as he trimmed away at the slender trunk of spruce, from which he had peeled the bark; "but it will do to take us on our cruise again. And what's the use of going on a cruise if you don't have adventures?"

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When he had fashioned the stick as well as his one tool—a hatchet from the locker of the *Spray*—would admit of, he unscrewed the jaws from the old boom, fastened them upon the new, and the boom was done.

Then they set about mending several tears in the mainsail, with a needle and twine, also from the yacht's locker, and by noon everything was in readiness for rigging the sail once more. This proved the most difficult task of all, for they found that it is one thing to know the running rigging of a sailboat, and another thing to reeve it when it has been displaced. It was not until the middle of the afternoon that they had the job completed, and then, as the wind was dying out, they decided it was useless to attempt to set sail till the following morning.

In the meantime, Henry Burns, finding that he was of no service in the work of rigging the yacht, had volunteered to get a mess of fish for supper. Accordingly he set out, equipped with a short alder pole and line and a basket, to try for some cunners and small cod off the ledges on the seaward side of the island. He succeeded in getting a fairly good catch, and then continued along the shore in search of mussels, as the tide was several hours ebb.

His search brought him at length to the northernmost extremity of the island, where he sat down on the beach to rest. Then, as he started to resume his walk, he noticed that the receding tide had left bare a narrow sand-bar, that connected the island on which the cabins stood and the adjacent island, so that he could now pass from one to the other almost dry-shod.

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Fondness for exploring was ever Henry Burns's ruling passion, so he set out across the sand-bar to the neighbouring island, and was pleased to find that the mussel-beds were far more plenty there than he had found them before. This island was not so large as the other Gull Island. It was not more than a half-mile long and about a quarter of a mile across in its widest part. It had, however, the same characteristic of the other, in that its shores were abrupt, and deep water lay all around it.

There was but one small strip of beach, extending out into mud-flats, where Henry Burns could gather mussels; but he soon filled his basket here, and, setting it down in the shade of an overhanging rock, climbed the ledge that now barred his way, and started to make a circuit of the island along the edge of its steep banks.

Henry Burns had a habit of day-dreaming as he walked, unless he happened to be in search of some particular thing, when he was the most alert of youths. So, as he walked, his mind was far away just then, back in the town of Medford, where he pictured to himself familiar objects, and wondered what was happening there.

So it happened that he passed a certain tree close by the shore, only half-noticing that the end of a stout hawser was tied to it, and not paying any attention to it. When he had gone on a rod or two, it suddenly struck him that this was an odd thing, as the hawser was new, and so he went back to look at it. There was a short length of the rope dangling from where it had been made fast about the tree-trunk, and he noticed upon examination that the free end had been severed cleanly by the stroke of a knife.

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"That's odd," said Henry Burns. "Fishermen don't usually waste a good piece of hawser like that. Some one was extravagant and in a hurry, or impatient—By Jove! You don't suppose—"

Henry Burns had lost his preoccupied air in a moment. Following the line from the rope to the edge of the bank, he scrambled carefully down over the face of the ledge to the water's edge.

Henry Burns was not surprised to discover that the rock was smeared all over with spots of black paint. Moreover, if further evidence were needed that some one had been at work there, there lay in a niche of the ledge an empty keg in which paint had been mixed.

But what elated Henry Burns still more was a discovery he made by a closer examination of the ledge just under water. There at a depth of from one to two feet under water were rough, jagged edges of the rock which had been in contact with some object—an object that had left upon their surface unmistakable smearings or scrapings of paint which was white.

"Hooray!" cried Henry Burns, excitedly, for him. "There it is—the old and the new. There's where he rubbed against the ledge as he made fast, and here's the evidence all about on these rocks of his new disguise. And there, right close to the bank, are the trees to which he fastened his tackle. If it isn't just as Miles Burton said, to the letter, then there's no trusting one's eyes."

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Henry Burns lay flat on a shelving bit of rock, with his face close to the water, and peered down to the bed below. The water was not very clear, but he could discern distinctly a deep, narrow trench in the hard sand, which might have been made by the keel of a boat, if the boat had touched bottom at low water.

Any one observing Henry Burns at this moment would have been puzzled indeed. He suddenly sprang up, tore off his jacket and trousers, bared himself in the quickest possible time, and, poising for one brief moment on the brink of the

water, dived in. He swam to the bottom with two strokes, clutched at something that lay on the bottom, grasped it in his right hand, came to the surface, and, drawing himself out on land once more, stuffed the object into his trousers pocket and scrambled into his clothing again, as though his life depended on his haste. Then he started on a run for the sand-bar, crossed it, paused never a moment for his basket of fish and clams, and dashed back to the shanty as fast as his legs could carry him.

It was not constitutional with Henry Burns, however, to continue long in a state of excitement, and by the time he had regained his companions his composure had returned. Still, they were familiar enough with him to perceive that something unusual had happened.

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"What's the matter, Henry?" exclaimed George Warren. "We saw you running along the beach up there as if somebody was after you. We didn't know but what you had found another burglar."

"No," replied Henry Burns, "it was the same one."

It was their turn now to become excited.

"You don't mean really——" began George Warren.

"Yes, I do," interrupted Henry Burns. "Say, do you remember the strange black yacht that came into the harbour at the foot of Grand Island the other night, and that was in such a hurry to get out again when it saw us? Well, that was Chambers, and the yacht was the *Eagle*."

"Well, but she was black," said George Warren, "and she had no topmast. The *Eagle* was white."

"Yes, but don't you recall what Burton said about Chambers, what a hand he was for changing a yacht over so she'd look like a different craft? Well, that's what he has done, and I've found the place where he did it. There's the white paint back there on the edges of the rocks where the yacht rubbed alongside, and the rock is all covered with spots of black paint."

Henry Burns rapidly recounted what he had discovered, including the end of hawser made fast to the tree.

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"But that isn't all," exclaimed Henry Burns, triumphantly, as he fished a hand into his right trousers pocket. "See here, what do you make of this? I saw it shining down in the water just where the stern of the yacht must have laid."

Henry Burns drew forth a glittering object from his pocket and held it up to their gaze.

It was a gilt letter "E."

"'E' for '*Eagle*,'" cried Henry Burns. "This letter got away from him. It's clear as daylight now. Say, fellows, let's start for Southport early in the morning. That man Chambers is in the bay. He's up to something, and we want to get them after him quick."

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAN IN THE BOAT

"Fellows," said Jack Harvey, one afternoon, a few days following the return of the *Spray* from its cruise, "I have decided to enter that free-for-all race over at Bellport. I've just heard that Ed Perkins isn't going to race the *Ella*, after all; and, with her out of the race, we stand a good show. Let's get the stuff aboard and start while there's a wind."

"Who'll stay here and watch the camp?" asked Allan Harding.

"Well, I guess you'd better, now you speak of it," responded Harvey, quickly. "There ought to be somebody here, sure. Camps have a way of disappearing around here, you know, Allan," giving a huge wink as he spoke.

"I'd just as lieve stay, all right," returned Allan, a little out of humour, in spite of his assurance. "But you can't win the race without me, you know. You always said I was lucky—and there's a good deal of luck in racing, after all."

"Well, we'll try to win without luck, that's all," said Harvey. "And, mind, we depend on you to have the camp still standing here when we get back. I shouldn't think it would be nice to get back and find one's camp gone, eh, Allan?"

"No," replied the other, shortly.

The crew lost no time in stowing their blankets and camp-kit aboard the *Surprise*, and, leaving Allan Harding sullenly on guard, they sailed away for Bellport.

"Looks as though something was missing thereabouts," chuckled Harvey, as they sailed past the spot where Tom's and Bob's camp had stood. "Doesn't it strike you there used to be something there that's gone now?"

This piece of humour on Harvey's part seemed to tickle the crew vastly, for they shouted with derision as they sailed by.

"Guess they must have got tired of camping there," roared Harvey, at which the others roared the louder.

Bellport, whither they were bound, lay about four miles down the coast of the mainland below Mayville. It was not so large a place as Southport, but was a favourite resort for yachtsmen, as the bay there was free of islands, and for ten or more miles there was a good sailing course.

The yacht *Surprise* did not reach Bellport till late that night, but Harvey and his crew were up bright and early the next morning, as the race was to come off at ten o'clock, and they wished to have everything ready for it.

"Hulloa, Harvey!" called a voice from a sloop a few rods away, as the captain of the *Surprise* came on deck.

"Hulloa, Jeff!" answered Harvey.

The speaker was Jeff Hackett, who ran a small sloop from the foot of Grand Island over to the mainland once a day to carry the mails.

"Are you in this race, too?" queried Jeff.

"Rather think I am," responded Harvey. "Think I've got any chance?"

"Looks to me as though you had," answered the other. "There are only eight yachts going to start. The others backed out because they didn't think the handicapping was fair. It's all right, though. You will have to give us fellows a trifle allowance, by just a rough measurement on the water-line; but you'll get the same from the *Bertha* and the *Anna Maud*. They are the only boats that are bigger than yours. You want to get measured right away, too, or it will be too late."

Harvey had soon complied with the requirements of the regatta committee, as the committee of summer guests chosen to act as judges were pleased to style themselves, and shortly before the hour for the race the yacht *Surprise* sailed out of the harbour at Bellport, and stood off and on before the starting-line with the others.

Harvey was in high feather, for, by his own estimate of the situation, he had a fair chance of winning. He knew most of the boats, either by reputation, or from having seen them sail, and the others he was able to judge of in a great measure by their general appearance.

The prize to be sailed for was a handsome silver cup, for which a subscription had been taken up among the summer residents of Bellport.

The *Bertha*, which conceded the greatest time allowance to Harvey's boat, was a handsome sloop, about four feet longer than the *Surprise*, and carrying heavy sail. She had never been considered a fast boat of her size, but, owing to the discrepancy in lengths, had to allow the *Surprise* several minutes over the complete course of ten miles. This, as the *Surprise* was really fast for her size and rig, would make it quite an even race.

The *Bertha* was under charter by a party of young men from Benton, who had engaged a sailing-master to pilot her for them during the summer. This made them an object of contempt in Harvey's eyes, and he wished all the more to "take the conceit out of them," as he expressed it.

The *Anna Maud* was a big catboat, thirty-three feet long, carrying an enormous mainsail, and reputed to be one of the fastest boats of her size in the bay. She was owned and sailed by Captain Silas Tucker, a native of one of the islands at the foot of the western bay, that formed part of the main thoroughfare leading out to sea. He was generally accorded the distinction of being the best skipper on this part of the coast.

All the other boats, except one, were smaller than the *Surprise*. That one was the Sally, a sloop of exactly the same length as the *Surprise*, and apparently able to sail about on equal terms with her.

The starting-signal was to be a gunshot, the gun to be fired five minutes after a first warning shot. In the interval after the first shot the yachts could manoeuvre about the starting-line, ready to cross when the second shot was fired. As soon as the second shot was fired, it was allowable for a yacht to cross the line, and all yachts were to be timed one minute after the second gun, whether they had actually crossed the line or not. So that it was to the advantage of all nine craft to be as near the starting-line as possible at the signal, and under headway and also up to windward as far as possible.

Harvey's boldness stood him in good stead here. And, moreover, he certainly did know the working of his yacht to a nicety. After the warning gun had been fired, he made his calculations carefully, allowing for the tide which was running out to sea. The race was to be five miles straight out to windward, and a run home, off the wind. The ebb-tide, and the southerly breeze rolling a sea in to meet it, made an ugly chop, and the boats thrashed around, throwing the spray clear aboard.

Just before the second gun the relative positions of the four largest yachts were as follows: farthest up to windward was the *Surprise*; abeam of her, and a short distance to leeward, was the *Bertha*; then the *Anna Maud*, and then the *Sally*. The *Sally*, like the *Surprise*, had an amateur skipper, a youth of about Harvey's age.

The *Sally* was a new boat, not long out of the shipyard, in fact. She was perhaps the prettiest craft there. Her hull was beautifully modelled, with a graceful overhang, bow and stern; her sails snow-white, and mast and spars were glistening. She steered with a wheel of ornamental mahogany and brass, and here and there about her cabin and furnishings brass and mahogany had been used, regardless of expense.

"Willie Grimes has us all beat for beauty," remarked Harvey, as they neared the line, "but that boat is too new for racing; that is, he's too scared for fear something will happen to her. Most everybody is that way. I used to be scared of the *Surprise* all the time for fear something would knock a bit of paint off somewhere. It takes about a year to get over that. He handles her as though he was afraid something was going to break. Just watch me take advantage of that."

Harvey had seen that the *Anna Maud* and the *Bertha* would cross the line a moment ahead of him, but he did not mind that so much, thinking his time allowance would give him more than a good chance for the race, anyway. He had selected the *Sally* for his particular antagonist, and now prepared to get what advantage he could from the start.

Easing his sheet a trifle, he headed off the wind somewhat, allowing the two larger yachts to sail almost directly across his bows. Rushing out just astern of them, and heading diagonally for the starting-line, under full headway, Harvey bore down on the *Sally*, as though he meant deliberately to run her down.

If young Willie Grimes had not been so taken by surprise and so alarmed at this move of Harvey's, he would have perceived that the

manœuvre was only done to try his nerve; he would have realized that as good a sailor as Harvey would not deliberately foul another yacht, when that must lose him the race, as well as the boat he fouled.

But Harvey had reckoned on the other's apprehension for his new boat, and the move was successful. Just at the point where a moment more would have sent his boom crashing aboard the other yacht as he headed up into the wind, Harvey threw his yacht quickly about, Joe Hinman hauled in rapidly on the main-sheet, Tim Reardon trimmed in the jibs, and away went the *Surprise* over the line, footing after the two other boats as fast as full sail would carry her.

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At that same moment Willie Grimes, fearful of a collision, threw the *Sally* completely off the wind, so that when he had recovered his nerve and realized that he had been imposed upon, he was so far below the boat that marked the limit of the starting-line that he had to make another tack to reach it. Before this, the last gun had been fired to mark the taking of the time, and the luckless *Sally* crossed the line with one full minute counting against her.

The youth's face burned with indignation, and he had hard work to keep the tears from springing to his eyes.

"Bye-bye, Willie," sang out Harvey, looking back and waving his cap derisively. "Better courage next time. You don't want to mind a little paint, you know."

But the other had regained his spirits and paid no heed. "That's what yachtsmen call 'jockeying,' I guess," he said, quietly, to his two companions in the boat. "It's within the rules, so I suppose we cannot complain. That's like Harvey, from all I hear. He might have given us a fair show, though, as he knows this is my first summer running a boat by myself. Perhaps we won't be far astern of him at the finish, at that."

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"You did that slick, Jack," said Joe Hinman, admiringly. "We stand a good chance of winning this race, I think, with the allowance we get."

"Didn't he scoot, though, when he saw us coming?" laughed Harvey. "Thought his new boat was wrecked that time, sure. I've seen that trick played in big yacht races, but I never saw it work better than it did to-day, if I do say it."

The yachts were now strung out in line along the course, tacking back and forth, and making for a small naphtha launch anchored down the bay at the five-mile mark. They made a picturesque sight, laying well over under all their canvas and throwing the water high over their bows.

It was soon evident that the *Bertha*, take it all in all, was the best boat for working up to windward in rough water and a good breeze. The *Anna Maud* was a very broad, beamy boat, and had a marvellous reputation for running free, but now she seemed to feel the waves more than the *Bertha*, pounding heavily and drenching every one aboard.

The *Bertha* took the seas cleaner and headed up higher. She was evidently gaining slowly but

steadily. Moreover, although she carried an enormous club-topsail and a mainsail of big area, she heeled over the least of any of the boats. She had been built for heavy weather, and this was exactly the breeze she sailed best in.

The *Surprise* and *Sally* were, however, holding their own remarkably well, and it would not be clear for some time which would come out the winner.

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"Hello!" exclaimed Jack Harvey, suddenly, in a tone of evident surprise. "What on earth—or, rather, on water—is Cap'n Silas doing? Look where he is standing. I've been looking for the last few minutes to see him tack, but there he keeps on away off toward shore."

The *Anna Maud* had, strange to say, gone way off the course, apparently heading well over to the westward.

"Why, Jack, don't you know," said Joe Hinman, "how we've noticed the tide over along that shore? It makes a swing in there and runs like a mill-slucice. Don't you remember one night how we tried to row against it, and what a time we had?"

"That's true," responded Jack Harvey, "and Cap'n Sile Tucker is clever enough to take advantage of it. He knows more about sailing in one minute than that captain of the *Bertha* does in a week. But there must be something more in it than the tide alone. I'll tell you, the wind is changing. It's heading more and more from the westward, and Captain Sile will get the full benefit of the slant when he gets down about a mile further. He knows what he's doing. We'll just head over and follow him."

"Seems to me it's taking long chances to go so much off the course," remarked George Baker.

"Of course it is taking chances," responded Harvey, quickly. "You have got to take chances in a contest of this kind. The fellows that take the chances are the ones that win. But it isn't taking any great chances, following Cap'n Tucker. I tell you he knows these waters better than any man in the bay. He wouldn't go over there unless he knew he was going to make something by it. Why, he has sailed that big catboat of his up and down along this coast for the last twenty years and more, that and other boats. The skipper in the *Bertha* comes from away up beyond Millville. He can sail his boat all right, but he don't know this coast like Captain Sile."

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Harvey, accordingly, stood over to the westward, in the wake of the *Anna Maud*.

Only one other boat followed him. That was the *Sally*.

"I don't know what they are standing away over there for," said Willie Grimes to his companions. "I don't know whether it is the best thing to do or not. It may be that they know something about the tide over there. But I know one thing, and that is, wherever Jack Harvey goes I'm going to follow. I wouldn't care if every other yacht here beat me if I could only beat him. You never can tell, you know. Something may happen to him yet."

The wisdom of Captain Silas Tucker's departure from the straight course soon became apparent. The tide, indeed, at this point made a sweep inshore, for some reason, flowing far swifter in near the land than it did offshore. Again, too, the wind had slanted a little, and the yachts that had taken this course were soon in a better position relative to the stake-boat than the others.

Slowly the *Anna Maud* drew ahead of the *Bertha*, the captain of the latter boat realizing the advantage which the others were gaining too late to change his own course. As they neared the mark, even the *Surprise* and the *Sally* were leading the *Bertha*, which now seemed to be hopelessly out of the race.

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The race, indeed, seemed narrowed down to these three yachts, with a slight advantage in the *Anna Maud's* favour.

"Hooray!" cried Harvey, "we are holding the *Anna Maud* in fine style. She's gaining ever so little, not enough thus far to cover our time allowance. They say she is fast off the wind, but so are we. That's the best point of the *Surprise*. She sails better running free than any boat of her size I ever saw."

"Cracky!" cried young Tim, "I hope we take that silver cup back to camp with us. We'll march through the streets with it, if we get it."

"Yes, if we get it," replied Harvey. "It don't do to be too sure, though."

Now the *Anna Maud* was rounding the stake-boat and coming back over the course, not quite before the wind, owing to the slant to the westward that it had taken, but with her sheet well out.

"The wind is in our favour," said Harvey, gleefully. "There's just enough slant to it so our jibs will help us some. They will draw a little, and that gives us an advantage over that catboat. Let that sheet go, now, Joe, the minute we turn the mark."

A moment later the *Surprise* rounded the stake-boat, with a good lead over the *Sally*, and still near enough astern of the *Anna Maud* to give her a good race.

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"Up with that centreboard, now, George—lively," cried Harvey. "It's a big board, and we don't want to drag it a minute longer than we have to. It counts a whole lot with this tide running against it. What's the matter? What are you waiting for? Up with it!"

"Why, hang the thing!" exclaimed George Baker, "I'm trying to get it up as hard as ever I can. It won't come. It's stuck."

"What's that?" cried Harvey. "Stuck? Nonsense! Here, you, Joe, hold this wheel a moment. I'll have it up in a hurry."

He sprang forward, brushing George Baker out of the way impatiently.

"Let me get hold there," he said.

Harvey seized the iron rod, which was fastened to the centreboard, and gave a strong pull. But the centreboard did not budge. He took a firmer

hold and pulled with all his strength. It was of no avail. The board had stuck fast in its box.

"I'll have it up or break something," cried Harvey, beside himself with anger, and again he grasped the rod with both hands and gave a furious wrench. There was a most unexpected and baffling verification of his threat, for the rod, broken off short at its connection with the centreboard, did come up, so suddenly that Harvey sprawled over backwards, still grasping the rod with both hands clenched, and rolled over on the floor of the cockpit.

There was no such thing as getting the centreboard up now. It was down to stay.

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Harvey, white with rage, sprang to his feet and hurled the rod into the sea. Then he took his seat sullenly at the wheel again.

"That settles it," he said, as soon as he could speak for anger. "We haven't a ghost of a chance now. I shouldn't wonder, even, if the *Sally* overhauled us." And he looked back helplessly at the yacht astern.

Slowly but surely the *Anna Maud* forged ahead. The distance between her and the *Surprise* grew ever farther and farther.

"That's queer," said Captain Silas Tucker, looking back at Harvey's yacht. "I thought she was going to give us a harder run home than that. I've heard the boat was good off the wind, but she doesn't seem to be doing well. It's first prize for us this trip, and easily won. Well, your Uncle Silas hasn't sailed around these parts all his life for nothing."

Slowly but surely, too, the *Sally* was creeping up close astern of the *Surprise*, to the wild delight of Willie Grimes and his comrades.

"If I can only beat Jack Harvey," he kept saying, "I don't care about the other yacht's beating us."

"If Willie Grimes beats us, I'll run him down and sink him some day," muttered Harvey, grinding his teeth.

It was still a close race between these two as the finish-line was neared. The *Sally* had crept up until she was almost abeam of the *Surprise*, and was gaining, ever so slowly, but surely. Harvey, dogged to the last, waited until the *Sally* was nearly abreast of him, and then, as a last resort, tried once more to bully the race from his less experienced rival.

Throwing his wheel over slightly, he tried the tactic of crowding the other off the course.

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But Willie Grimes was bound to win or sink this time. He kept his own boat off just enough to avoid the possibility of Harvey's fouling him, maintaining the same relative distance between them, and all the while drawing ahead.

The judges, watching the close finish through their glasses, perceived this trick of Harvey's, and were ready to disqualify him in case of any accident. But their determination was unnecessary. Less than a dozen rods from the finish-line the *Sally* had sailed clear of the *Surprise*, and now cut in on to the course, leaving Harvey astern, and crossed the line a

rod to the good.

Then, as a storm of cheers rang out from the assembled boats, as a fluttering of handkerchiefs and waving of parasols, a tossing of hats and shrieking of whistles, saluted the victory of Willie Grimes over him, Harvey did not deign to cross the line. Angrily he swung out of the course, and stood over, without a word, for the town of Bellport.

"Takes his licking hard, doesn't he, Willie?" called out a voice, and a chorus of laughter mocked at Harvey's wrath as he sailed away.

The *Anna Maud* had won the race, but the honours were as much for the *Sally* as for the winner. They took substantial form, moreover, for, one of the committee, vowing the *Sally* should have a second prize, if he had to buy one himself, as there had not been any offered, the suggestion met with a ready response; and the owner and crew of the *Sally* rejoiced that night in the unexpected award of a handsome compass for their cabin.

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"Now," said Harvey, as the *Surprise* neared the landing at Bellport, "I want to get out of this town just as quick as I step foot in it. I don't intend to stay here and have those chaps and those girls laugh at me. They've got altogether too good a chance. You fellows have got to stay here and take the *Surprise* up to Billy Coombs's marine railway. She'll have to be hauled out for a day and the ballast come out of her around that centreboard box. Tell him to put a new iron in, and you can pay for it, Joe, and I'll pay you when you come back to camp."

"But where are you going?" asked the others.

"I am going to foot it down the road for seven miles to Hackett's Cove, and wait for Jeff Hackett to come down," answered Harvey. "Then I'll go across to the foot of the island with him in his sloop. I'd walk farther than that to get clear of the crowd that will be ashore here soon; but, for that matter, I want to get back to the island to-night, anyway. There's a dance in the old town hall at Carter's Harbour, and I'll get there in time for that."

"He's all cut up over Willie Grimes's beating him," said Joe Hinman, as Harvey sprang out on the landing and walked rapidly away. "He won't get over it for a week. Well, we shall have to catch it for him when the boats come in. However, we didn't sail the boat. That's one comfort."

Late that afternoon, Jack Harvey, hot and dusty with his long walk, waited impatiently, seated on a pile of timber by the shore, for the arrival of Jeff Hackett's sloop. Five o'clock came, and then six, and no sloop in sight. Harvey strolled up to the village store and bought some crackers and cheese for his supper.

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"So you're waiting for Jeff Hackett's sloop to take you across to the island, are you?" said the storekeeper. "Well, you'll wait till morning now, I reckon. Wish I'd known you wanted to go over sooner. You see, Jeff engaged Tom Crosby to make his trip this afternoon for him, and he's been gone an hour now. You must have seen Tom's boat off there."

"I did," replied Harvey, shortly, "but I had no idea he was going across. What can I do, now?"

"Nothing that I see," said the storekeeper, "except to take it comfortable here to-night, and go over with Jeff in the morning."

Harvey strode angrily out and walked down to the shore again.

A rod or two out a fisherman was rowing in a small boat.

"Here, you, where are you going?" sang out Harvey.

The man looked up, surprised, but did not answer.

"I say, there, where are you going? Can't you hear?" cried Harvey, roughly.

The man stopped rowing. "What's that to you?" he answered.

Harvey laughed. "You've got me there," he said. "I didn't mean to be rude—but I've been disappointed. I didn't know but you might be going to row across to the island, and I thought perhaps you might like to earn a dollar. I'll help row, too, if you like. I want to go, the worst way."

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The man hesitated for a moment, started as though he were going to row away, and then paused again.

"Where do you belong?" he asked.

"Over on the island," said Harvey. "I'm camping there."

"What's that?" said the man, putting his hand to his ear. "Say it again."

"I'm camping out over on the island," repeated Harvey.

The man looked stealthily in at him from under his eyebrows. "Camping there!" he muttered to himself, and began backing water slowly with his oars.

"I'll take you across for—for a dollar," he said.

"Good!" cried Harvey. "Come on, lively, then. It's a good five miles, and I'm in a hurry to get across."

The man, however, was in no hurry. He came in slowly, as though perhaps he might still be considering the matter, whether he should take this passenger aboard or not. He worked the boat inshore, finally, and Harvey sprang aboard.

"You are going to help row," said the man.

"Yes," answered Harvey. "Didn't I say I would?" He took his seat toward the stern of the boat, where there were rowlocks for an extra pair of oars.

The man at the bow oars was a thick, heavy-set, middle-aged man, burned dark by sun and wind. He was roughly dressed in ill-fitting clothes, that looked as though they might have come from the dunnage-bag of a fisherman who had been long at sea. They were patched in one or two places

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with cloth that did not match the original garments. He wore a red, cheap-looking handkerchief tied loosely about his neck, and a rough beard of several weeks' growth heightened the effect of his swarthy complexion.

They rowed for some time in silence, making good headway, for the wind had gone down with the sun, and the man in the bow pulled a powerful stroke, making even the sturdy efforts of Jack Harvey seem like child's play.

The sun sank behind the hills and the shadows deepened across the water, fading out at length into the darkness that settled over all the bay. A few lights glimmered out from the shore of the island, some three miles distant, and the stars appeared in the sky.

"Lucky I fell in with you, just as I did," said Harvey, as he slowed up his stroke. "Lucky for both of us, I take it. I should have been stuck there all night if I hadn't met you; and I don't suppose you mind picking up a dollar, as long as you were going this way."

"No," said the man, though there was a queer expression on his face. "I don't mind,—and the fishing isn't any too good these days."

"Got a smack, have you?" inquired Harvey.

"No," answered the other. "I don't own any boat myself. But I sail with a man as owns his own boat, and I come in for a fair share of the fish."

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"Where does she lie?" asked Harvey.

The man waited a moment before answering. "She's down among the islands somewhere," he said, finally. "She'll be in for me to-night or to-morrow. I've been visiting some relations of mine back of Bellport a few miles. So you're a summer visitor at the island, are you?"

"Yes," replied Harvey, "I spend my summers there."

"Pretty quiet place, isn't it?" said the man.

"Mostly," returned Harvey, "but not so quiet this year. We've had some exciting times there."

"Yes?" said the man. "How's that?"

He had slowed up, himself, in his rowing now. And if by chance the conversation had turned whither he had intended it should, there was no way that Harvey should know of that, for his back was toward the man and he could not see his face.

"Why," continued Harvey, "they caught the men that stole the Curtis diamonds over there; that is, they got two of them. A third one escaped. He was the worst of the three, they say."

The man in the bow had paused in his rowing.

"The worst one got away, did he?" said he.

"He did," said Harvey. "It seemed one of them had the diamonds hidden in a house that every one thought was haunted. He was stopping at the hotel as a regular guest. And no one suspected him but Henry Burns. Then, when his confederates came, the detectives were lying in

wait for them in the cellar. They nearly beat the detectives, though, at that. For they smashed the lanterns out—that is, one of them did, and made a run for it. The other one was hurt.”

“Did he die?” asked the man, quickly.

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“No,” replied Harvey. “He’s all right, waiting trial along with the other one. We got him, too, just as he was nearly down to shore, where the other man was waiting to take him off in a boat. The third man escaped in his yacht. We only captured two.”

The man in the bow had drawn his oars in, now, so that they rested along the side of the boat. His hands worked nervously together, and he half-rose in his seat.

“Who’s ‘we’?” he asked, huskily. “Who did it—did you have a hand in it?”

If, by chance, this moment was a crisis in the life of Jack Harvey, and if, by chance, he was in greater danger at this moment than he had ever been before in all his life, there was no shadow of it across his mind. He answered with a laugh:

“No, not I. No such luck. If there’s anything like that going on, I’m sure to miss it. No, ’twas the other camp and a crowd I have no liking for that did it all, that got all the glory and all the fun and the money, too. The reward, I mean. I’d rather have been there at the capture, though, than get the money for it. And I don’t know why, but I felt rather sorry for the two chaps that got caught, bad as they were.”

A good speech for you, Jack Harvey, if you did but know it!

“So you missed all the fun, did you?” said the man, quietly. “That was too bad; too bad.”

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He had put his oars into the water once more now, and resumed his rowing. He did not pause to rest again, but pulled long and steadily. Evidently he did not care to row and talk too, for he lapsed into silence now, and Harvey could not draw him into conversation again. At the end of another hour they had come close to the Grand Island shore, and shortly they had pulled alongside a ledge, where Harvey could jump out. The man started to row away.

“Here, hold on, there,” cried Harvey. “Don’t you want your dollar? You’ve earned it, fair enough.”

The man came slowly back to shore.

“Indeed,” he said, as he stretched out his hand, “I ought not to forget that, with the fishing as bad as it is.” And then he added, quietly, as he started to row away again, “And it’s worth a dollar to you to get here, isn’t it?”

“Indeed it is,” replied Harvey.

“Indeed it is,” said the man to himself.

Then he rowed down the shore for about a mile farther, turned into a sheltered cove, rowed his boat alongside a black sloop that lay moored there, climbed aboard, dragged the boat aboard, and waited for an hour or so, till a faint breeze stole across the water. Then he hoisted sail on the sloop and drifted slowly out of the cove;

drifted slowly away from the island, and was swallowed up in the night.

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CHAPTER XV. GOOD FOR EVIL

The yacht *Spray*, arriving home again in the harbour of Southport, two days following the discovery made by Henry Burns, had created somewhat of a sensation: first, because, on account of the storm, there had been felt considerable alarm for the little boat, and, second, because of the story that the boys had to tell.

The finding of the letter "E" confirmed their story, so that there could be no room for doubt that the yacht *Eagle* had been secreted there in the Thoroughfare and refitted. The question now was, had the man who had done this left the bay and gone on his voyage, or had he chosen, for some purpose or other, to linger in some part of the great bay till a later time.

Henry Burns now told the story of the man they had seen at the foot of Grand Island, how he had sailed in and out of the harbour so mysteriously, how he seemed to avoid them, and how there had apparently been none other than he aboard the black yacht.

Most of the people of the village were inclined to the belief that the man Chambers had gone out to sea as soon as he had altered his yacht so that it would escape detection in such harbours as he would be obliged to make. There was no possible reason why he should return, they said, and every reason in the world why he should get away from that part of the coast as soon as he could.

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There were plenty of black yachts, they argued, that would answer the general description of the yacht seen by the boys at the foot of the island; and, as for sailing out and away in the night, that was a thing commonly done among fishermen, to take advantage of wind and tide when it was important that they should reach a certain port on time.

Still, there were one or two yachts that set out cruising about the bay, on the chance of running into the mysterious craft, and they cruised about for a week or more. Every strange sail that looked as though it might belong to a yacht of the size of the *Eagle* was pursued, until it had either outsailed the pursuers and disappeared, or until a nearer view had proven that it was not the hunted craft.

By the end of two weeks the village was well satisfied that Chambers and the yacht *Eagle* were far away, and had ceased to think of him, except as a group gathered of an evening about the village grocery-store and talked of that for lack of something better.

In the meantime, when the excitement was at its height, the Warren boys in their yacht, and Tom and Bob in their canoe, took a hand in the

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search. Even Henry Burns took an occasional spin on his bicycle down to the foot of the island of an evening, and wandered along the shore in the hope of catching a glimpse once more of the sail he had seen that night in the harbour. Just what he expected to do in case he should see it, he did not know, himself; still, it might be that he could spread the alarm and start some of the boats out after any suspicious craft that he saw.

For the time being it was in all the air. Nobody talked of anything else. It was really more because people dearly love a mystery than that they actually believed the *Eagle* was still in the bay; but the talk sufficed to keep the boys at fever-heat, and Henry Burns firmly believed that he had seen the *Eagle* that night.

Tom and Bob were indefatigable for ten days in searching on their own account. They would take their canoe in the afternoon, paddle down five or six miles along the shore of the island, land in some lonely spot, haul the canoe on shore, and then continue along on foot for a mile or two, coming up cautiously to some cove with which they had become familiar in their trips through the summer, only to find it empty of sails, or some fishing-boat lying snug for the night, and which could by no means be mistaken for the craft of which they were in search.

Again, they would paddle down to the Narrows, carry the canoe over into the western bay, leave it hidden until sundown, and then go down along the shore on that side of the island, repeating their walk along the shore. Some days they left the canoe hidden for the night away down the island, and came back to the village afoot along the road, going after it afoot the next night, and retracing their search of the night before, thus varying the search in a dozen different ways.

But the result was always the same. It seemed this time as though the *Eagle*, if it had, indeed, ever lingered in the bay, had gone for good. What might have been the result if those who sailed in search of the mysterious craft had known that the description they now had of her was at fault, can never be known. Be that as it might, the exact yacht that Henry Burns and his friends had seen down at the foot of the island no longer existed. In its place there sailed—somewhere, on some waters—a handsome, black yacht, with a tall, slender, glistening topmast, white sails, and gleaming brass, in place of the dingy, dirty fisherman. She was as fine and handsome, and as polished as to deck and fittings, as the *Eagle* had been of yore, only her colour remained as it had been changed—black.

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Was this boat the *Eagle*? Those who sailed the bay in quest of her had no means of knowing, for if they ever did get sight of her it was but a far, fleeting, shadowy glance. They never came within miles of her, this fleet, beautiful, and disappearing yacht. Across her stern in letters of gold was the name *Sprite*. It may have been most appropriate, for now and then a distant view of her tempted some bay craft to follow; but it was like a dog pursuing a bird on the wing. She always drifted on and on, out of reach, and disappeared.

Since the night when the man that rowed Jack Harvey across the bay had climbed aboard this yacht and sailed southward, the yacht had never

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ventured near Grand Island, nor within miles and miles of it. If the man Chambers had any plan which he meant to execute, it did not suit his purpose to attempt it at this time. He had, perhaps, achieved all he desired now, in familiarizing himself with the waters of this coast.

Of all those who joined in the search for the strange yacht, there was none more enthusiastic nor persistent than Jack Harvey. No sooner had his own yacht been brought back from Bellport by the crew, than he stocked up with a week's provisions and began cruising day and night. To be sure, it was a most uncertain chase, but Harvey was willing to take chances that others would not; and if he should by mistake intercept some respectable craft for a few brief moments, he would rely on his assurance to carry him through and explain matters.

Harvey had, moreover, a critical eye for a good boat, and had noted the *Eagle*, when it had been in the harbour, with more than passing interest, and was certain now that he should know her again, even with a change of rig. Besides, he had the description furnished by Henry Burns and the other boys of the yacht they had seen, which corresponded in size with the *Eagle*.

He had never been so aroused about anything before in all his life. The adventure that Henry Burns and the others had had with the two men that had been caught was an experience after his own heart. He would have given his whole summer's fun to take part in that capture. But all the glory of that had been denied him; now he made a resolve that if any one succeeded in finding the vanished yacht it should be he.

His activity was not destined to go all for naught, either, for on at least one occasion he was satisfied in his own mind that he had met with the yacht,—yes, and nearly come to close quarters with the man that sailed it.

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It was miles below Grand Island, for Harvey had for some days made up his mind that the man he sought had left the bay, since he had scoured it east and west and north and south in vain. It was down among some islands that lay out of the much travelled part of the bay, and not far from the Gull Island Thoroughfare. It was, in fact, just at the outer rim of the bay, where several channels through a chain of islands led out to sea. There were three of the crew aboard besides Harvey, only little Tim being left ashore to guard the camp.

They had been cruising all evening among these islands, for it was a part of the coast with which Harvey was very familiar. They were carrying no lights, for the chances of being run down here were small, and, besides, it was a part of Harvey's plan to be able to approach any chance craft unobserved.

It had come on rainy, and the crew were for putting in at some harbour and lying snug, but Harvey would not hear of it. He had sailed until near midnight for about a week, and did not like to give it up.

However, as a concession to his crew, and as it bade fair to blow up a nasty sea before many hours, Harvey had consented to beat back and

forth under the lee of a small unnamed island, keeping a lookout down the bay for the little distance they could see through the rain.

It seemed that some other craft was also willing to take the risk of sailing without lights, for, along about ten o'clock, a yacht, that might or might not be the one for which they sought, was beating up toward the island, with all dark on board. All at once the man that sat at the wheel left his boat for a moment to itself, so that it headed up into the wind with sails flapping, while he darted down into the cabin.

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He was gone only for a moment, but in that brief moment that he was below a light flashed in the cabin,—only a fleeting gleam of light, and then all was dark again.

This gleam of light, transient as it was, had sufficed, however, for the sharp lookout aboard the *Surprise*.

Harvey seized Joe Hinman by the shoulder and whispered, as he steered the *Surprise* out from behind the end of the island: "Did you see that, Joe? Did you see it? There's something coming up. Everybody keep quiet now!"

There was an excited group that crouched silently in the cockpit of the *Surprise* as she swung out from under the lee of the island and headed straight for the spot where they had seen the flash of light, running almost before the wind.

Whatever the craft was, it seemed as if they must surely catch it, leaping out as they had from the darkness. All at once they saw the dark outline of a yacht almost dead ahead, and saw for a moment the shadow of its sails, a faint blur through the rain.

Then the yacht veered about suddenly, and they saw the white crush of water as it heeled over, and, running with the wind on its quarter, was gone, like a boat that had vanished. So sudden and so silent was the manoeuvre that they could hardly realize that the yacht had, indeed, turned like a flash and run away. They followed for a moment, but, seeing how useless it was, Harvey soon gave up the chase and went back to harbour, beaten but not discouraged.

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"That was the man we want," he said, as they came to in the nearest harbour that night. "No other craft would have gone off its course that way. And to think we were almost upon him."

"Yes, but I don't see what good it would have done us to have come up with him, if it was the man," replied Allan Harding. "We could only have taken a look aboard. What else could we have done?"

"I'll tell you what," answered Harvey, emphatically. "It would have done a lot of good. I tell you that wherever and whenever I meet that yacht, whether it's night or day, I'm going to run alongside, and you fellows and I are going aboard. I've been doing things to be ashamed of long enough,—not that I'm ashamed of them, either, as I know of. Only they have been things that I didn't dare tell of afterward, and I'm sort of tired of it. I tell you, I want to do something for once that I can boast of and that people

won't hate me for. That's why I'm so anxious about this, if you must know it."

"Whew!" cried Joe Hinman. "That's something new for you, Jack. I didn't suppose your conscience ever troubled you."

"It don't," said Harvey, angrily.

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But perhaps it did.

By the end of a few days more, Harvey had given up the search, convinced that they had seen the last of the black yacht, if, indeed, they had seen it at all.

"I give up," he said. "I'm beaten, and that's all there is to it."

And so the idea of ever seeing the strange yacht again was given up by all. The yachts came back to harbour, and the impression became general that they had all been fooled; that what they had sought was a delusion.

Tom and Bob were the last to give up. Partly because they liked these long paddles together and the long walks along the island roads, and partly because they had helped start the renewed hunt for the yacht *Eagle*, and did not like to admit that they had made a mistake.

So they did not wholly discontinue their evening paddles nor their lonely rambles along the shore. It was good exercise, at all events, they argued.

One evening they started right after supper, while it was yet light, paddled down along the shore to the Narrows, carried across, and paddled down the island for some three miles. Then they landed and hid their canoe, as was their custom, and stretched themselves out on the beach to rest and enjoy the lights far out on the water.

It was a clear starlight night, with the bay still and restful, save for a quick gust of wind that came now and then, only to blur its surface for a moment and leave it smooth again.

"I guess we have tried this thing about often enough, haven't we, Bob?" asked Tom, finally. "We don't seem to be a success as man-hunters."

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"I'm about ready to quit," answered Bob, yawning and stretching. "The fact is, we really get enough exercise through the day. Here we've been swimming, bicycling, helping the Warrens get up driftwood, paddled over to the cape, all in one day,—and here we are at it again at night. Yes, I think it's time we gave this up."

"Then supposing we do call it off," said Tom. "I've had paddling enough for one day. What do you say to going up along the beach for a mile or two, and then taking the shortest cut home and coming down for the canoe to-morrow? I think I'm kind of tired, myself, though I didn't notice it when we started out."

"All right, that suits me," replied Bob. "I don't mind saying that I'm a bit tired, too. That last mile came hard, and no mistake."

So they rose and sauntered along the beach

toward the Narrows, till they had come to within about half a mile of it, and then sat down once more for a brief rest before going home.

"It seems almost too bad to go home to bed such a beautiful night as this," said Bob. "These are the kind of nights that make me wish we had the old tent back again, so we could lie on our bunks and look out on the water, as we used to do before we went to sleep."

The night was indeed singularly calm and peaceful. The bay was still, and the water as it came up the beach with the tide made only a small rustling, creeping sound, as it covered the sand inch by inch. As for the island, it always seemed asleep after nightfall, and to-night there was scarcely a sound of life anywhere to break the stillness.

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But then, all at once, as they sat there looking out upon the water, out of the silence there arose a cry, faint and smothered, but a cry for help.

Then all was still again.

They sprang to their feet, startled, almost frightened for a brief moment at the strange cry, coming from they knew not where.

Again the cry came, this time more distinctly, from somewhere out on the water. They heard the words, "Help! Help!" uttered in a choking voice, as of a man drowning.

The boys rushed down to the water's edge and peered out over the bay, straining their eyes to see whence the sound came.

"Hulloa! Hulloa! Where are you? What's the matter? Call again!" cried Tom.

They listened, and in a moment the voice came again weirdly over the water, though they could not distinguish this time the words.

"Why, there it is," cried Bob, all at once, pointing as he spoke. "Don't you see it, Tom? I declare, but it's queer we didn't see it before. Look, there's something floating only about an eighth of a mile out,—and there's something moving a little distance from it. Why, Tom, I'll tell you what it is. It's a canoe—it's Jack Harvey—and he's upset—he's drowning. Just look, where I am pointing."

"Yes, I see," exclaimed Tom, excitedly. "I just saw a splash. He's upset, sure enough, and struggling. I say, Bob, we've got to swim out. Our canoe is too far. Keep up! We're coming!" he called, and began hurriedly to strip off his clothing.

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In a moment the two boys were in the water, striking out wildly toward the object that seemed to be a canoe floating in the water.

"Hold on there, Bob," cried Tom, presently. "We mustn't try to be too fast. We'll only waste our strength. We'll need it all when we get there. Let's calm down, now, and not get excited. We've got to keep our heads."

Then, as they surged ahead, with long, powerful strokes, the voice again came, calling chokingly for help. There could be no mistaking it now. It

was Jack Harvey.

"Quick!" he cried, "quick! I can't hold on long. I'm hurt."

They quickened their strokes, and in a moment more came in plain sight of Harvey, struggling feebly to keep above water.

"Hold on for a moment, Jack," said Tom, as they came up to him. "Don't grab us, now. Let us do the work. You just keep on paddling, what you can, and we'll save you."

"I won't grab you," gasped Harvey. "Just get on each side of me and let me put my hands on your shoulders for a moment, till I get my strength back. I've swallowed a lot of water."

The two swam up close, and Harvey reached up and rested a hand on each shoulder.

"Swim for the canoe now," said Tom. "We'll let him get hold of the end of that and cling on for a few moments till he gets his breath. He'll be all right, I think."

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Reaching the overturned canoe, they helped him to clasp one end of it, and then supported him there, as they began to push it toward shore by swimming with their feet and with a single hand each.

For a few moments Harvey managed to hold on, but then his strength seemed to fail him and his hands slipped their hold.

"I can't hold on," he gasped. "Something's hurting me."

"Then lie over on your back and float," said Tom. "Just lie still and we'll swim you in."

Harvey groaned at the effort it cost him, but did as he was told, and they left the canoe and struck out with him for the shore.

It was not such a long swim that they had before them, but they had exhausted their strength more than they knew in their excitement, and Harvey was well-nigh helpless.

Before they had swum a rod farther, their breath began to come hard and their shoulders ached until it seemed as though they would crack.

Still they kept on.

"We'll make it all right, Tom?" said Bob, finally, panting the words out.

"We've got to," said Tom. "We're bound to do it. Let's swim on our backs for a spell. Jack, we're going to change the stroke. Don't get scared. We're going to stick by you."

The words seemed to rouse Harvey, who had apparently almost lost consciousness.

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"Let me go," he gasped, faintly. "Let me go, I say. I don't want you fellows to drown, too. Let me—"

And then he seemed suddenly to lose control of himself, and clutched frantically at them, with the frenzy of a drowning man.

They struck themselves loose from him, and he

sank under water, but came to the surface again, exhausted and helpless. Tom seized him then by the hair. He lay motionless, as though dead, and they took hold once more and struck out again for the shore.

When they had reached it—they scarcely knew how—and felt the sand again under their feet, they had barely strength enough to drag Harvey a little ways out of the water, and lay by his side on the beach, groaning with every breath they drew.

This was from sheer exhaustion, caused by exerting themselves far beyond their natural strength. They were not strangled with swallowing water, so that after they had lain there flat on the beach for some five minutes they had regained their strength sufficiently to be able to arise and lift the half-unconscious Harvey completely out of the water and carry him up on the bank. Then they sat down and rested once more, sitting by Harvey's side and chafing his hands. They lifted him up, although the effort cost them all their strength, held him head downwards for a moment to get the water out of him, then doubled his arms upon his breast and extended them, over and over again, alternately, as they had learned was the way to restore a man rescued from drowning.

Harvey, who had never fully lost consciousness, revived under their treatment, till at length they perceived that he was out of danger, and needed now as quickly as possible warmth and shelter.

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There was no house near by, and it was clear that whatever was done for Harvey must be done by them.

"We can't carry him, that's certain," said Bob, finally. "We've got to get our canoe and paddle him up as far as the Narrows in that. Then we can get his crew over, and we can all carry him up to their camp."

So Bob set out on a weary trot down along the shore to where they had hidden their canoe. Tom waited by Harvey, trying to keep him warm, or, rather, to restore warmth to him, by rubbing; but Harvey was chilled through and through and shivered pitifully. It was fully an hour, and seemed ten to Tom, before Bob appeared in sight again.

They lifted Harvey into the canoe and set out for the Narrows. Poor Bob was well-nigh exhausted, and it was Tom who did about all the paddling. They reached the Narrows, however, after what seemed an endless journey, driving their paddles through the water with arms that almost refused to obey the wills that forced them to work.

When they had reached the Narrows, Tom set out for Harvey's camp, leaving Bob to wait with Harvey. Tom had not gone more than half a mile, however, when he ran into the entire crew, who had become alarmed at Harvey's long absence, knowing that he had gone out in the canoe, and had started out in search of him.

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Tom's white face, pallid with weariness, filled them with terror, as he rushed up to them and sank down on a knoll, breathless.

"Why, it's Tom Harris," exclaimed Joe Hinman.

"For Heaven's sake, what is it? Did you see Jack? Is he drowned?"

He rattled off the questions excitedly, before Tom could find breath to answer.

"He's all right, I guess," Tom said, in a moment. "He isn't drowned. He's over there the other side of the Narrows; Bob's with him. He is most dead with cold, though. You better get him over to camp quick or he will die."

They were off like mad, on the run for the Narrows, before he had finished.

Tom waited to rest a few moments more, and then set off slowly for Harvey's camp. "There's enough of them to bring him," he said. "I guess Bob and I have done about all we can to-night."

When he had reached Harvey's camp, however, he waited only to rest and warm himself by the brands of a fire which the campers had left, before he began to make what preparations he could to receive the boys when they should return with Harvey.

There was a big pile of wood at hand, and he started the fire up afresh, after having first pushed the brands nearer the tent, so that the fire would send a comforting warmth inside. Then he brought out a pair of blankets and put them near the fire to warm through. He hung a kettle of water on the stick provided for it, and rummaged through the campers' stock for the coffee.

Presently the sound of voices told him that the crew were at hand. Stepping to the door of the tent, he saw the strange group approaching. They had not taken Harvey from the canoe, but had let him lie there, while they lifted the canoe and carried it along, two boys at either end, bearing the weight with a stick stretched underneath to support it. Alongside plodded Bob, holding to the gunwale, to assist in steadying it. They approached and set the canoe down, just outside the tent door.

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"Get his clothes off quick, now," cried Tom. "I have the hot blankets ready to wrap him in, and some coffee when he is able to take it."

In a twinkling Harvey was stripped and rolled snugly in the blankets, while Tom busied himself in rushing up with cloths heated hot, and applying them to the soles of his feet. After a time he lifted Harvey up and poured a few spoonfuls of the coffee down his throat. This seemed to revive Harvey, for he opened his eyes, muttered something that was unintelligible, and sank back to sleep.

"He's all right now," said Tom, passing his hand over Harvey. "He is getting warm again. He'll be all right now when he gets his sleep out."

Tom and Bob were thoroughly tired. They lay stretched out before the fire on blankets for a time, too weary to more than barely reply to the questions of the crew as to the mishap that had befallen Harvey.

Presently Tom rose up and said: "Well, Bob, it's late, and we've got to be getting started or we'll never get back to the cottage."

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"We shall be down again to-morrow to see how Harvey is," he added, turning to the crew, who sat a little apart, somewhat abashed by the turn of affairs and the consciousness of the debt of gratitude they now owed to the boys whom they had wronged. "We'll send a doctor down if you want us to, but I don't think there's any need of it. He'll be all right by morning. Good night."

They were about taking their departure when Harvey struggled for a moment with the clothing that enveloped him, lifted his head slightly from the ground, and said, weakly, "Hold on."

"What is it?" asked Tom, as they stepped inside the tent again and sat down beside him.

"Don't go," said Harvey, huskily. "Please don't go. I want you to stay here to-night,—that is, if you will. I've—I've got something—something to say to you in the morning. I can't say it now. I'm too weak. But I want the crew to hear it in the morning."

Tom and Bob looked at each other in astonishment. Then they nodded, and Tom replied to Harvey:

"All right, Jack. We'll stay. Go to sleep now. You're all right."

The crew quickly spread some boughs for them, and brought more blankets from the yacht.

"Tom," said Bob, as they stood alone for a moment, while the crew were busily engaged, "it looks like our revenge."

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And then, before they had the blankets half-wrapped about them, they were sinking off to sleep,—to sleep in Harvey's camp, alongside Harvey's crew.

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CHAPTER XVI.

A TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP

It was late the following morning when Tom and Bob awoke. The sun was well up, and the light was streaming into the tent. Their eyes opened on unfamiliar objects and on strange surroundings.

"It gave me the strangest feeling," said Tom, telling Henry Burns about it some time later. "At first, before I was fully awake, I had forgotten where I was, and I thought I was back in our own tent upon the point. Then it flashed over me that that was gone, and the next moment I remembered that I was down there in Harvey's camp, and you can't imagine what a queer feeling it gave me."

Harvey and the crew had already arisen, and Tom and Bob could hear the crackling of a fire outside, where they were preparing breakfast. Harvey had awakened apparently as strong as ever, unharmed by his terrible experience of the night before.

"Hello, Bob," said Tom, as they looked across the tent at each other. "Do you know where you

are? Isn't this a queer scrape? I wonder what will come of it."

"Hello," answered Bob, yawning and stretching. "Oh, but how I did sleep. I feel as though I had slept about a week. I never was so tired in my life. Say, this is queer, isn't it? Who'd ever have thought we would be sleeping here, of all places."

They arose and stepped outside.

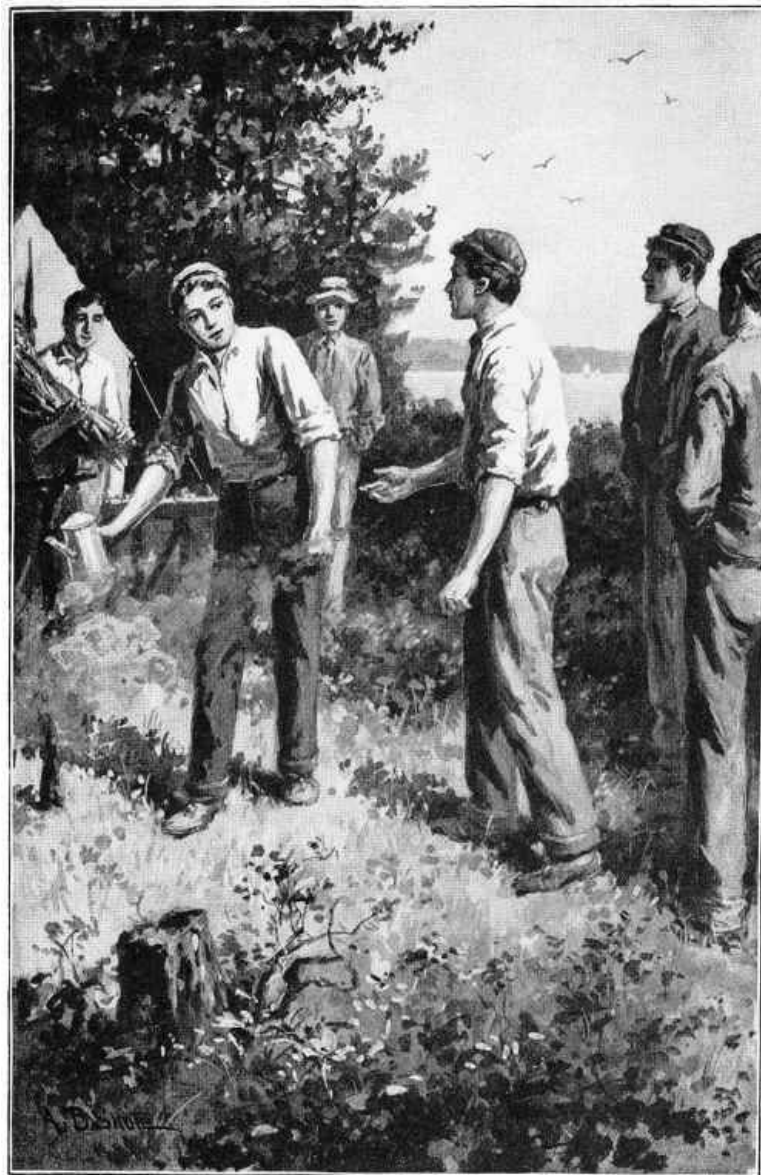
The crew paused in their work and looked up, while Harvey advanced to meet his guests.

"Hello," he said. "We thought we'd let you have your sleep out. You must have been played out."

"Hello," answered Tom and Bob. "We thought you were far worse off than we," continued Bob, "but you seem to have come out of it all right."

Harvey had by this time come up to them. He paused, hesitatingly, for a moment, while his face flushed. Then he put out his hand.

"Will you shake hands with me?" he asked.



"WILL YOU SHAKE HANDS WITH ME?" HE ASKED"

Tom and Bob, for answer, extended each his right hand and grasped that of Harvey.

"Thank you," said Harvey, simply. "I don't deserve it, I know."

There may have been the faintest suspicion of moisture about his eyes.

"Come over here," he said, and led the way to a big log that lay near the fire, close by where the crew now stood. "I want to say something to you, and so do the fellows, too."

There was an embarrassing moment as Tom and Bob seated themselves on the log, while the crew stood awkwardly by. They seemed uncertain what to do or say to these brave young fellows, whom they now knew had risked their lives to save their leader. With boy-like reticence, they were too ashamed to speak. Harvey broke the silence.

"The fellows and I don't know hardly what to say to you," he said. "The crew want to tell you how ashamed we all are for the way we have treated you, and they want to thank you for what you did for me; but they can't begin to tell what they feel,—and no more can I,—but they want me to speak for them, too, as I've been their captain in all we've done, as well as aboard the yacht.

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"They know what you did for me," continued Harvey. "I told them the whole story this morning. There never was anything braver than what you did, and they all know it now as well as I do. They know you were as near drowning as I was, at the last, and you wouldn't give up and let me go, but stuck to me till the end, and couldn't have saved your own lives if there had been another rod to go.

"I wouldn't be here now, if it wasn't for you—"

"Well, you would have done the same for us, and so would the crew," said Tom, eager to spare the other's mortification as much as possible, and feeling his heart kindling toward his late enemy.

"I don't know whether I should or not," replied Harvey. "I don't think I'm so much of a coward, even if I *have* been doing things that look that way. But that doesn't make our position any the better. It isn't what we would have done for you in the same danger that counts. It's what we have been doing to you ever since you landed on the island that makes our case so bad."

"I tell you," Harvey exclaimed, vehemently, as he arose from the log, "we've been a lot of fools and we've been thinking all the time that we were smart. It just came to me like a flash, as I thought I was going down out there, all the mean things I've been doing and what a fool I've been. I knew it all the time, too, I guess, only I didn't care. But you fellows have just brought it home to us hard, and we are going to try to square things up all that we can.

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"Now, first," continued Harvey, taking a long breath and speaking earnestly, "we're sorry we stole that box of yours from off the wharf. We knew it was yours all the time, too, though I said we didn't. Of course we couldn't help knowing. We don't blame you, either, for blowing up the cave—"

"We didn't intend really to blow it up," interrupted Tom. "That was my idea, to burn up

some of the stuff, just to get even, and we were nearly scared to death when the explosion came off. We thought you were all killed."

"Well, I believe you now," said Harvey, "although I didn't before. I can see just how it happened, too. The fact is, we had some powder and kerosene there, hidden away. That's what caused it. Well, anyway, we don't blame you for setting the fire, and we shouldn't blame you now, if you had meant to blow up the cave, too. We deserved it."

"We're sorry it happened, anyway," said Bob.

"Now," added Harvey, "there's another thing, and that's the tent. Of course you knew we took it, although you couldn't prove it. You hadn't any doubt about it, had you?"

"Well," replied Tom, "we did kind of think so, although we couldn't be sure."

"Of course you thought so," said Harvey, "because nobody else would have done it. However, you are going to get the tent back all right."

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"Hooray!" cried Bob.

"You're not half so glad as I am," exclaimed Harvey. "You bet I'm glad we didn't harm it. It's safe and sound, and you wouldn't guess where it is in a hundred years. It's up in the old haunted house, stuffed away in the garret, under the eaves. We didn't dare keep it and we didn't want to destroy it. In fact, we had decided to put it back on the point some day, after we had kept it as long as we wanted to."

"We'll set it up again this afternoon," cried Tom.

"No, you won't," answered Harvey, quickly. "We're going to do that for you, that is, if you will let us. We want to put it up in as good shape as it was before. We'll feel better about it then, eh, fellows?"

"That's right," responded Joe Hinman. And the others nodded assent.

"Now, one thing more," said Harvey. "You saw what we had in the cave. There were some things that belonged to Spencer, and one of the first things I do to-day will be to go up there and settle up with him. Then I'll feel as though I was ready to start fair again."

"And now if you fellows will sit down and have some breakfast with us, then we'll sail up right after it and get the tent and have it up for you just as quick as we can. We can't do it any too quick to suit us."

So Tom and Bob seated themselves with their new-found friends. George Baker, who had the fry-pan all heated and a big dish of batter mixed, proceeded to fry a mess of flapjacks, while Joe Hinman poured the coffee. All the old enmity had vanished in a night, and they laughed and joked as they sat about the campfire like friends of long standing.

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Then, when they had finished, and had shaken hands once more all around, and Tom and Bob had departed for the Warren cottage to explain their strange absence, and to acquaint the

Warrens with the new turn of affairs, Harvey and his crew got sail on the *Surprise* and headed up alongshore for the haunted house.

"There," cried George Warren, as the boys appeared in sight a little later, "didn't I tell you, mother, not to worry about Tom and Bob? You ought to know them by this time. They know how to take care of themselves."

"Well, the next time you go off for all night," exclaimed Mrs. Warren, a little impatiently for her, "I wish you would let me know about it beforehand. I don't like to have to worry about you, and I can't help it if you start off in that canoe and don't come back."

"I don't blame you for not liking it," replied Tom, "and we'll try not do it again. But we really couldn't help this. We met with an adventure."

"What, you didn't see the *Eagle*, did you?" cried George Warren.

"No, you're wide of the mark," laughed Tom. "We've given up that hunt for good. No, we had a different sort of an adventure altogether. Where do you suppose we slept last night?"

"With Henry Burns," said young Joe.

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"No."

"Down on the beach?" said Arthur.

"No."

"Give it up," said George.

"Well, you wouldn't guess in a hundred times trying," said Tom, "so I'll tell you. It was in Jack Harvey's camp."

"Harvey's camp!" exclaimed the three brothers, in chorus.

"Yes, sir, Harvey's camp."

"I didn't know they were off on a cruise," said George. "Oh, I see, you've been getting even, have you? And how about the camp? Is it still there? What have you done with that?"

"It's still down there," laughed Tom. "We didn't do anything to it at all. In fact, the crew were all there, and Harvey, too. We stayed there because they invited us. And, what's more, we have just had breakfast with them all."

The Warrens stared at Tom in amazement.

"Had breakfast with Harvey and his crew! Oh, say, you fellows, quit fooling now, and tell us where you have been."

"Well," said Tom, "listen and we'll tell you the whole story. We've been having our revenge."

And Tom related the story of the night's adventures.

Good Mrs. Warren fairly hugged them with delight when they had concluded.

"That's just splendid," she cried. "That's a splendid revenge. That's the kind that counts for most. But I want to hear Jack Harvey tell the story now. I know you haven't told half about the

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rescue. I want to hear him tell how brave you were."

"He'll exaggerate it," said Bob. "He's our friend, you know, now."

"Well, I'm glad enough you are all friends," exclaimed Mrs. Warren. "You must go and tell Henry Burns."

When Jack Harvey and his crew had returned from the haunted house, and had anchored off the point and had brought the tent ashore, they found assembled there to greet them the entire group of comrades, the Warren boys, Henry Burns, and Tom and Bob.

There was a general hand-shaking all around, and then they all set to work to pitch the tent. It didn't take long to do it, either, for Tom and Bob had saved the poles that had supported the canvas, and there were hands enough to jump at every rope and bring it taut into place. And everybody went at it in such good spirit, and everybody was so pleased and so willing to lend a hand, that the tent was up in its old place again almost as quick as it had come down.

Then they rushed off in high spirits to the Warren cottage for the camp-kit and the boxes and the blankets and all the camp equipment, and packed it down on their shoulders as fast as they had ever done anything in all their lives.

And Mrs. Warren did hear the story of the rescue from Jack Harvey's own lips, and was prouder than ever of her boys' friends, Tom and Bob.

Then, when everything was shipshape, and Harvey and his crew were about to take their departure, he said: "We want all you fellows to come down to-morrow evening and take supper with us, the whole of you. You see, I've just got my allowance from the governor, and he's mighty generous to me, more than I deserve. It comes in just at the right time. You'll be sure and come, all of you?"

"We'll be there," answered Henry Burns.

"Indeed we will," said young Joe.

"And remember Joe counts for two when it comes to the supper-table," said George.

"We'll have enough," said Harvey.

"We'll go along with you to your camp," said Tom, "and get our canoe. That is, unless you'd like to use it awhile," he added, slyly.

"Not much," replied Harvey, with a laugh. "I've had enough canoeing to last me for a few days. But I'm glad I took that paddle, though, for all the narrow escape I had. It was the best accident I ever had in all my life."

"Canoeing isn't always as easy as it looks," said Bob, as they walked along. "By the way, we haven't even asked you how you came to upset. It's because we have had so much else to talk about and think about."

"Why," said Harvey, "there isn't much to tell. I don't hardly know how it happened, myself. I went to change my position in the canoe, as I

was cramped with kneeling in one position so long. I suppose I lost my balance a little, but I was overboard so quick I don't know, myself, just how it did happen. I must have wrenched myself as I went over, for the minute I tried to swim I felt a pain in my side."

"That's the way with a canoe," said Tom. "It doesn't always tip over. Moreover it just slides out from under one, without even capsizing at all. That's usually when one is kneeling or sitting up on a thwart, and the centre of gravity is high in it. When one is low down in a canoe it is rare an accident ever happens. We never have had a bad spill in several years of canoeing, except when we got caught in the storm this summer, and that was because a paddle broke."

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They had now reached the camp, and Tom and Bob launched their canoe and paddled away. They did not return to their own camp, however, but headed down the island. When they had reached the Narrows they carried across into the other bay, and then started down along the shore at a good clip. They were in search of Harvey's canoe.

Several miles down they found it, lodged gently on a projecting ledge. It was uninjured, beyond a little scraping of paint from the canvas, and they took it in tow and returned to the Narrows. They carried both canoes across, and then, when they had paddled up toward Harvey's camp a way, they took his canoe up on shore and left it.

That night, when Harvey's camp was asleep, they paddled down quietly, got the canoe, and towed it out to the yacht *Surprise*. They lifted it aboard and left it there, for Harvey to find in the morning.

"There's just as much fun in that kind of a joke, after all, if one only looks at it that way," said Tom, as they paddled home to bed.

"My! but it seems good to be back in the old tent once more, eh, Tom?" exclaimed Bob, as they turned in.

"Good? Good's no name for it," returned his chum. "The Warren cottage is fine, but I like to hear those waves creeping up on the beach as though they were coming clear into the tent. It just puts me to sleep."

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The next moment bore truth to this assertion.

The next afternoon, as the sun was just sinking down through the trees beyond Harvey's camp, a band of six boys marched along the shore and through the woods, singing as they went. If they had not known every inch of the way as they did know it, a beacon-light on the shore would have guided them.

All afternoon Harvey and his crew had worked, making preparations to receive them. They had gathered wood, lugged water, brought stuff down from the village, brought in the lantern from the yacht to aid in the illumination, and had, indeed, laid themselves out to do honour to their guests.

Harvey extended a hand to welcome them, one by one, as they came up.

"That was a fine joke you played on us last night," he said, warmly, as Tom and Bob appeared. "If you fellows keep piling it on, you'll have me buried under a debt of gratitude that I never can attempt to pay."

"Looks as though you had made a good start at it," said Bob, pointing to one of the benches, where a huge supply of food lay heaped.

"Well," replied Harvey, "just watch Joe now. He's going to give us a treat. If any one knows how to broil a chicken over the coals, it's Joe."

Joe, thus distinguished, had raked over a bed of glowing coals, the product of a heap of ship's timbers, nearly consumed, and was preparing to lay out the aforesaid chickens, split for broiling, upon a big wire broiler.

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"There's half a dozen of them," said Harvey, "and they're the best that the island affords. You needn't be afraid—we didn't confiscate them, either. We're all done with that sort of thing."

"Don't they smell good!" said young Joe, gleefully.

Soon they had a great dish of the chickens on the table, flanked by a heaping plate of potatoes, baked in ashes, a pot or two of jelly, several loaves of bread, and coffee that filled the woods with fragrance.

Then they fell to and ate like wolves. If young Joe had any the best of it, it was hard to see,—and nobody cared, anyway, for every one did his level best.

And then, when they had eaten, they sat and sang, roaring away at the top of their lungs, for it was a fair place for noise and no one to be disturbed; only the fish-hawks high in their nests and the seals away out on the ledges to wonder at the unusual disturbance. Then, as the fire blazed, they told stories of fishing, of hunting, of the search for the strange yacht, and a hundred other things, more than ever fascinating, heard under the stars, in the shadow of the woods, in the sight and sound of the sea, by the firelight.

It was a night long to be remembered, although as yet they did not dream of those events soon to happen, which would be far more memorable, and of which this evening by the camp-fire was but the beginning.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE FIRE

It was nearly midnight when the boys came over the hill, and the half-moon was just sinking out of sight. They strolled down past the hotel, whistling a college tune in chorus. The hotel stood out, a big, black, indefinite object in the enveloping darkness, for the lights had been out for nearly two hours, and the guests were supposed to be all abed.

"Hulloa!" exclaimed Henry Burns, pointing to a faint gleam that shone from a basement window.

"John Carr has forgotten to put out his lamps in the billiard-room. Old Witham will give him fits when he finds them burning in the morning. Wait a moment, and I'll just slip in through this window and put them out for him. If the colonel should find them, just as likely as not he would discharge John for wasting five cents' worth of oil."

So saying, Henry Burns, with the best of intentions, shoved up the sash and crawled into the billiard-room in the basement.

The boys stood around the window, waiting for him to return, but one and all thrust their heads into the open window as Henry Burns suddenly gave a whistle of surprise.

"Say, fellows," he called, turning the lights up stronger instead of extinguishing them. "Look what John Carr's done. He's left all the balls and cues out, instead of locking them up. Wouldn't the colonel be furious? I'll tell you what we'll do. Old Witham always drives us out of the billiard-room, so we'll just stop and play one game now and I'll make it all right with John Carr. He wouldn't care, and he will be glad enough to have things put to rights, so Witham won't find them out in the morning."

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George Warren, as the eldest of the brothers, demurred at first. "We've been up to enough pranks this summer," he said, "and we don't want to get into any more trouble."

"But we're not going to do any harm," persisted Henry Burns. "We'll only play one game, just for the lark of playing at this time of night, and to get ahead of old Witham; and then we'll put everything away shipshape and put out the lights, and no harm done."

It did not take much argument to influence them; and in a moment they were all inside, each equipped with a cue, and engaged in the forbidden game. The time passed faster than they knew, and one o'clock found them there still.

But, late as it was, a most unusual hour for any Southport dweller to be astir and abroad, there were at least three individuals who were not abed and asleep; and with these three we shall have to do in turn.

It so happened on this morning that Squire Brackett had important business that took him across to Cape Revere, on the mainland; and, as no steamer was due to run across till afternoon, and he must be there in the morning, he had arranged to sail over, taking advantage of the ebb-tide, which served strongest shortly after midnight. He was sleepy and surly as he came down the road, but paused a moment in his haste as he caught the gleam of light and heard the sound of subdued voices from the half-opened basement window.

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Squire Brackett stole up softly and peered inside.

"Aha!" he exclaimed, under his breath. "So that's the way the young rascals treat Colonel Witham, is it? I'll just see about that in the morning. I fancy Colonel Witham will have something to say about this breaking and

entering. I'd call him down now and trap them at their game, if it wasn't that I'd lose a tide and a twenty-dollar bargain by it."

And the squire tiptoed craftily away, chuckling maliciously to himself at the thought of how he would aid in punishing the boys on the morrow.

The second man of the three who were to figure in the night's adventure had set out some two hours ago from afar down the island on the obscure western side. If any of the boys had seen him rowing in from a yacht anchored just off shore, had seen him land on the beach and drag his boat well up on it with supreme strength, and had seen him set off through the fields and along the strips of beaches of the coves, if any of the boys had seen all this and had looked carefully into his forbidding face, with its malign, evil expression, it is probable that that boy might and would have seen a striking resemblance to that same individual whom he had seen in flight on a certain evening, and have wondered and feared what business could bring him back to the scene of former danger at this hour.

Not being seen by them, nor by anybody else, the man slunk along, now running, as a clear stretch of field opened up before him, now thrusting his way through clumps of alders, now skirting the shore of some little inlet.

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At length he struck fairly across the island, directly toward the very town from which, a few weeks ago, he had made so hurried an exit. Coming finally in view of the hotel, he squatted down in the grass and surveyed the prospect long and carefully before approaching nearer.

Squire Brackett, going on down to the hotel, would not have been so much at ease had he felt the presence of this evil figure, crouching within a few feet of him as he went by, and following stealthily in his footsteps, pausing as he paused, and watching him wonderingly as he peered into the window at the boys.

Now, as the squire went on his way, the man, himself, crawled up to the window and cast a quick glance within.

What he saw clearly startled him, for he had expected to find the hotel in utter darkness. He seemed to hesitate for a moment, then quickly drew away from the window.

"So much the better," he muttered. "They won't stop me, and if only some one has seen them there they'll get the blame."

Stealing around to the second window distant from where the light came, the man took a short piece of iron from a coat pocket and proceeded to pry the window open. Its flimsy lock broke easily under the pressure, and he sprang inside. He may have known where he should find himself, for in the darkness he appeared at home. It was the hotel's storeroom, and was crowded with a litter of boxes and barrels; loose straw lay in profusion, and a barrel or two of oil stood in one corner.

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It was scarce a moment from the time the man had entered till he sprang out again. But now his manner was altered. No longer proceeding with

caution, he started on a run for the fields whence he had come, holding his arms hard to his sides as he ran.

Up the long slope of the hill he dashed, breathing hard, rather, it would seem, from some deep excitement than from the exertion. So he went on without interruption for nearly a mile. Had he seemed less beset by some fear that drove him recklessly on, and been more mindful of his road, he might have avoided the third person who was abroad this night, and who now suddenly loomed large in it.

Plunging desperately along through the rough pasture, following an uncertain path as it wound in and among clumps of cedars and alders, the man all at once ran full tilt into another man, or, rather, a large, heavy-set youth, and, clutching at each other, they both fell sprawling upon the ground.

"Hulloa!" exclaimed Jack Harvey, for he it was, "you seem in a confounded hurry, my friend, and that's something new on this island, I'll be bound. Why don't you—" but, as they scrambled up together, Jack Harvey grumbling, but inclined to treat the incident as a rough joke, the man lunged out heavily at him with his fist and struck him full in the face.

Jack Harvey was no coward. He clinched with the man, and they reeled for a moment in a fierce embrace. But the man had muscles of iron, and, nerved to desperation, more than matched Harvey. Presently he threw the youth to the ground, and as Harvey struggled to his feet again he dealt him a blow between the eyes that stretched him flat, and for a moment stunned him.

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Before Harvey had regained his feet and collected his senses, the man was off, running harder now than ever.

When Harvey finally stood upright, his first impulse was to set out in pursuit of his mysterious adversary. On second thought he paused a moment to consider the matter.

Who could the stranger be, and where could he be going? There was one thing Jack Harvey did know. He knew every living soul on all the island, man and boy, and this man was not of them. There was not a fisherman along this part of the coast with whom Harvey had not cast a line or raced with his yacht, the *Surprise*. He had looked the man fair in the face twice in their struggle, and thought for the moment that he had never seen him before.

He had come from some other island, or the mainland, then, and, as was evident, he was in desperate haste to return. He must, then, have a boat, presumably a sailboat, waiting for him, and that boat must be moored somewhere along the western shore of the island. The man's haste and fear of being delayed argued that he had been up to some bad business, "Thieving at the hotel, perhaps," said Harvey.

And then Harvey, knowing every bush and tree and nook and corner, and every rock and cove on all the shores of the island, ran over quickly in his mind the inlets along the coast, to pick out the most likely spot he knew of where a man

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might choose to moor his yacht and steal ashore; and the proof of his accurate knowledge was that the mental picture he drew of the place was that very cove toward which the stranger was now travelling, and where there lay snugly at anchor the strange yacht.

With this clearly in mind, Jack Harvey resolved to follow in pursuit, although the man had now some ten minutes the start. Harvey had the advantage, however, that, whereas the man knew only the general direction he must take, to Harvey every inch of the way was as familiar as the ground around his own camp. For instance, he knew, when the way led through Captain Coombs's grove of woods, that through the centre, the most direct way, it was boggy and hard travelling, and that one could save from one to three minutes by skirting along the end nearest the town, and going through there in a smoothly travelled path.

Again, and most profitable of all, there was full five minutes to be gained by swimming the narrow opening of Gull Cove, instead of following the line of the shore in the way it spread out in the shape of a huge pear. At the point which the stem of the pear would represent, the passage from the bay into the cove, it was only a matter of two rods wide.

Jack Harvey did not even stop to remove his trousers, blue blouse, and tennis shoes, but plunged in and swam across.

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What he had gained by this was soon apparent, for, as he ascended the top of a low bank on the farther shore, he saw running along the beach, not many rods distant, the man whom he was pursuing.

Now the chase had become simplified and was easy for the rest of the way. There could be no doubt of the man's destination. Jack Harvey, covering himself with rock and tree, made no effort to come up with him, but took his time in following, knowing where he should ultimately find him.

Presently Harvey left the shore, ascended the bank to a roadway which led down the island, followed it for a few rods, cut across a narrow strip of field, seated himself deliberately upon a gnarled tree-trunk, and looked out upon a tiny inlet that was just discernible through the bushes.

There, of a certainty, lay a pretty sloop at anchor, and presently there came to Harvey's ears the creaking of the halyards and of the ropes in the blocks as the mainsail fluttered up.

"He's in a tearing rush to get away, sure enough," muttered Harvey. "Now he is getting up the anchor, and slatting it up in lively style, too. But he is a stronger man than I am, there's no mistake about that," and Harvey felt of two lumps on his head that bore witness to the man's violence.

"If I only had Joe Hinman and Allan Harding here now he wouldn't sail away so easily. But that's neither here nor there. I'll know that elegant hull, however, and I'll know that slick-setting suit of sails anywhere in all this bay, and I'll get even with him yet. The *Surprise* couldn't

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catch that boat in a race in a hundred years, but I'll catch him napping somewhere between here and Portland, or I have sailed this bay for nothing."

The yacht, its sails filling to the light morning airs, sailed slowly out from its place of hiding and faded away into the darkness.

Jack Harvey, waiting a moment longer to rest, started off on an easy jog-trot back to camp. "For," said he to himself, "the *Surprise* must up anchor and after that fellow before daylight. We'll catch him first, and then find out what he has been up to. Perhaps he is another—

"Why, by Jove!" exclaimed Harvey, suddenly, "what a fool I am! How could I ever have forgotten for a moment where I saw that face once before? The man in the rowboat! Whoop! And that yacht is the *Eagle*, as sure as my name is Harvey. And that man is Chambers. And to think I came across the bay with him, alone at night!"

The cold drops of perspiration stood out on Harvey's forehead at the very thought of it.

Over hills and through woods ran Harvey, his arms pressed close to his sides and his head down. He had gone about a mile in this way when, upon emerging from a dense clump of bushes and ascending at the same time a little hill, he paused to survey the prospect ahead.

The sight that met his eyes astounded him. Up against the black morning sky there streamed a broad flaring of red, irregular and uncertain. Now it streamed up in a widely diffused glare. Again it darted up in a series of sharp streaks of red.

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"Heavens!" cried Harvey. "It's the hotel and it's all on fire! Now I know it's Chambers, for certain. Now I know why he struck me down. Now I know what we'll hunt him for and what we'll catch him for."

Harvey, redoubling his speed, raced for his camp.

While this strange chase of Harvey after the man had been going on, even more exciting things had been happening at the hotel.

Shortly before the time the man had run into Harvey in the pasture and knocked him down, the boys had finished an absorbing game of billiards, had put cues and balls carefully away, extinguished the lights, and left the hotel.

They were in high spirits at their harmless adventure, as they walked a short distance together, and then separated.

"I think I'll go along with you," said Henry Burns to Tom and Bob, "if you'll give me that spare blanket to put down on the floor." And the boys locked arms with him in answer, as they said good night to the Warrens. They were soon inside the tent, and, too weary to undress, threw themselves down with their clothes on to sleep.

But scarcely had they closed their eyes when the sound of persons running hard roused them, and they recognized the voices of the Warren boys, calling to them in excited tones.

The next moment the tent was burst open, and George and Joe Warren thrust their heads inside.

"Get up! Get up, boys, quick!" they cried, and Arthur, appearing the next instant, added his voice to the others. "Hurry!" they screamed. "The hotel's afire and the flames are pouring out of the basement windows. We've got to give the alarm, and there's no time to be lost."

Tom and Bob and Henry Burns groaned in anguish; but the three sprang up and darted out of the door.

"Could we have done it? Oh, how could it have happened?" moaned Bob, as his teeth fairly chattered with excitement.

"I don't see how," answered Arthur Warren. "I put the lights out myself, and we didn't light a match in all the time we were there."

"Never mind," said Henry Burns. "We've got to give the alarm. We've got to see that everybody gets out, and let the rest take care of itself."

And they started on the run for the hotel. The fire was already plain to be seen, for the flames were gaining the most rapid headway, and a dense cloud of smoke mixed with flame poured out of the basement windows.

They rushed madly up the hotel steps, found the doors locked, smashed in one of the big front windows opening into the parlour, and one and all crawled inside, screaming "Fire!" at the top of their lungs.

Almost the first person they encountered was Colonel Witham, rushing down the front stairs to the office, his red face looking apoplectic with excitement.

"What's this?" he yelled, as he came down-stairs two steps at a time. "Some more of your practical joking, I'll be bound." But then, as he breathed a choking cloud of smoke that by this time had begun to pour in from the direction of the parlour, he changed his tone.

"Good for you, boys!" he cried. "I guess you've saved us this time. Scatter through the halls now, quick. You can do it quicker than I can. We mustn't let any one burn to death."

The colonel was, indeed, out of breath and nearly helpless, and could be of little assistance.

The boys needed no urging. They ran from one end of the long halls to the other, up-stairs and down, pounding on every door and startling the inmates of the rooms from sleep.

The guests, rushing out on each floor into darkened halls, and smelling the all-pervading smoke, were ready to jump from windows in panic; but the boys ran quickly among them, explained just where the fire was, just what the particular danger was, and guided them all to escape.

Thanks to them, not a life was lost, although there were several narrow escapes. Once when the guests had assembled and a count was taken to see that no one was missing, some one exclaimed: "Well, where's Mrs. Newcome? Has

any one seen her?"

Then there was a rush and a scurrying for the second floor, but the guests were met on the stairs by Joe Warren and Tom Harris, carrying the little old lady in their arms. They had knocked at her door and had received no response, and so, hurling themselves at the flimsy door, had burst it in, and found her on the floor in a dead faint.

"Perhaps this will kind of square accounts with the poor old lady," said Joe Warren, as they laid her gently down at a safe distance from the fire. "She used to complain that we made more noise than a band of wild Indians, and were always disturbing her afternoon naps, but I guess she won't complain of our disturbing this nap." Then the boys left her in the care of the guests, and hurried back to the fire.

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The fire had gained rapid headway, and there was no hope of saving the new part of the hotel, at least. The old-fashioned town fire-engine came rattling up in charge of Captain Sam, but, though the guests and villagers and the boys all took turns at the pumps, the machine could do little more than throw a feeble stream up as high as the base of the second-story windows. The water-supply of the hotel, which was pumped by a windmill at a distance, was of more avail, but it was helpless against the headway that the flames had gained.

Soon the whole front end of the hotel collapsed, sending up a fierce cloud of smoke, ashes, and sparks.

"Lucky we're not in there now," exclaimed one of the guests. "By the way, has anybody stopped to think that we should all probably have been burned to death if it hadn't been for these boys that we've been complaining of all summer? Guess we'll owe them a vote of thanks, at least, when this is over."

"We can't be too thankful that everybody's saved," said another.

"That all may be," growled Colonel Witham, "but I can't see so much to be thankful for in watching a twenty-five thousand dollar hotel burn to pieces, and I've got the lease of it—" But his sentence was interrupted by a piercing wail that came from the scene of the fire, and, following the sound of the noise, one and all looked up in time to see a large, handsome tiger cat leap from a window from which smoke was pouring to a narrow ledge which was as yet untouched by the flames. There it crouched, crying with fear.

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"Oh, it's poor Jerry! It's my poor Jerry!" cried a thin, piping voice, and old Mrs. Newcome, roused from her faint, came forward, trembling and waving her hands helplessly. "Oh, can't somebody save him?" she cried. "He knows more than lots of these boys. Why don't somebody do something?"

"Can't erzactly see as anybody's goin' ter risk his life for a fool cat," muttered one of the villagers. "There ain't no ladder'll reach up there. Guess Jerry's a goner, and lucky it ain't a baby."

Waving her hands wildly and moaning, Jerry's old mistress was a pathetic sight, as Henry Burns went up and spoke to her.

"I'm afraid I can't do much," he said, "but I'll try. You just wait here, and don't take on so. I know some things about climbing around this hotel that the others don't." And he gave a quiet smile. Then he suddenly darted across to the old hotel, and, before any one could stop him, disappeared up the stairs. Wholly unmindful of the fact that a human being was risking his life for that of a dumb animal, old Mrs. Newcome took fresh hope and screamed shrilly, in words intended to encourage the terrified Jerry.

All at once the crowd of guests and villagers saw a boy's slight figure at the edge of the hotel roof in relief against the sky.

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"Who's that?" they screamed. "I thought every one was safely out," cried one to another.

"It's that Burns boy, and he's going to save Jerry," piped old Mrs. Newcome. "He's—"

A howl of indignation drowned her voice, and a chorus of voices rose up to Henry Burns, demanding that he return.

But, helpless now to prevent, they saw him coolly divest himself of his coat, seize hold of a lightning-rod, and go hand over hand quickly to the top. Then he stood for a moment on the only remaining wall of the hotel, for the rest of the roof, though not yet aflame, had caved in and broken partly away from the end wall.

Along this narrow strip of wall crept Henry Burns; but when he had come to the end of it there was a sheer drop of ten feet down to the ledge where the cat crouched, wailing and lashing its tail.

"Go back! Go back!" screamed those below. "You can't do anything."

But Henry Burns, paying not the least attention, reached one hand into his pocket, drew from it a piece of rope, which he proceeded to lower till it dangled within reach of the unfortunate Jerry.

"Grab it, Jerry! Grab it!" piped old Mrs. Newcome; and, whether in answer to the familiar voice or from an appreciation of the situation, Jerry fastened his claws into the rope, clawed at it furiously till all four feet were fast, and so, miaowing shrilly, was drawn up to safety by Henry Burns.

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Back along the wall he crawled, and, sliding down the lightning-rod, was once more on the roof of the old hotel. Then, with Mrs. Newcome's cat perched on his shoulder, he shortly reappeared below, amid the cheering of the crowd.

"I'll never say you boys are bad again and ought to be horsewhipped," sobbed old Mrs. Newcome, as she fondled her pet.

But she got no farther, for a moment later the end wall, on which Henry Burns had stood shortly before, was seen to sway violently. Then, with a wrenching and tearing, as of beams split apart, and with grinding of timbers, it collapsed upon the roof of the old hotel, and a few minutes

later that, too, was all ablaze, and there was nought to be done by any one but to stand helplessly and see the flames devour everything.

When morning lighted up the spot where on the previous day the hotel had stood, the pride of the village and the boast of Colonel Witham, the sun shone only on a charred and blackened heap of ruins.

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CHAPTER XVIII. THE FLIGHT

Southport, rudely awakened from sleep as it had been, and awake all the rest of the night by so unusual and stirring an event as a fire, was too much excited to go back to its slumbers, but stayed awake through the morning hours to discuss it. A group of villagers hung around the grocery-store all day long, adjourning only now and then to journey to the spot where the hotel had been, where they stood solemnly contemplating the ruins, with all-absorbing interest in the twisted and distorted fragments that still bore some resemblance to whatever part they had constituted in the structure of the building.

There were dozens of theories advanced as to how the fire had started. The oil had exploded from spontaneous combustion; rats had set the blaze by gnawing at matches, and so on through the list of ordinary causes of fires; but as for Colonel Witham, with his customary suspicion of all human nature, he was sure of one theory, because it was his own, and that was, that the hotel had been set on fire. This he doggedly asserted and as stubbornly maintained. The hotel could not have set itself afire; therefore, some one must have done it. This was as plain as daylight to the colonel.

He fiercely questioned John Carr as to whether any lights had been left burning, but John Carr was loud and persistent in his assurances that the hotel had been as dark as Egypt when he had retired for the night.

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But throughout all the discussion, that ranged through cottages, along the streets, and that spread throughout the length and breadth of the island, there were six boys who were silent, who took no part in it, but who kept away from wherever a group was gathered.

They were a serious-looking lot of boys as they assembled on the shore in front of the tent; so much of anxiety and apprehension showing unconcealed in their faces that one happening upon their council might have read therein a key to the mystery. It would have been a mistaken clue, of course, but it would have sufficed for the village and for Colonel Witham.

For a few moments not one of them spoke, though each boyish brain was turning the one awful subject over and over, vainly seeking the answer for a problem that defied all attempts at solution.

Finally Bob broke the awful silence.

"How could it have happened?" he exclaimed. At which there was a universal whistle and a shaking of heads.

"You see," continued Bob, "it's absolutely necessary for us to decide in our own minds, the first thing, whether it was our fault or not. Because, if it was, I suppose we've got to own up to it sometime or other, and we may as well do it first as last."

"Better now, if at all, than later," said Tom. "They might have some mercy on us now, being grateful that they didn't burn up."

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"All but Colonel Witham," said young Joe. "Catch him being grateful for anything, with his hotel in ashes."

"Keep quiet, Joe!" exclaimed George Warren, sharply.

The very mention of Colonel Witham's name was irritating. It was only too certain that no mercy could be expected from the colonel.

"But," said Arthur Warren, "we're not to blame, so why should we consider that at all? You remember," he continued, turning to Henry Burns, "how we waited after I had blown the last lamp out and the room was absolutely dark, and we had to stand still a moment till our eyes got accustomed to the darkness before we could find our way to the window?"

"I remember that," answered Henry Burns; "and not one of us lighted any matches all the time we were there, because the lamps were all burning dimly when we went in; but," he added, somewhat desperately for him, "that is not going to save us the moment an investigation begins, if they have one. The first time they begin to question one of us we're done for. The moment they know we were in there last night, that will settle everything in their minds."

"And what then?" asked young Joe.

"Well," said Henry Burns, more calmly, "it means that we've got a twenty-five thousand dollar hotel to pay for."

The proposition was so absurd that they burst out laughing; but it was a short-lived and bitter merriment, and they could just as easily have cried.

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"What would our fathers say?" said Arthur Warren. "Ours told us we'd have to make our pocket-money go a long way this summer, because he rigged the boat all over for us. There couldn't any of us pay for the hotel in all our lives."

"Perhaps they'd send us to jail," suggested young Joe.

This happy remark was received with howls of indignation, and the originator of it was invited to clear out if he couldn't keep quiet.

"They couldn't send us to jail," said Arthur, gravely, "for, at the worst, we could convince them that it was accidental. We may be nuisances, but we're not criminals. Wouldn't it

be better, on the whole," he concluded, "to make a clean breast of it to father, and do whatever he says is best?"

"I'd do it in a minute," said George Warren, "but when I know we didn't set the fire, even accidentally, I hate to put all that trouble and worry on father; because, you see, we might not be able to convince him absolutely that we may not, in some way that we don't know of, have been responsible. Of course, if it comes to it, we'll tell him all,—and he'll believe it, too. That is, he'll believe that we are telling what we think is right, for we've always done that way, because he puts confidence in us."

"Then," said Bob, "we've got to keep out of the way for awhile till this thing blows over some. Everybody that sees us now will stop and ask us how we first saw the fire and all about it."

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"They've done that already to us," said George Warren. "And, luckily, we could say truthfully that we first saw the fire from our cottage piazza. And we said we ran down to your camp and roused you boys. Now that is all right for a touch-and-go conversation, but suppose they see fit to follow it up, we'll soon find ourselves either obliged to lie or to confess."

"Then what are we going to do?" asked Tom.

"Take a fishing-trip," suggested young Joe.

They looked at young Joe savagely, for each knew in his own heart that it was running away from danger,—but it was significant that not a boy objected.

"We've been planning one for a week or more," urged Joe, in extenuation of his plan. "And we needn't stay long. We can come back in a day or two and then start right out again, so as not to attract attention by being gone too long."

"I suppose a little trip down among the islands wouldn't be so bad for our health," said Henry Burns, dryly; but it was clear he had no great liking for the plan.

And so, in a vain endeavour to escape from what seemed to them a most unfair and cruel predicament, and without realizing that it was the worst thing they could do, the boys agreed to start early on the following morning in the *Spray* for a cruise.

Much surprised was Mrs. Warren when informed of their plan.

"And just as everybody is telling what brave boys you were," she said. "They all say that half the guests would have lost their lives if it hadn't been for you."

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This was worse than punishment, and the boys groaned inwardly, for Mrs. Warren had taught her boys to respect her, and they valued her good opinion more than anything else in the world. They went off to bed soon after supper, "so as to get an early start in the morning," they said.

It was early that same evening, while the boys were at tea, that Squire Brackett stepped ashore from his sailboat in a perfect fever of excitement.

"I knew it and I said it," he muttered to himself, slapping one hard fist into the palm of the other hand. "When I saw that blaze across the water this morning, and knew that it couldn't be anything else than the hotel, I says to myself, 'Those boys have done it, with some of their monkey-shines,' and that's just the way of it. By Jingo! but won't Colonel Witham jump out of his skin when I tell him what I saw through that window.

"P'r'aps them 'ere boys won't be' so much inclined to tying other people's dogs to ropes and drowning them when they get caught for setting fire to a fine hotel!"

And so, nearly bursting with the magnitude of his secret, and bristling with more than his usual importance, Squire Brackett hurried up from the landing and lost no time in finding Colonel Witham and escorting him in great haste to his own home.

There on the veranda of Squire Brackett's house sat the two worthies, while the squire poured out his news into the eager colonel's ear.

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"Whew!" exclaimed Colonel Witham, when he had heard it all. "We've got them at last and no mistake. What's more," he added, jumping from his chair and stamping vigorously on the piazza floor, "I'll prosecute them, every mother's son, to the extent of the law. It's breaking and entering, too,—forcing their way into my hotel at night,—and the fire was caused by their criminal act. That's serious business, as they'll find before I get through with them. Blow me if I don't take the boat for Mayville this very night, and see Judge Ellis and get the warrants for Captain Sam to serve first thing in the morning!"

"I'll go with you, colonel," cried Squire Brackett. "We'll be back here before midnight, and be all ready at daylight to arrest them. Reckon we'll surprise folks a little."

And so, chuckling maliciously together, the squire and the colonel waited eagerly for the whistle of the little bay steamer, upon hearing which they walked arm and arm down to the wharf and went aboard, with their heads together, in great satisfaction.

Their trip must have been greatly to their liking, for some hours later found them coming ashore again, evidently in a most agreeable state of mind; and as they bade each other good night on the veranda of the squire's cottage, the colonel might have been heard once more to exclaim, exultantly: "We've got 'em this time, squire! They can't get away." And so strode away, caressing in one hand some crisp, official-looking papers, which boded no good in their contents to six boys whose names the colonel had given with evil delight to the judge at Mayville.

Very early next morning good-hearted Captain Sam might have been seen at the door of his home, his fist clenched and his face burning with indignation. Colonel Witham and Squire Brackett stood by the stoop.

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"Now look here, colonel," exclaimed Captain Sam, hotly, "you surely ain't going to ask me to serve these papers on them innocent young

lads? There's some mistake, somehow, and the way for us to do is to get them up here and just give them a talking to; ask them all the questions you want. I've watched them boys for a good many summers now, ever since they was little shavers no bigger'n mackerel, and I tell you they wouldn't do no wicked thing like setting fire to a hotel full of people, and there ain't nobody on this island mean enough to believe it."

"We didn't come here asking you for advice," sneered the squire. "You're a constable of this village, sworn to do your duty, and your duty is to serve these warrants, the same being legally drawn and signed by the judge. That's all your part, and all we ask of you to do. We take all the consequences."

"Well, it's a shame. It ain't the right thing to do, squire, as you ought to know, having a boy of your own. But, as you say, it's my duty if you insist, and I'll do it,—but it's the hardest job I ever done in all my life."

"Let's go down to the tent first," said Colonel Witham. "There's always two of them down there, and sometimes more. If Henry Burns is there, I just want to get my hands on him. I suspect he's been fooling me all along and playing his tricks on me, when I thought him in his room asleep."

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The dew was still heavy on the grass and the sun had not lifted its face above the distant cape when the three men walked down to the tent upon the point. Not a sound broke the early morning quiet, save the cawing of some crows in a group of pines, and the lazy swash of the sluggish rollers breaking on the shore.

"They're fast asleep," whispered Squire Brackett. "We'll give them a little surprise—just a little surprise." And he gave a hard chuckle.

Captain Sam, at this same instant, casting his eyes offshore and hastily surveying the bay with the quick, comprehensive glance of an old sailor, gave a sudden start, and, for a moment, an exclamation of surprise escaped him.

"What is it?" asked Colonel Witham. "Did you remark anything, Captain Sam?"

"Nothing," answered Captain Sam. "I was just a-muttering to myself."

And at this moment the squire threw open the flap of the tent, saying, as he did so, "If you boys will—"

But as he and Colonel Witham poked their heads through the opening, the sentence was abruptly cut short.

"Empty!" gasped the colonel.

"Gone!" cried the squire.

The tent was, indeed, deserted.

"Where can they be?" asked Colonel Witham.

"I know," answered the squire. "Up at the Warrens, of course. They are there half the time. It simply means we capture them all at once and save trouble. Come on, Captain Sam, you don't

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seem to be in much of a hurry to do your duty, as you're sworn to do."

Captain Sam was, indeed, in no hurry. He loitered behind, stopped to tie his shoes, dragged one foot along after the other slower than he had ever done before, while every now and then, as he followed in the footsteps of the colonel and the squire, he cast a hasty glance over his shoulder out on the bay. What he saw must have pleased him, for on each occasion a broad smile spread over his face and a mischievous twinkle kindled in his eyes.

The colonel and the squire strode along impatiently, pausing now and then for Captain Sam to catch up with them; but as they drew near to the Warren cottage Captain Sam quickened his steps and halted them.

"You two will have to stay here," he said, with an authority he had not shown before. "I'm commissioned with the serving of these warrants, and I'm going to do it; but Mrs. Warren is a nice, motherly little woman, and I don't propose to have three of us bursting in on them like a press-gang and frightening her to death. I'm just going to break the news to her as best I know how, and I don't want no interfering."

So saying, and with face set into a reluctant resolve, the captain walked on alone, leaving the colonel and the squire much taken aback, and too much astonished by the sudden declaration of authority to attempt to dispute it.

What Captain Sam said to Mrs. Warren only she and he knew. There were no boys called in to listen to what was said. There were no boys there to see how Mrs. Warren's face paled and how the tears rolled down her cheeks, nor to hear Captain Sam's words of burning indignation as he tried to comfort her. No boys came to gather about her chair, to assure her it was all a dreadful mistake. There were no boys to face the colonel and the squire and declare their own innocence.

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But out on the bay, with all her white sails set to catch the morning breeze, the yacht *Spray* was beating down toward a distant goal among the islands. And aboard her were six boys, whose hearts were heavy and whose faces were drawn with an ever present anxiety. For a time they cast apprehensive looks back at the disappearing village, but as the morning wore on and no pursuing sail appeared, they became more cheerful; and to forget so far as they could the real cause of their flight, they talked hopefully of the fish they expected to catch and the swimming and other sport along the white sands of the island beaches.

But although no familiar craft as yet followed where they sailed, there was, far in the lead of them and some miles down along the island, a yacht they all knew, and in whose mission, had they but known it, their deepest interests, their very fate, in fact, lay.

Jack Harvey had lost little time in reaching his camp. While he ran the fire blazed brighter and brighter, sending an angry glare over the waters of the bay and lighting up the country around. Looking back now and then, he could see men

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and women running about in the light of the fire, and the frantic, though unavailing, efforts of the village fire department to stay the flames.

"Seems funny," he muttered to himself, "to be running away from a fire, and the greatest fire we ever had on this island at that. I never did such a thing before, but I guess there'll be something more exciting ahead than a fire before we get through."

Harvey found his camp deserted, as he had expected. Not a sign of life showed about the place.

"They're all up to the fire," said Harvey; "but I'll bring them soon enough, though I reckon they'll be mad at first to have to leave when the fire is just at its best."

And he began ransacking the camp, rolling up blankets, tying them into compact bundles and hurrying down to the shore with them, where he deposited them in a rowboat.

He made a pile of the rude dishes that the camp afforded, a saucepan, a fry-pan, tin dippers, and a few tin plates, tying them all together in a bundle and rattling them all down to the shore in great haste.

Finally he got a boatload of the stuff, and, jumping in, sculled the little craft out to the *Surprise*. Leaping aboard, he rushed down into the cabin, threw open a locker, drew forth a big tin horn, which he raised to his lips, and blew four loud, long blasts in succession.

"The hurry signal will surprise them, I reckon," he exclaimed; "but they've always answered it before, and I guess they'll come,—even from a fire." And Harvey began stowing the stuff away aboard the yacht. Then he proceeded to untie the stops in the mainsail, and was thus engaged when a voice hailed him from the shore.

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"Halloo, Jack!" came the call. "What's the matter? Why aren't you up to the fire? What's up?"

"Wait a minute," answered Harvey. "I'm coming ashore. Are the others on the way?"

"Yes," answered the boy on shore, who proved to be Joe Hinman; "but they don't like it a bit. It's a shame to lose this fire, Jack. Why, you ought to see Colonel Witham. He's the craziest man I ever saw, running around and begging everybody he sees to rush into the blaze and save his old office furniture."

"Well, Joe," said Harvey, as he stepped out of the small boat on to the beach, beside the other, "we've got some work cut out for us that beats watching a fire all to pieces. I'll tell you all about it, but there isn't one half-minute to lose now. Believe me, you fellows won't regret it,—hello, here are the others!"

The three other members of the crew, George Baker, Allan Harding, and Tim Reardon, burst out of the woods into the clearing, gasping from running, and amazed beyond expression that Harvey should have called them from the fire.

"Fellows," said Harvey, "I'll tell you the whole story just as soon as we get aboard and up sail."

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This is the greatest thing we ever did in all our lives; but it's the minutes that count now, and we have got to get under way the quickest we ever did yet."

And then, as the boys hesitated, and Joe Hinman ventured the question, with something of suspicion in his tone that he could not all conceal, "Why, Jack, there's no trouble, is there—no trouble—about the fire?" it suddenly dawned on Harvey that this sudden departure did have a queer look to it, and that he was, indeed, open to their suspicion.

"Yes," he cried, "there is trouble, and it's about this fire; but it isn't our trouble. The trouble is for the man that set it,—and we are going to make it for him. We're going to catch him. Now will you hurry?"

"Will we?" exclaimed George Baker. "Just watch us!"

And every boy made a dash for the camp to secure anything he might need on a cruise down the bay.

Harvey and Joe Hinman seized two big jugs and made off for the spring, whence they returned quickly. Then the entire crew piling into the small boat, they were soon aboard the *Surprise*.

The anchor was up in a twinkling. The sails were never spread in such time. Almost as quickly as it takes to tell it, the yacht *Surprise* was under way, and with Harvey at the wheel was standing out of the little harbour.

Then, as they left the glare of the fire upon the waters astern, but still flaming like a giant beacon against the sky, Harvey, with his crew about him, narrated his extraordinary adventure with the strange man, and asserted his conviction that the man was none other than the same Chambers who had fled from the island not long before.

"That is a fast boat, and we can never catch her in plain sailing," said Allan Harding. "She is full half again as big as we, and she would sail around us a dozen times and then walk away from us without half-trying."

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"I know that," said Harvey, "and that is just why I am so anxious to catch up with him before he gets out of the western bay into the open sea. If we don't get him in the bay we shall lose him. Now let's overhaul everything, and be sure that something doesn't break just as we come to the pinch."

There was little to be done, however, on that score; for, however carelessly they lived ashore, they had the true yachtsman's spirit aboard the *Surprise*, and kept her shipshape. Then they set the club and jib topsails, for there was not much air stirring, and they drew the tender up close astern, so it would drag as little as possible.

"We have one advantage," said Harvey. "We can depend upon it, he knows enough not to try the open bay and sail down toward the Gull Islands. The first part of the way is clear sailing enough, but when you get down just off the islands you come to the shallows, and a man has to follow the marks to get clear and safely out to sea. And

then, too, the alarm is going to be sent out just as soon as a boat from the village can get over to the mainland. They won't lose any time about that,—and Chambers is sharp enough to know it. He knows the whole bay down below there will be alive with boats, just as soon as they get the news wired down to them.

“Depend upon it, Chambers will try to fool them. I think he will come through the Thoroughfare at this eastern end of Grand Island, which he must have studied out on the charts. He will not dare to try the Thoroughfare to-night, however, and if we can only beat down to somewhere below the Thoroughfare to-night we shall be well to windward of him in the morning, and he will think we are a boat coming in from outside, while he will still be beating into the wind, if it holds from the south'ard, the way it is blowing now.”

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“That's right,” said Joe Hinman. “He cannot make the passage out through the Thoroughfare in the night, unless he knows the way better than I think he does. It is a bad run in the dark, even for a man that was born around here. We have done it only once or twice ourselves.”

“You fellows turn in now, all but Tim,” said Harvey, “and get some sleep. We two can run her for awhile. I'll call you, Joe, in about an hour or two, to handle her while I get forty winks, but, mind, everybody will be called sharp the minute we clear Tom's Island, for no knowing what we shall see then at any minute. Chambers will lie up in Seal Cove for an hour or two, I reckon, if he has got down that far. I only wish I was sure of it. We'd go ashore and take a run across the island and catch him napping—

“By the way, George,” exclaimed Harvey, “how do you feel? It's mighty lucky you happened to be taken with that colic in the night, just at the right time, and that I started out to rouse up old Sanborn to get some ginger for you. All this would never have happened if it hadn't been for you.”

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“Why, I'm all right,” answered George Baker. “I could hardly walk when we first saw the fire, but I just made up my mind I wasn't going to miss it, and so I started out. When the sparks began to fly I forgot all about the pain, and I hadn't thought of it since. It's all gone now, anyway.”

Two hours later they were nearing the southern end of Grand Island and coming in sight of a chain, or cluster, of smaller islands, through which an obscure and little used passage ran from the western bay to the outer sea. Jack Harvey had sent young Tim into the cabin to snatch a wink of sleep, and Joe had come up, heavy and dull.

“I'll go without my sleep this once,” said Harvey. “Here, Joe, hold her a minute. I'll get a bit of rest right here on deck, with one eye open.”

It was growing light fast now, and they strained their eyes for a sail.

“I guess we are in time,” said Harvey, as they came abreast of Tom's Island. “He is not in sight. We'll head out to sea a bit more, and cut into the Thoroughfare farther down, for the tide will be high in an hour, and we can cross Pine

Island Bar. Then, if he has taken the channel on the other side of Tom's Island, we can still head him off,—unless he went through in the night."

And Harvey, having relinquished the tiller to Joe, stretched himself out at full length on the seat to rest.

Thus they sailed for a short cut into the Thoroughfare at a point where they could command the farther of the two channels.

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And, as they sailed, so sailed another and a larger sloop, beating its way out to sea through the farther channel. A man, powerfully built, and with a hard, desperate look in his eyes, sat at the wheel,—and he was all alone. The yacht cut a clean path through the smooth waters of the Thoroughfare, and, as the man looked at the coast-line along which he was passing rapidly, he muttered: "It's a clear passage; a safe run to sea. And, once there, who's to say I was ever in these waters? I said I'd have revenge on this town for what I've lost, if it took all summer, and I've done it. The blaze did me good as it lit the sky. Twenty minutes more and I'll be clear of this, and good-bye to this coast for ever."

But even as he said it a smaller sloop turned the head of an island half a mile ahead, and came down the Thoroughfare, running off the wind.

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CHAPTER XIX. THE PURSUIT

Great was the rage of Colonel Witham and Squire Brackett when they discovered that the boys had escaped.

"But it will be only so much the worse for them in the end," said the squire. "The fact of their running away is a confession of guilt, and will count hard against them when we once get them into court.

"Colonel," he continued, gazing off on to the bay, "I believe that's them now, about two miles down along the shore. Cap'n Sam, you're a sure judge of a sail. Isn't that the *Spray* beating down along the island, just off Billy Jones's beach?"

Captain Sam took a most deliberate observation, turned a chew of tobacco twice in his cheek, and then remarked, laconically:

"That's the *Spray*, sure's a gun. There is no mistaking the queer set of that gaff-topsail. It always was a bad fit, and it sticks out just as crooked like, two miles away, as it does close on. Y-a-a-s, there's the youngsters, and no mistake."

Captain Sam did not see fit, however, though a constable, sworn to do his duty, as the others had suggested, to explain that he had seen the *Spray* for the last hour or more, and that he had been conscious all along of the precious time they were losing. But a sharp observer might have detected him chuckling down deep in his throat as the colonel and the squire stormed and raged.

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"Well, what are we going to do?" cried Squire Brackett. "We're losing valuable time here. That little boat eats fast into the wind, they say, and we have got to get started pretty quick if we expect to overhaul her between now and dark.

"Come! What do you say, Cap'n Sam? You know the boats in the harbour better than I do. Whose is the best one to go after them with?"

"Wa-al," drawled Cap'n Sam, "if I do say it, I suppose the *Nancy Jane* is about as good as any in a long thrash to windward,—if she does belong to me. She's big and she's roomy, and there's a comfortable cabin in her for you and the colonel—for I suppose you'll want to go along."

"Go along!" exclaimed Colonel Witham. "I should say we did—eh, squire? When these 'ere warrants are served I want to be there to see it done, and so does the squire, I reckon."

"That's what I do," responded Squire Brackett. "We'll go along with you, sure enough."

"Then you want to be getting some grub aboard right away," said Captain Sam, with a fine show of energy and haste, "while I break the news to my wife. She'll put me up a bite to last a day or two. You can't tell, you know, when you start off on one of these 'ere cruises, where you'll end up nor how long you'll be out,—so you want to come prepared to stay."

And then, as the colonel and the squire hurried off down the road, he turned back for a moment to Mrs. Warren, who stood weeping, and said, with rough good-heartedness:

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"Now, don't you go to taking on, Mrs. Warren. There's some mistake here. Depend upon it. I've known them youngsters ever since they was no bigger'n short lobsters, and I know they ain't got nothing bad enough in 'em to go to setting a hotel afire.

"P'r'aps there might have been some little accident," he added, more conservatively. "Accidents always is happening, you know, and we're all of us liable to 'em. I've got to do my duty, Mrs. Warren, bein' as I am a constable of this town, sworn to obey my orders as I get 'em, signed and sealed from the court; but I'm goin' to stand by them boys, all the same.

"So you just go and get your husband down here, quick as ever you can,—and we'll settle this 'ere difficulty pretty soon, I reckon.

"And see here," he said, in conclusion, "if Mr. Warren gets here by to-morrow noon, that'll be time enough. And that gives you a chance to take the boat up to-day if you hurry, and bring Mr. Warren back with you. I'll sorter guarantee we don't fetch up here again till to-morrow afternoon, so don't you worry." And with a sly twinkle in his gray eyes the captain took his leave, and rolled along lazily toward his home.

He was still eating a hearty breakfast when the colonel and the squire burst in upon him, hot with impatience. But the captain was provokingly deliberate, and finished a few more huge slices of bread and a biscuit or two, and two cups of coffee and a few of his wife's

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doughnuts, before he would budge an inch.

"The boys can't escape," he said, by way of assurance to the impatient pair. "They can't go across the Atlantic in a little sardine-box like that, if it has got a mast and a bowsprit and a cabin to it. We're bound to fetch up with them quick enough. Have a cup of coffee, colonel! Squire, sit down and drink a cup of coffee! Mrs. Curtis knows how to make it, if anybody does."

But the colonel and the squire refused impatiently, and by dint of nagging and voluble persuasion they got Captain Sam started, and the three went down to the shore.

The news had spread abroad by this time,—thanks to the colonel and the squire,—and quite a number of villagers and cottagers had gathered to see them off.

What they said was not complimentary to the worthy two, for the boys, in spite of their pranks, were universally liked, and the whole village had not done with praising them for their bravery at the fire.

"Why don't you go and arrest Jack Harvey and his crew?" cried one of the villagers. "Looks mighty queer to have them clear out, every one of them, the morning of the blaze. Dan French, he saw them standing out by his point early that morning while the fire was blazing its hardest. Reckon that looks a sight queerer than it does to wait a whole day."

"Well! Well! I guess they had a hand in it," cried Colonel Witham, as he stepped into the yacht's tender. "We'll hunt them up, too, later on. They are all mixed up in it, I've no doubt. Wait till we get the boys we are after now, and we'll make them confess the whole thing."

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It certainly did look suspicious, this flight from both camps and from the Warren cottage, just after the fire; and the villagers, however well disposed they might be in the boys' favour, or however much inclined to show leniency, could not explain it away.

"They must have been up to some of their pranks," they said to one another, "and somehow got the hotel on fire. Colonel Witham must be right,—and, besides, Squire Brackett says he's got the proof. He must know something bad, or he would not be so certain."

And to this conclusion, reluctant as they might be to come to it, there fitted, in startling corroboration, the coincidence of their being the first to discover the fire,—the first to give the alarm.

And the villagers sympathized all the more, for this conclusion, with Mrs. Warren, as she took the boat for home that morning, bravely keeping back her tears, and receiving courageously their kindly assurances, though her heart was breaking.

The *Nancy Jane* was a heavy fishing-boat, of the centreboard type, big and beamy and shallow of build, able to "carry sail" in the worst of weather, but not so marvellously fast as one might have been led to believe by the recommendation of her owner. However, it was

quite true that she could overhaul the *Spray*—only give her time enough, and provided no accident should happen.

“She’s got a bit of water in her,” said Captain Sam. “So make yourselves comfortable, gentlemen, make yourselves comfortable, while I pump her out. She’ll sail faster and point up better with the water out of her, and we’ll all be more comfortable.”

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And the colonel and the squire made themselves anything but comfortable, fretting and fuming at the delay.

The captain took it leisurely, however, yanked the pump for ten minutes or more, to the accompaniment of short puffs of his pipe, and then pronounced her dry as “Dry Ledge at low tide.”

The colonel and the squire were neither of them sailors; so they could only wait on Captain Sam’s pleasure. He finally made sail on the *Nancy Jane*, got up anchor, brought her “full and by,” and they began the long zigzag chase down the bay in the teeth of the wind.

The breeze freshened as they drew out of the shelter of the island shore, and down between the nearer islands Captain Sam could see the line of breeze show black upon the water.

“Looks like a right smart blow by afternoon,” he said.

Colonel Witham looked up apprehensively.

“It doesn’t get dangerous, does it?” he asked.

Captain Sam laughed dryly.

“Guess you’re not much on sailing, colonel, are you?” he asked, by way of reply. “Bless you! We don’t get a dangerous blow in the bay once in a summer. No, you need not worry about that. There’s no danger; but I wouldn’t wonder if we had a bit of a chop-sea when the wind freshens.”

The colonel looked more at ease.

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“No,” he said, “I’m no sailor. I manage to make the voyage down the river to the island, but that is as much seagoing as I have ever wanted, and this will be my first real ocean experience.”

“Not what you’d hardly call an ocean experience, either,” said Captain Sam, grinning from ear to ear. “No,” and he said the words over to himself as though they afforded him no end of amusement, “a slat to windward from the point to Gull Island ain’t just what one would call an ocean experience, though it does shake a body up now and then in a blow.”

Dinner-hour came, and they had the *Spray* well in sight, some miles ahead and pitching hard.

“We’ll eat a snack,” said Captain Sam, who was never so happy and hearty as when he had his hand on the wheel of the *Nancy Jane*. “Colonel, have one of Mrs. Curtis’s fresh doughnuts, just fried this morning, make you feel like a schoolboy.”

But the colonel, pale of face, declined.

"I—I don't seem to feel very hungry just this moment," he stammered. "Late breakfast, you know. Er—by the way, is it going to blow much harder, do you think?"

"No great shakes," responded the captain. "Guess there may be another capful or two of wind in them 'ere light clouds out yonder. It may freshen a bit, but that's all right. That's just what we want. The harder it blows the more the *Spray* will pitch and get knocked back. It's the kind of a breeze that the *Nancy Jane* likes, plenty of wind and a rough sea. The wind is bound to go down by sunset. It's the way these southerlies act."

"By sundown!" groaned the colonel. "That's hours yet, and I'm sure we'll tip clear over if this boat leans much more."

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"Built to sail on her beam," explained Captain Sam. But at this moment the *Nancy Jane's* bow snipped off the whitecap of a roller somewhat larger than its predecessor, and the spray flew in, drenching the colonel from head to foot.

He yelled with terror. "We're upsetting, sure!" he cried. "Let's turn her about, Captain Sam, while there is time, and start again when it's lighter."

"Nonsense!" said Captain Sam, with a grin. "You're a bit shaken up, but you'll feel better by and by. Just go into the cabin and lie down a little while. That may make you feel better."

Perhaps it had been so many years since Captain Sam had experienced the awful misery of seasickness that he did not realize that the worst thing the colonel could do was to go down into the dark, damp, musty-smelling cabin of the old fishing-sloop. Perhaps he really did think that the colonel would feel better for it. But whatever his motive was, it had a sudden and deadly effect on Colonel Witham. Indeed, he had scarcely stuck his head into the stuffy cabin, had certainly no more than gotten fully within, before he staggered out again, with an agonized expression on his face, and sank, limp and shivering, to a seat, with his head over the rail.

"Oh! Oh!" he groaned. "I think I'm going to die. I'm awfully sick; never felt so bad in all my life. Can't you put me ashore, Captain Sam—anywhere, anywhere? I don't care where, even if it is a deserted island. I'd wait there a week if I could only get on shore." And the colonel groaned and shivered.

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It was obvious there was no way of going ashore, however, as they were some miles distant from it. There was nothing for the unhappy colonel to do but to make the best—or the worst—of it.

"Cheer up, colonel," said Captain Sam, pulling out the stub of a black clay pipe, lighting it, and puffing away enjoyably. "I've seen 'em just as sick as you are one hour, and chipper enough to eat raw pork and climb the mast the next. You will be feeling fine before long,—won't he, squire?"

But as the squire evidently had his doubts in the matter, owing particularly to the fact that he was not too much at ease himself, his response was rather faint; and the captain was left to the

entertainment of his own society. He enjoyed himself for the next hour or two with a sort of monologue, in which he proceeded to analyze audibly the relative chances of the little yacht ahead and the *Nancy Jane*.

"They are doing surprisingly well for a small craft in windward work," he muttered. "They handle her well. Still, the *Nancy Jane* is eating up on them. I say about sundown we shall be able to run alongside—Hulloa! If they are not changing their course to run down the Little Reach! Thought they knew better than that. Why, it's what they call a 'blind alley' in the cities. Well, I'm surprised. They know the bay pretty well, too; and, only to think, they go to running in to a thoroughfare which really is nothing more than a long cove. They'll fetch up at the end of it in an hour or two, and there's no way out."

The captain's voice almost seemed to express disappointment that the chase should end so tamely.

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"Colonel," he cried. "Squire. It will be all over in a few hours now. They're running into a trap."

But the colonel and the squire were beyond interest in the pursuit.

The yacht *Spray* had, indeed, started its sheets, and now, with the wind on its beam, was running off toward a group of small islands, or ledges, on a course nearly at right angles with that which it had been taking.

The boys had watched the *Nancy Jane* anxiously for the last few hours.

"They are steadily coming up on us," George Warren had said. "Too bad we could not have got a few hours more start. We might have given them the slip then when night shut down."

"But we are not sure that they are after us, are we?" asked young Joe.

"No, but it looks pretty certain," replied his brother George. "There's nothing particular to start the *Nancy Jane* down here, and she is Captain Sam's boat and he is the town constable."

"Then what had we better do?" queried Tom. "There is not much use running away, if we are sure to be caught inside of a few hours. We'd a sight better turn about and start back, as though we had finished our sail. That would look less like running away."

It was noticeable that, having once set out to escape, they accepted the situation now fully, without more pretence.

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"We have got to decide before long," said Henry Burns. "The *Nancy Jane* is overhauling us fast."

"George," said Arthur Warren, "I know one chance, if you want to try it, and if you are willing to risk the *Spray*,—and I think it would save us."

"What is it, Arthur?" asked George. "If it is any good, I'm for trying it. I can't see as we have anything great to risk, with a twenty-five thousand dollar fire charged to us."

"What is it, Arthur?" exclaimed the others, excitedly. It did not seem possible there could be any chance of escape open, but they jumped eagerly at anything that offered a faint hope.

"Well," said Arthur, in his deliberate manner, "you know the small opening between Spring and Heron Islands at the foot of Little Reach? Nobody ever ran a sailboat through there because it's choked up with ledges. But you remember when the mackerel struck in to the Reach there last August, we all went down in the *Spray* for a week's fishing. Well, one day Joe and I took the tender and worked our way clear through between Spring and Heron Islands to the bay outside. Now the *Spray*, with the centreboard up, does not draw very much more water than the tender, and by dropping the sails and all poling through, I think we can work her in clear to the other side."

"We'll try it," said George Warren. "It is the only chance we have, so we've really no choice."

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And he put the tiller up and threw the *Spray* off the wind, while Arthur and Joe started the sheets. It was this sudden manoeuvre which had startled Captain Sam.

They soon passed the entrance to Little Reach, two barren ledges shelving down into the water, and were well down the Reach when Captain Sam and the *Nancy Jane* headed into it.

"There they go," cried Captain Sam, "like an ostrich sticking its head into the sand. Well, what can you expect of boys, anyway? We'll overhaul them faster than ever now, because this big mainsail draws two to their one this way of the wind, and the jibs aren't doing anything to speak of, the wind varies so in here."

It was smooth water inside Little Reach, and, as there was now scarcely any motion to the *Nancy Jane* as she skimmed along by the quiet shores, the colonel and the squire began to revive a little, sufficient at least to regain their interest in the pursuit.

They were about a mile and a half down the Reach, and the *Spray*, not quite half a mile ahead, was apparently at the end of her cruise.

"They are at the end now," cried Captain Sam, whose blood was up when it came to a race between the *Nancy Jane* and another, though smaller, craft. "We've got 'em like mice in a box."

"By George! look there, colonel—look, squire!" he exclaimed, excitedly. "They have given it up. There go the sails. It's all over. They may scoot ashore, but the island on either side is nothing more than a rock. Well, I vow! But I didn't think they would quit so tamely after a game race."

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"We'll make 'em smart for what we have suffered to-day, eh, colonel?" growled the squire.

The colonel grunted assent. He was not yet sufficiently himself to be very aggressive.

"What on earth are they doing?" said Captain Sam, a few moments later. "Looks as though they were trying to hide away among the rocks,

like a mink in a hole. They'll have the *Spray* aground if they jam her in among those ledges."

The *Spray*, however, slipped in among the rocks, and was shut out from the view of the pursuers.

"Let 'em hide," said Captain Sam, contemptuously. "That is a boyish trick. We'll be up with them now in fifteen minutes."

But the *Spray*, hidden from view of Captain Sam and the colonel and the squire, was not running itself upon the rocks nor poking its nose, ostrich-like, among the ledges.

The instant the sails were dropped young Joe sprang out on the bowsprit and lay flat, holding a pole, with which he took soundings as the others pushed and poled with the sweeps of the yacht.

They ran the bow gently on to rocks a dozen times, but a warning yell from Joe stopped them, and they turned and twisted and wormed and worried their way in among the ledges, turning about where a larger craft would have had no room to turn, and slipping over reefs that just grazed the bottom of the little *Spray*, and which with two inches lower tide would have held them fast.

"It's just the right depth of water," said Arthur, exultantly. "Luck is with us this time, for certain. An hour later and we could not have done it. But we're going through. There is only the bar ahead now. If we clear that we are free of everything."

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Just ahead, where two thin spits of sand ran off on either end of the two islands into shoal water, was a narrow, shallow passage, where the water was so clear that it looked scarcely more than a few inches in depth, as it rippled over the bar.

"All out!" cried Arthur, as the *Spray* grated gently on the bottom, "We will lighten her all we can," and they sprang overboard into water scarcely above their knees.

"Now, Joe," said Arthur, "you and Henry take the head-line out over the bows and go ahead and pull for all you are worth. George and I will get alongside and push, and keep her in the channel, and Tom and Bob can get aft and push. We have got to rush her over that shallow place, and we must not let her stop, for if she once hangs in the centre we cannot budge her. The *Spray* is not a ninety-footer, but she's got enough pig iron in her for ballast to hold her high and dry if she once sticks."

The boys seized hold quickly, and the *Spray*, lightened of her load, slid along, at first sluggishly, and then gathering speed, as the twelve strong, brown, boyish arms pulled and tugged and pushed.

"Jump her, now, boys! Jump her!" cried Arthur, as they neared the shoal. "We're doing it. Don't let her stop, now! Oh, she mustn't stop! We've got to put her over or die."

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And the little *Spray* seemed to feel the thrill and joy of freedom throughout its timbers; for at the words it surged forward with a rush, as though it would take the bar at a flying leap. The white sands reached up from the bottom, and the

whole bar seemed to be rising up to hold the boat prisoner, as the water shoaled. But the little *Spray* kept on.

It hung for one brief, breathless moment almost balanced on the middle of the bar, and the white sands thought they had it fast; but the next moment it slid gently from their grasp, gave a sort of spring as it felt itself slipping free, and the next moment rode easily in clear water, just over the bar.

The next instant six exultant boys, their faces blazing with excitement and exertion, had scrambled aboard, falling over one another in their eagerness to seize the halyards.

They hoisted the sails on the *Spray* again in a way that would have made Captain Sam himself sing their praises, and now, with evening coming on, there was just enough breeze left in among the rocks to waft them gently along out of the inlet.

They watched breathlessly, as they neared the entrance to the outer bay, for a glimpse of the *Nancy Jane*; but the *Nancy Jane*, good boat though she was, was just a moment too late. Scarcely had they turned the little bluff and were hidden behind it, on their way whither they might choose, when the *Nancy Jane* rounded to at the entrance to the channel.

"It's all done," Captain Sam had exclaimed, as he threw the wheel of the *Nancy Jane* over and came up into the wind, but when he looked to see the *Spray*, she was not there. Not so much as a scrap of a sail nor the merest fragment of a hull, absolutely nothing.

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Captain Sam was so dumfounded he could only gasp and stare vacantly at the place where, by all rights, the *Spray* ought to be.

The colonel and the squire, who had no preconceived ideas about the passage between the islands, solved the problem at once; but not so the captain.

"They've gone through there, you idiot," exclaimed the squire, growing red in the face. "Where else can they be? They can't fly, can they?"

The captain groaned, as one whose pride had been cruelly smitten.

"To think," he muttered, "that I've sailed these waters, man and boy, for forty years, only to be fooled by a parcel of schoolboys from the city. Why, every boy in Southport knows you can't run a sailboat through between Heron and Spring Islands. There ain't enough water there at high tide to drown a sheep."

"Well, it seems they got through easy enough," answered the colonel.

"That's it! That's it!" responded the captain, warmly. "They do say as how fools rush in where angels don't durst to go, and sometimes the fools blunder through all right. And here's these boys gone and done what I'd a sworn a million times couldn't be done."

"Yes, and we probably can get through, too, if we only go ahead and try, instead of lying here

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like jellyfish," exclaimed the squire. "Cap'n Sam, seems as though you weren't so dreadful anxious to catch up with them youngsters as you might be. P'r'aps you might have told Mrs. Warren back there a few things that might explain this 'ere delay."

"Yes, and if them boys can go through there, I, for one, don't see what's to hinder us," chimed in the colonel. "Cap'n Sam, I don't see what we're a-hanging back for."

And so, his pride humbled, and too mortified to stand by his own better judgment, Captain Sam reluctantly yielded to their importunities, and pointed the nose of the *Nancy Jane* in toward the opening amid the rocks.

"It can't be done," he said, doggedly, "but if you say that I am not trying to do my duty as a sworn officer of the town, I'll just show you. Only don't blame me if we're hung up here hard and fast for twelve hours."

The *Nancy Jane*, like a horse that is being driven into danger that it somehow apprehends, seemed almost intelligent in its reluctance to enter the stretch of reef-strewn water. It bumped and scraped its way from one rock to another, balked at this ledge and that, and, finally, after an extra amount of pushing and pulling by the three men, jammed itself fast on a reef studded with barnacles and snail-shells, and refused to budge one way or another. In vain they tried to bulldoze and cajole, to push and to pull, to plead with and to denounce the obstinate *Nancy Jane*. Stolid and deaf alike to entreaty and expostulation, the boat squatted down upon the reef like an ugly fat duck, comfortably disposed for the night and refusing to be disturbed.

"I told you so!" roared the captain, now aroused to his rights as skipper, and finding himself thus exasperatingly vindicated as to the impassability of the channel. "We're hung up fast for the night, for the next twelve hours, till next flood. Then, if Lem Cobb is living in his fishing-shack on Spring Island, and will lend us a hand and a few pieces of joist to pry with, mebbe we'll get off, and mebbe we won't."

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The colonel and the squire boiled inwardly; but as it was apparent they had only themselves to blame, they felt it useless to engage in discussion with the indignant captain. So they wisely remained silent, and left him to consume his wrath alone.

"Well," he said, finally, "I for one am curious to see just where those young rascals are; and if you're of the same mind you can satisfy your curiosity by coming ashore with me." And the captain waded off to the rocks of Spring Island and clambered up the bank, closely followed by the colonel and the squire.

"There they go, slipping along as slick as eels," exclaimed the captain, as he and his panting companions achieved the ascent of the highest bit of rock on Spring Island and looked down the bay. "They're off down among the islands," he continued, "and here we stand like natural-born idiots and bite our fingers. If ever I get into a mess like this again, I'll resign my office of constable and hire out to Noddy Perkins for a clam-digger." But the colonel and the squire, too

angry and chagrined for words, stayed not to listen to the captain's denunciation.

They turned and walked rapidly in the direction of the fishing-shack, the only shelter the island afforded; while the captain, standing out in relief upon the rock, like some disappointed Napoleon, was the last solitary object that the boys saw as, looking astern from the *Spray*, the little island faded from their view into the twilight.

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CHAPTER XX. AMONG THE ISLANDS

The yacht *Spray*, with six jubilant boys aboard, sailed slowly away from Heron and Spring Islands, shaping its course for a group of outer islands of some considerable size, about two miles away. It was nearly seven o'clock, but the southerly breeze had not wholly died with the going down of the sun, and the tide, which had just begun to ebb, was favourable.

"I think we can get across to-night," said George Warren. "This wind is going to hold for some hours yet and maybe all night; and we know our way into Cold Harbour at any hour of the twenty-four. I don't think Captain Sam will start to run out of the Little Reach at all to-night, for when the tide drops there are some bad ledges all along that thoroughfare, and, besides, he won't want to run the risk of drifting out here in the bay, in case the wind should drop. We shall have twelve hours start of him, anyway, and once among the islands we can keep out of sight for days."

"I'd have given something to see the colonel and the squire when they found we had slipped away from them at the very moment they thought they had us," said young Joe. "Didn't they look funny, standing up there on the rock, watching us sail away?"

"Captain Sam has my sympathy," said Henry Burns, dryly, and the very thought of the disappointed trio arguing it out together sent the boys into fits of laughter. They fairly rolled over on the seats and hugged one another.

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"It's the richest joke of the season," said young Joe.

And so, for the time being, in their elation, the consciousness that they were runaways, fleeing from possible arrest, was forgotten. The stars came out, and a lighthouse far and near gave them their course. The water gleamed with phosphorescence, and the yacht *Spray* left a wake of gleaming silver and gold and flashing jewels. By and by the moon came up out of the sea and threw a radiant path across the waters, and the islands ahead stood out in huge black shadow.

It was glorious sailing, with the soft summer night air blowing in their faces; and they sang as they sailed, and yo-hoed all the sea choruses they knew, and felt so free and irresponsible that the yacht *Spray*, as though it absorbed

some of their spirit, rolled along in a merry, swinging fashion, rocking gently from billow to billow, dipping and tossing in time to the music.

The still shores of Eagle Island rang with their songs as they rounded to in Cold Harbour somewhere near midnight, and came to anchor close to shore in the deep water, within the shadow of the hemlocks that rose up, tall and black, almost from the water's edge, where the tide swashed gently against the rocks. High up in the thick branches of the great trees some fish-hawks, startled by the unwonted noise, rose up from their nests and uttered shrill, piercing screams of fright. And this was their only welcome, for on all the island there was no other sign of life.

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"It's fairly certain they won't pursue us to-night," said George. "But it won't do to be caught napping. We've got to set watch regularly every night now, and we might as well begin to-night. Somebody's got to walk out on the point of rocks yonder and look out for sails. Two will be enough till morning. We will split the time from now till six into two three-hour watches."

"I'll begin it," said Bob.

"My next," said Tom, not to be outdone by his chum.

Bob rowed ashore in the little tender, and set off at once for a point of rocks some half-mile distant, which commanded a view of the bay. The others were sound asleep by the time he was half-way there.

When Tom awoke, about seven hours later, it was broad daylight and the sun was streaming into the hatchway. He scrambled out in a hurry as Bob's voice hailed him from the deck.

"Hulloa! Hulloa!" came the voice. "Are you fellows going to sleep all day?"

"Why didn't you come back and rouse me to take my turn?" asked Tom, reproachfully.

"Well, I wasn't sleepy," answered Bob, "and it grew light soon, and I got to watching a mink fishing for his family, and carrying cunners to them along the rocks, and I thought I'd let you sleep. It's tough to wake up, you know, when one has just dropped off. Come on, we'll take a swim now. The water is fine."

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Tom bared a muscular young form, and he and Bob dived off the rail of the *Spray*, making such a splashing and commotion in the water and bellowing so like young sea-lions, that the others gave up trying to turn over for another nap, and came sprawling out of the cabin, diving overboard, one after another, to join them. Then they had a race ashore, which was won by Tom, with Bob and Henry Burns a close second; after which they lay on the beach sunning themselves, and then swam back to the yacht for breakfast.

"There's not a sail in sight, and the whole bay is as smooth as glass," Bob had announced on his arrival; and, as not a breath of wind was yet stirring, there was no need of setting watch for the present. So they all sat down to hot coffee and griddle-cakes, and ate like wolves.

After breakfast they went ashore to explore the island, roaming about like young savages, leaving their clothing piled in a heap in the tender. Every now and then, as the humour seized them, they raced down to the shore, wherever they were, ran along on the fine white beaches, and cooled themselves in the clear, still water.

They had it all to themselves, for nobody lived on this small island, the fishermen on the mainland or neighbouring larger islands coming over in the late summer only, to cut the grass and make the hay.

Then they went back to the tender and dressed, and Henry Burns, daunted at nothing, tried to climb one of the giant hemlocks to a fish-hawk's nest, but gave it up when the birds screamed in his ears and beat at him with their powerful wings.

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They had dug some clams at the low tide in the forenoon and put them away, covered with wet seaweed. Now, shortly after their noon luncheon, as the tide flooded, they got out the lines from a locker in the *Spray* and tried the fishing in Cold Harbour. There were plenty of small harbour fish, flounders out in the middle where the water was muddy, and cunners and small rock-cod in among the ledges. They soon caught a basket of these, cleaned them, and put them away, covered with seaweed, like the clams.

Then, toward the end of the afternoon, as the bay was still calm, they set out along the shore and gathered driftwood, which they threw in a great pile on a flat, clean ledge. As supper-time came, they set this heap afire and let it burn for an hour or two, until the great flat ledge was at a white heat. Then they made a broom of some branches of hemlock, and swept the ledge clean of ashes, and brought the clams and poured them out on the ledge, covering them all with clean, damp seaweed till there rose clouds of steam, and, after a time, an appetizing odour.

The fish they cooked in much the same way, wrapping them in big green leaves and setting them upon the hot stones to bake.

Then, as evening came on, they built the fire anew close by, for a fire is the cheeriest of companions in a strange place, and sat feasting on steamed clams and fish, with a great pot of coffee filling all the air with a most delicious fragrance. They lolled about the fire and ate, till even slim Henry Burns said he felt like an alderman. They told stories by the firelight, and stretched out at ease till sleep nearly overtook them as they lay there; for the day had been brimful of exertion. By and by, long after the stars were out, and a gentle breeze from the south, coming up softly from among the islands, just rippled the water, they rowed out to the *Spray*, Tom returning ashore again to begin the night's watch.

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Then, later in the night, came George Warren's turn to watch, and he stayed it out till morning, for, with all the fun of the day, there was something that would keep turning over and over in his brain, and which took away the sleepy feeling and left in its stead a feeling of unhappiness; a sense of something wrong. His

father would have said it was conscience, but George wrestled long and hard through the morning hours to avoid recognizing it as that, for conscience would say, if recognized, that it was all wrong, what they were doing,—and George Warren wanted to think he was having a good time.

These moody thoughts began to dissipate, however, with the coming of the warm golden glow in the east; and when the sun was at length up, and the boys had had their morning swim, and sat about a fire awaiting breakfast, George Warren seemed himself again.

But the breakfast was rudely interrupted by a series of whoops from young Joe, who had taken his brother's place on guard at the end of the point of rocks, and who now came running down alongshore, crying out that there was a sail that looked like the *Nancy Jane* coming out from around the islands across the bay, and they all raced back to have a look at it.

"It's the *Nancy Jane*, sure enough," said Henry Burns. "It's her big mainsail, with the high peak. She's making slow headway, though, with this breath of wind. However, we shall have to be off at once, if we are going to try to escape."

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It was noticeable that Henry Burns said "if."

However, as no one felt like proposing to give up, they lost no time in getting aboard the *Spray*, and had sail on and the anchor up in what Captain Sam would have called a jiffy. Heading out into the open bay that lay between them and the outer islands, they bade good-bye to Cold Harbour and began a long, slow beat to windward, in the light breeze.

"There's more wind coming, down between the islands," said Bob. "There's a line of breeze about two miles to the southward, and we shall catch it a good half-hour before the *Nancy Jane*."

"That's so; it will give us a fine start," said Arthur.

But, somehow, no one seemed wildly enthusiastic over their prospects. However, as they caught the fresher breeze, and the little *Spray* stood stiffly up into it and ate away to windward, their spirits rose. Then, as the islands came plainly into view and they drew nearer and nearer to the first, big Saddle Island, with its low range of little hills dropping down in the centre in the shape of a horse's back, the excitement became intense; for the *Nancy Jane* had not rounded the point of Eagle Island, and it seemed as though they might be out of sight behind Saddle Island before they could be seen by those aboard the pursuing yacht.

"Go it, old *Spray*! Good little boat!" cried young Joe, as the yacht glided swiftly up into the shadow of the island. "We're going to make it, and, once behind old Saddle, who's to know which way we have gone?"

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"Five minutes more of this sailing, and we shall fool Captain Sam once more," said Bob.

The five minutes were nearly up. They had but another leg to run to round the head of Saddle Island. They stood out till they had one and all

declared that they could clear it on the next tack; they were all ready to go about. George Warren stood with one hand on the tiller and the other ready to grasp the main-sheet. Joe and Arthur Warren were waiting impatiently to trim the jib-sheets, and then—and then George Warren took their breaths away.

All at once he jammed the tiller over, threw the *Spray* clear off the wind, let the main-sheet run, and before they scarcely knew what had happened, instead of standing in to round the head of Saddle Island, the little *Spray* was running dead before the wind and heading squarely back for the point around which the *Nancy Jane* must soon come in sight.

It was so quickly done that at first they thought there was some mistake, and Arthur and Joe and Bob rushed to the stern to help bring her around again; but George Warren, with a firm, set look on his face, stood them off.

"Oh, I say, George, you're not going to give it up now, are you?" cried young Joe, who had been in high spirits not a moment before.

"That's what," responded his brother, quietly. "I've thought it all out at last, and I've come to the conclusion we are doing the cowardly thing to run away. We have got to face the thing, and we may as well do it first as last. Besides, we didn't set out to run away when we started."

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"That's a fact," said Tom. "We have sort of drifted into this running away business without realizing what we were doing. Now the best thing we can do is to go back and have it out with Colonel Witham."

"It's not Colonel Witham that I hate to face," said George. "It's father and mother. And the part they'll feel worst about is that we did not stay and talk it over with them."

"That's so," added Arthur. "What a lot of loons we were to come down here."

"Shall I pull the centreboard up?" asked Henry Burns.

"You bet!" answered George Warren. "And we'll take a leaf out of your book, Henry, and we won't worry over what cannot be helped. We're doing the right thing now, anyway, so there's that much to feel good about."

"There's the *Nancy Jane*," said Henry Burns.

Sure enough, Captain Sam's pride was just turning the point, and Captain Sam, looking at the *Spray* coming down free and pointing its nose right at him, could hardly believe his eyes.

"It's them, all right," he assured the squire and the colonel. "They are coming back; tired of being runaways, I guess. Well, I thought they would get sick of it after a night or two away from home. They ain't the kind of boys to enjoy running away."

"Humph!" snorted the colonel.

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"They're a lot of young scamps and scapegraces," snarled the squire.

Getting aground and spending a night in a bed

that the colonel swore was stuffed with pig iron and seaweed had not improved their tempers.

"Well, anyhow," responded Captain Sam, "they are coming back of their own accord, and that is something in their favour."

The colonel and the squire only sneered.

Meanwhile the little *Spray* came running down the wind in merry style, and the end of the next hour found her swinging up into the wind, with sails flapping, while the *Nancy Jane* ran alongside.

The colonel and the squire were at last avenged.

Full of wrath was the one, and brimming with wrathful satisfaction was the other.

"So we have caught you at last, have we?" exclaimed Squire Brackett.

"We seem to have sort of caught ourselves, squire," answered George Warren.

"Well, never mind about being smart," said the colonel, hotly. "You are under arrest for burning my hotel down. Perhaps that will take some of the smartness out of you."

"Under arrest!" George Warren's face paled. "It isn't right," he added. "We didn't do it nor have any hand in it."

"Guess you won't attempt to deny that you were in the billiard-room, will you?" broke in Squire Brackett. "Because, bein' as I saw you all in there, it might not do you any good to swear as how you wasn't."

"Don't you dare accuse us of trying—" But young Joe got no further.

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"Be quiet, Joe," said George Warren, calmly. And then, turning to the colonel, he said:

"We are not going to deny anything, Colonel Witham. That is why we are coming back of our own accord. We have got nothing to conceal, and we are going to tell everything just as it happened."

"That is just about what we are arresting you for," said the squire, sneeringly. "We calculate you'll have to tell everything."

"Hold on there a minute, squire," cried Captain Sam. "Let's not be too hard on these boys. There may be some mistake, as they say. I hold these 'ere warrants, and I don't see as there is any necessity of serving of 'em just yet. If these boys will give me their word to go along straight as they can sail for Mayville, and agree to appear when wanted before Judge Ellis, why, I guess maybe the warrants will keep till—say, just as we go in the door. Or perhaps Judge Ellis will consent that they come before him of their own accord, without serving these warrants at all, considering as they are only boys."

It is needless to say that Captain Sam's legal experience was of the most limited sort.

"Bully for you, Captain Sam!" cried Bob. "You're a brick,—and you won't regret it." And a yell of thanks from the others gave Captain Sam a

warm glow under his blue shirt.

The squire and the colonel were loud and furious in their denunciation of such a course.

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"It's against the law," cried the colonel; and he vowed he would make it hot for Captain Sam when Judge Ellis found his orders were not obeyed. But Captain Sam knew better than they of the warm corner in the judge's heart, and knew, moreover, that his old friend of years, the judge, would never reprimand him for a breach of duty of this sort. So he shut his lips firmly and let the squire and the colonel boil away as best they might between themselves.

The captain shortened sail on the *Nancy Jane*, so that the two boats kept along near together, heading back for Southport.

It was a sorry crew aboard the *Spray* as the little craft silently followed in the wake of the *Nancy Jane*. They might have been in dreamland as they sailed all that day, for scarcely a word was spoken; and when night dropped down and the boys, all but George Warren, piled into the cabin to sleep, it was scarcely more quiet than by day.

Very late that night, as the *Spray* and the *Nancy Jane* ran into Southport harbour and brought up for a few moments alongside the wharf, to let a serious-looking man, and a tearful woman aboard, the boys were still sleeping soundly; and George Warren and his father and mother sat alone together till the sun rose, while the *Spray*, following the *Nancy Jane*, ran along up the island and then stood across to Mayville, where Judge Ellis would hold his court that morning.

"I don't need you to make any denial about the fire," Mr. Warren had said, when he stepped aboard the *Spray* and put his hand on his eldest son's shoulder. "I know you boys would not do such a thing as that; but I fear your recklessness has gotten you into serious trouble, and Colonel Witham seems inclined to press the matter to the extreme. So I want to hear everything from beginning to end."

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And George Warren told him all.

There was another boat coming sluggishly up the bay that night, far astern of the *Spray*, a handsome big sloop, beautifully modelled and with finely tapered, shining yellow spars. But she carried little sail, was reefed, in fact, though the breeze was very light; and she moved through the water so like a dead thing, or like a creature crippled by a wound, that a sailor would have seen at once that there had been some mishap aboard, some injury to hull or spars that held her back.

The youth at the wheel of this strange, big sloop bore a striking resemblance to Jack Harvey, though the yacht was not the *Surprise*, but bigger and far more elegant. And the crew—yes, they were surely Harvey's crew—George and Allan and Tim and Joe,—and they addressed the boy at the wheel as "Jack."

And the *Surprise*—where was she?

Four days had passed since, on that morning following the fire, the *Surprise* had turned the

point of the island that marked an entrance to the thoroughfare where, a half-mile to leeward, a big black sloop was coming fast up the wind.

"There he is!" Harvey had cried. "Come, boys, get into shape now; but stay below till I give the word,—all but you, Joe,—and when I yell you pile out and get aboard that sloop the quickest you ever did anything in all your lives. He will fight, and we have got to act quick."

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If the thick-set, ill-visaged man who sat at the wheel of the black sloop felt any concern at the sudden appearance of this new craft, dead ahead and coming down the narrow thoroughfare toward him, his alarm must have abated as on its near approach the apparent number of its occupants became disclosed.

"She looks harmless enough," he muttered, between his teeth. "Pshaw! There's only a couple of boys aboard. But it did give me a start for a moment." And he slapped a hand at his jacket pocket.

"He's taking long chances, if he did but know it," said Harvey, as the big sloop came about after a tack close in shore. "That boat cannot more than clear those ledges by an inch, if it does that. It's a regular stone field where he's sailing. The channel here winds like a cow-path in a pasture. However, if he can clear there, we can, so we'll begin to crowd him."

It was no easy matter now to close in on a boat beating across the thoroughfare and not arouse suspicion. To follow him, tack by tack, and point so as to head him off every time he went about, must inevitably put him on his guard long before the time came to strike, and might even allow him, by clever sailing, to slip by.

With his cap pulled down over his eyes, so that the stranger could not by any chance identify him as the youth he had knocked down in the pasture the night of the fire, and his head bent low, Jack Harvey watched the man's every move, and calculated every inch of the way.

"Three more tacks will bring him up to us," he said. "And there's shoal water to starboard and some ledges just beyond them. He's got to meet us about in that spot," and Harvey laid his own course according to his calculation and held to it steadily.

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It must have served to allay the man's suspicions, if he still had any, but now, as he came about on the third tack, he viewed the oncoming *Surprise* with anger.

"Keep away, there!" he cried, in a fierce, violent tone. "Keep off! Can't you see you're going to foul me if you don't keep off?"

"Ready to jump, now, Joe," said Harvey, in a low voice. "I'm going to run him down. It's the only way to be sure, though it may wreck us.

"Fellows," he called, softly, to the boys below, "all ready, now. You know what you've got to do the moment she strikes."

The man at the wheel had risen to his feet, and he shook one fist threateningly, while his other hand clutched the wheel, throwing his sloop off

as far as he could.

"Curse you!" he cried. "You're running me down. Keep off, I say, or I'll blow your stupid head off your shoulders."

The next moment Harvey, with a sudden turn of the tiller, threw the *Surprise* full tilt at the oncoming sloop. There was a sharp crash of splintering wood, the tearing of head-sails, and a shock that shook the yachts from keel to topmast, as the *Surprise* rammed the big black sloop just by the foremast stays, snapping her own bowsprit short off and making an ugly hole in her own planking.

Leaping just as the boats crashed, and holding a coil of rope on his arm, Joe Hinman landed on the top of the big sloop's cabin in the very midst of the confusion. A moment more and he had made a few quick turns about the mast, lashing the two yachts fast together at the moment when Harvey, followed by the rest of his crew, who came swarming out of the cabin, sprang aboard the strange sloop.

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"I'll shoot the first boy that steps a foot on this boat," cried the man; but the words were scarce out of his mouth before they were upon him. He had been in danger before and knew how to make the most of his chances, and he stood, desperate but cool, as they made their rush.

There was a shot, and Jack Harvey, who was leading, gave a cry of pain, for a bullet just grazed his left shoulder. He stumbled and fell full at the feet of the man as another shot was fired and young Tim thought his right hand was gone.

The next moment Harvey had the man by the legs, while Allan Harding and George Baker and Joe made a rush for him. The man fell heavily, Joe Hinman clinging with both hands to one wrist, so that he could not fire again. They rolled over and over in the cockpit for a moment, the boys and he. Twice the man got to his knees and twice they dragged him down again; till, at length, young Tim, whose hand was not shot away, but only slightly wounded, managed to run in and deal the man a blow with the end of an oar, which stunned him for a moment, so that they got him flat and had bound the loose end of a halyard about him before he came fully to his senses. Then, as they proceeded to complete the job and tie him fast, hand and foot, he recognized Harvey for the first time.

"Hulloa!" he exclaimed. "Why, where have I seen you before? You're not the chap in the pasture, are you?"

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"The same," said Harvey.

"Well, the game's up," said the man, coolly. "'Twas a mistake, and I knew it the moment after I had done it. I was a fool to hit you that night. It's my temper, that's what has beat me. It gets away from me sometimes. I dare say if I had gone along about my business you wouldn't have followed me, eh?"

"Probably not," answered Harvey. "That is why I am glad you knocked me down," and then, taking a quick glance over the side of the boat, he cried:

"Joe! Allan! George! Out with the sweeps, lively! We're going aground."

Harvey sprang to the wheel, hauling in on the main-sheet as he did so.

But it was too late. There was a gentle shock that shook the sloop from end to end, a dull, grating sound, and the next moment the big sloop rested firmly on a jagged rock of the reach, listing as she hung, and wrenching the bilge so that she made water rapidly.

"Whew!" cried Harvey. "Here's a mess. We're wrecked, and badly, too. How in the world are we ever going to get out of this?"

It was, indeed, a serious problem. The *Surprise*, her bow planks ripped open by the collision, had sunk within a few minutes, and now lay on bottom, with her deck covered. The big sloop, hard aground and full of iron ballast, was not a thing to be moved easily.

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"This is a scrape and no mistake," said Harvey. "Here we are, where a boat may pick us up in a day or a week, but more likely not for a week. We've got our man, but the reefs have got us. Well, we have got to figure out some way to get out of it ourselves."

But first they took account of their wounds, which had, now that the excitement was over, begun to sting and smart. They found that neither Harvey's nor Tim's wound was at all serious, mere surface flesh-wounds. The back of young Tim's hand was bare of skin for the length of three inches across, and Harvey's shoulder bled badly till it was cleansed and bandaged, but it was the price of victory, and they accounted it cheap. All of them had honourable scars of battle, bruises and scratches without number, and every one of them was proud of his, and wouldn't have had one less for the world.

Taking their prisoner, securely bound, they all rowed ashore to survey their surroundings, build a fire and get breakfast, and make plans for getting away.

"There's only one thing to be done," said Harvey, after they had finished breakfast and sat by the shore, surveying the wrecks of the yachts. "The *Surprise* is done for. We can't raise her. But the big sloop is not so badly hurt but what we can repair her, if we can only float her. The first thing we have got to do, when the tide goes out, is to get all that pig iron out of her, and that's a day's job, at the least. Then we may beach her at high tide and patch her up. It's a big contract, though."

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That day they brought the spare sails of the sloop ashore and pitched a tent with them; and, when the tide was low enough for them to work, they began the hard labour of lightening the big sloop of its ballast.

They worked all that tide like beavers, and by night the yacht was light. They camped on shore that night, standing watch by turns over their prisoner.

The next day at low water they found the worst of the leaks in the sloop, and made shift to patch them up temporarily with strips of canvas tacked

on and daubed with paint, which they found in the sloop's locker, and by recaulking some of the seams with oakum. By the next high tide, with hard pumping, she was sufficiently lightened to float clear of the reef, though still leaking badly, and they got her around to a clear, steeply shelving strip of beach, where they rested her more easily when the tide fell, and so could work on the repairs to better advantage.

Another night in camp ashore, and the next day they floated the sloop off again at high tide and loaded about half of her ballast in again.

"That will keep her right side up till we can get back to Southport," said Harvey. "I think we can make it, if we carry short sail, so as not to strain her and open up those places where we have patched her. We will try it, anyway, for I have half an idea that our running off so soon after the fire may have made talk about us, and the quicker we get back and put an end to that the better."

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So that afternoon they began their voyage home again, looking very serious as the mast of the yacht *Surprise*, sticking out of water, faded from their view, but swelling with pride and satisfaction as they peered in now and then at a form that lay secure on one of the cabin bunks.

They sailed all that night, for the breeze held fair and light, and by daybreak of the following morning they came into the harbour of Southport.

Harvey and Joe Hinman rowed ashore, soon after they came to their old moorings off the camp, to see how the land lay; but came back on the run in about twenty minutes, and made the water boil as they rowed out to the yacht.

"We're off for Mayville," cried Harvey. "We'll put on more sail, too, if it pulls the bottom out of her. Why, what do you think! Who's arrested for the fire?"

And he told the news, to the amazement of young Tim and George Baker and Allan Harding.

"I've got a score to pay to Tom Harris and Bob White," he exclaimed.

"Why, they saved your life, Jack," said young Tim.

"That's what," said Harvey. "I owe them one for that. Here's a chance to get square, if we can only make it in time."

"And only to think," muttered the man in the cabin, as he looked out at the stalwart but boyish figure at the wheel, "that I had that young fellow in the same boat with me at night in the middle of Samoset Bay! Well, if I had only done as I set out to, then, I wouldn't be here now, that's all. But how is a man to look ahead so far?"

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CHAPTER XXI.

THE TRIAL

What one man knew in Mayville was every man's property. Gossip always spread through the town like wildfire. So it happened that on the morning of the arrival of the *Nancy Jane* and the *Spray* there was a buzzing and a shaking of heads and a wagging of tongues; and before long the whole town knew that something of vast importance was about to take place up at Squire Ellis's court.

"It's those young fellows that set the hotel afire over across at Southport," said a certain tall, gaunt individual, who happened to be the centre of an excited group on one of the street corners, near the town pump. "I hear as how Squire Barker is going to defend them, but they do say he's got no case, because I heard Lem Stevens say as he heard Squire Brackett declare he saw them young chaps down in the billiard-room of the hotel along about midnight, and the fire started pretty quick after that."

"Well, guess they'll catch it if Squire Brackett is on their trail," volunteered another of the group. "He ain't given to showing kindness to anybody, much less to a lot of firebugs."

"I don't believe they ever done it, anyway," ventured a third. "They don't seem like that kind, from all I can learn, and they do say as how they pitched in and saved a lot of Colonel Witham's boarders from being burned in their beds, when the flames was a-spreadin' fast."

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And so the gossip waged, this way and that, while impatient knots of idlers hung around the entrance to Squire Ellis's court, waiting for ten o'clock, when proceedings should begin.

Shortly before the old town clock beat out the ten solemn strokes that proclaimed the formal sitting of justice, a whisper ran along the line of loiterers, "Here he comes. It's the judge." And that person of great importance, a short, thick-set man, with a quick, nervous step, an energetic, sharp manner, but, withal, a kindly eye, entered the court-room. The next moment the clock announced his punctuality.

The crowd swarmed into the court-room, stuffy and hot enough already, and the air vibrated with expectancy.

Proceeding up the long village street at this moment was a little group, headed by Captain Sam, not wholly unimpressed with the importance of his own part in the affair, the boys and Mrs. Warren following, and, not far in the rear, the colonel and the squire. Just as they reached the court-room door, Captain Sam halted the little party for a moment, and, not without reluctance, said: "Well, boys, I suppose I'll have to serve these 'ere warrants before we go inside. I'm free to say I'm sorry to do it, but they're the orders of this 'ere honourable court, and they must be obeyed by me, a sworn officer of the law."

And having disposed of this somewhat painful formality, Captain Sam opened the door and the party were in court.

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Presently they were joined by Squire Barker, a sober, elderly, clerical-looking lawyer, dressed in a somewhat rusty suit of black, serious-minded, whose lugubrious manner was not

calculated to infuse a spirit of cheer into hearts that were sinking.

The county attorney, who was to conduct the case for the people of the State, a youthful attorney, of comparatively recent admission to practice, bustled about as became a functionary with the burden of an important matter upon his shoulders.

The court-room, save for the buzzing of innumerable flies upon the uncleaned window-panes, was still as a church when His Honour announced that the court was now open for whatsoever matters the county attorney had to bring before it.

After the usual formality of acquainting His Honour officially of the matter in hand, which matter His Honour was already as much acquainted with as a thousand and one busy tongues of gossip could make him, the likewise formal answer of "Not guilty" was returned, and, without further delay, Colonel Witham was called to the stand.

The colonel, fully awake to his opportunity, took the stand rather pompously, thrust a well-filled, expansive waistband to the front, whence there dangled from a waistcoat pocket a ponderous gold chain, plentifully adorned with trinkets, in the handling of which, as he testified, a large seal ring on a finger of his right hand was ostentatiously displayed.

Yes,—in answer to questions,—he was the lessee of the Bayview Hotel on the 10th of September last, on which day it was burned to the ground; and, if he did say it, there was no better conducted hotel along the shores of Samoset Bay.

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Suggestion by His Honour that he please answer the questions as put, and reserve his own personal opinions and convictions to himself, received by the colonel with evident surprise and some little loss of dignity.

Then the colonel detailed, so far as he knew them, the events of the night of the fire; how he was first aroused by the cry of "Fire!" and how the first persons he encountered—within his very hotel, in fact—were the accused; how the smoke was even then pouring up from the basement windows, and that upon investigation he had found the whole basement floor to be on fire, so that it was already far beyond control.

Then there followed a detailed account of the fire, of the destruction of this section and that, and, finally, the utter collapse and ruin of the entire structure, with all that it had contained. The colonel did the scene full justice in his description, making an unmistakable impression on the minds of the assembled townsfolk.

Asked if he had seen any suspicious characters in or about the hotel on the day or night of the fire, the colonel said he had not; nor had any stranger who had not been subsequently accounted for come ashore from the steamers on that day.

Leaving at length the subject of the fire, County Attorney Perkins came down to the subject of the attempt to serve the warrants upon the boys

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at the camp and at the Warren cottage, the failure, the subsequent pursuit of the boys down the bay in the *Nancy Jane*, and the final surrender of the yacht *Spray* in the middle of the bay.

It was clear that this part of the evidence would have great weight with the court. After the attorney's questions he put several of his own, regarding the escape from Little Reach, and whether it must have been clear to the boys in the yacht that they were being pursued.

It was this testimony that made Mr. Warren breathe hardest, and put his hand to his head with a troubled look.

Squire Barker's cross-examination was brief, but he made two telling points, which might have their influence. One was, that the boys had been very brave on the night of the fire, and had undoubtedly saved many lives. This the colonel reluctantly had to admit. The other, and far more important point, was the bringing out that early on the morning of the fire the colonel had seen that the yacht *Surprise* was absent from her moorings, whereas the colonel had seen her lying there the afternoon preceding.

"Was it not common talk in the village that Harvey and his crew were missing the very morning after the fire?" inquired Squire Barker.

"It was," answered the colonel.

"And did you not see all of the accused about the village for the entire day following the fire?"

"Yes."

There was a buzz in the court-room, which indicated that this point had told.

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"And is it not true," continued Squire Barker, "that this Jack Harvey and his crew have not yet returned, are still missing?"

The colonel said he believed such was the case.

Asked why he had not secured their arrest, he responded that he felt sure he was on the right track, as he would prove by his witness, Squire Brackett.

And Squire Brackett, nothing loath, was the next witness. Having brought out, what everybody knew, that the squire was a property owner and a man of importance in his own village, the county attorney asked:

"And where were you shortly after midnight on the night of September 10th?"

"I was passing the Hotel Bayview on my way to the shore."

"What did you see as you neared the hotel?"

"I saw a light in the billiard-room window, and went to the window and looked in."

"Did you see any one in there?"

"I did."

"And who were they?"

"These accused," and the squire named in turn

each of the six boys and pointed them out in court.

They, feeling the eyes of all turned toward them, the awful stillness of the court-room for the moment following the squire's declaration, and oppressed more than ever by the hot, choking atmosphere of the stuffy little court, turned white and red by turns, wished that the floor would open beneath their feet and swallow them, and felt a burning sensation in their throats as though they were stifling.

"And how soon did you see flames coming up from the location of the hotel?"

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"I could not say exactly; it might have been half an hour. I was out in the bay in my sloop."

"Had you seen any suspicious characters in the village on that day?"

"I had not."

Then the squire also recounted the events of the pursuit of the yacht *Spray*, the escape through Little Reach, and the subsequent surrender of the boys.

From Squire Barker it was brought out, as in the testimony of the colonel, the fact that after Harvey and his crew in the yacht *Surprise* had suddenly set sail on the very morning of the fire, they had not been seen nor heard of since. This, the squire admitted, was common knowledge throughout the village.

Then there came to the stand Captain Sam, standing awkwardly, with a hard clutch on the rail in front of him, as if he were afraid of the court-house suddenly dipping and rolling on a breaker and spilling him overboard.

No, he had no objection to removing his tobacco in deference to the Court, and did so; but forgot that august presence before he had been testifying long, and took another and a bigger chew.

Did he know the accused?

Reckoned he did, with a haw-haw that shook the court-room.

Had he pursued them in his sloop the *Nancy Jane*, in an endeavour to serve the warrants?

He had, and they worked their boat like sailors, if he did say it.

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"And were you assisted in your pursuit by Colonel Witham and Squire Brackett?"

"Assisted!" drawled Captain Sam, and grinning from ear to ear. "Well, I dunno how much assisting you'd be pleased to call it, being as they were sick as a boy that had eaten a peck of green apples, and was sprawling around in the bottom of the boat like a couple of halibut just caught."

Which, being pronounced by Captain Sam with the utmost gravity, produced such a decided impression on the audience of fisher-people and sailor-folk, that there was a roar throughout the court-room, at which His Honour announced that any such further interruption would be

followed by the clearing of the room.

The squire and the colonel turned red in the face and looked rather foolish, inwardly wishing that Captain Sam was at the bottom of the bay.

Captain Sam, under further questioning, told again the story of that afternoon's sailing, mentioning casually that the colonel had requested to be set ashore when the *Nancy Jane* was out in the middle of the bay, which request, as Captain Sam explained, there being no land near by excepting that straight down under water, he was unable to grant.

Another titter through the court-room, the colonel and the squire blushing redder than ever.

It was embarrassing enough to Captain Sam to tell how he had put the *Nancy Jane* aground in Little Reach, for he knew there was scarce a man or boy within the sound of his voice who wouldn't vow to himself that, if he had been in Captain Sam's place, he would have known better. It was really mortifying.

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Squire Barker made the most of this, not because it could help his clients, but because it served in its way to put one of the people's witnesses in a ridiculous light, and because it gave him a chance to show how smart a cross-examiner he could be, thereby elevating himself in the eyes and admiration of his townsfolk.

"So you got aground where these young men took their boat through all right, did you?" queried Squire Barker.

"I got aground," snapped Captain Sam, sharply.

"And these young men took their boat through safe and sound?"

"I don't know," roared Captain Sam. "I didn't see them."

"But you saw them just a few minutes before that, didn't you?"

"Guess I did."

"And when you got to the entrance they were nowhere in sight, and therefore must have sailed through; they couldn't have dragged the *Spray* over the rocks?"

"Suppose not."

The colonel and the squire were rather enjoying this, and had plucked up spirits enough to titter with the rest at the discomfiture of Captain Sam.

"Then you tried to imitate these young men and go through as they did, but you didn't seem to know the channel, and so got aground?"

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"Channel!" roared Captain Sam, bellowing out the word in a rage and shaking a fist at the squire. "Channel, did you say? Haven't I told you there wasn't enough channel there to wash a sheep in? Didn't I tell these two thick-headed numskulls"—pointing to the colonel and the squire—"that we'd get aground if we went in there? And didn't they snarl at me like two old women, and accuse me of letting them 'ere boys get away? Didn't I know we'd get aground in

there, and didn't these two seasick old pussycats make me go ahead and do it?"

Captain Sam, beside himself with indignation, roared this out so his voice could be heard far out in the street. In vain the court rapped for order. The whole court-room was convulsed, and, finally, His Honour, overcome with the situation, leaned back in his chair and laughed too.

Only the colonel and the squire, the butt of all the merriment, looked alternately at the floor and the ceiling, and mopped their faces with handkerchiefs as red as their cheeks.

At length, when order was restored, Judge Ellis said: "Captain Sam, you are excused. You are in contempt of court. The case will proceed without testimony from you."

At which Captain Sam, feeling that he had in a measure vindicated his name and reputation, got down from the stand in a somewhat better frame of mind.

There followed several of the hotel guests, who had been duly summonsed to tell what they knew of the early stages of the fire, and whether they had seen any suspicious characters about the hotel or the village on that day. They made it very clear, together with the testimony of some of the villagers, that there had been no strange person seen in the town either on that day or the preceding or the following day, all of which argued, of course, that, if the fire was set, it was set by some one in the town, who was more or less known to every one.

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On the other hand, it was definitely established by Squire Barker that Harvey and his crew had set sail in the *Surprise* while the hotel was still blazing furiously, for there were two of the villagers who lived down the island several miles from the hotel who testified to seeing the *Surprise* beating down alongshore about daylight.

This was highly important, and yet the one essential thing was lacking, nor could it be supplied by any evidence at hand, that Harvey or any one of his crew had been seen about the hotel that night.

It was noon now, and time for recess. So His Honour announced an adjournment to half-past two that afternoon, and the crowd swarmed out-of-doors, leaving the flies in undisputed possession of the unclean windows.

It was hard for the boys to realize that at last they were under restraint; that they were not free to follow the crowd of villagers and their friends. The seriousness of the situation assumed an even more depressing aspect.

"Do you think he will hold them?" asked Mr. Warren, anxiously, of Squire Barker, as the little party, under the nominal charge of Captain Sam, sat in the anteroom of the court-house, trying to partake of a luncheon which had been provided, but for which nobody seemed to have any appetite.

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"Well, I can't say," answered the squire, wisely. "But I'm a little afraid of it. I'm just a little

afraid. You see, their getting into the hotel and being there just before the fire can't be denied. And I suppose that His Honour will hold that it was really breaking and entering to get into the hotel in the night-time in the way they did. And then, even though it may have been accidental, the setting the fire, still, as it followed and grew out of their unlawful act, they can be held for setting the hotel on fire."

This sentence, somewhat involved as it was, but delivered with sageness and an ominous shake of the head, set the boys to breathing hard, and more than one of them found himself swallowing a lump in his throat.

"But there isn't the slightest evidence that we set the fire," said young Joe.

"Yes," answered the squire; "there's what they call circumstantial evidence, and that is, the fact of your being in there just before it was discovered. It may not be enough to convict on, but the question that's bothering now is, will it be enough to hold you over on, and I'm bound to say it does look just a little bad. However, we won't give up. We'll fight it out to the last."

But just what there was to fight it out on, not one of them could for the life of him suggest.

The minutes, which seemed like hours, dragged wearily on, and the air in the stuffy little court-house seemed to grow denser and more unendurably stifling. One o'clock. Two o'clock. The hum of returning villagers became more loud. The hour for the resumption of the session was only thirty minutes away.

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Suddenly there was the sound of light, quick, nervous footsteps along the hallway, the door was pushed open, and in there bounced a little old lady, whose thin face beamed and flushed with excitement under a bonnet, fashionably but rather youthfully trimmed with bright flowers, dressed in a gown quaintly cut, but giving evidence of the means of the wearer, and bearing on one arm a small basket and in the other hand a chatelaine-bag.

"Why, it's Mrs. Newcome!" exclaimed Mrs. Warren, jumping up excitedly, and glad even of this interruption. "What can have brought you here?"

"Isn't this a wicked shame!" cried the little old lady, paying no attention to Mrs. Warren's question. "It's just the cruellest thing I ever heard of, bringing these boys here. I'll tell the judge that, too, if they'll let me. Where is that old scamp, Colonel Witham, and that old mischief-maker, Squire Brackett? If I don't give them a piece of my mind! I told Jerry about it all the way over, and you ought to have heard him growl. Here he is; just listen how angry he is."

And Mrs. Newcome, unfastening the cover of the basket which she had been carrying, disclosed to view the aforesaid Jerry, lying within on a cushion. The cat, in corroboration of his mistress's declaration, certainly did growl and snarl and then yowl dolorously; but whether as an endorsement of old Mrs. Newcome's indignation, or whether giving vent to his own at being whisked about in a basket on a boiling hot day, no one but he could say positively.

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"These boys didn't set that fire," snapped the old lady, decisively; "and I just want to do what I can for them. I couldn't leave Jerry behind. He gets so lonesome without me. So I brought him along. And now, Mr. Warren, I suppose you know I'm not the poorest person that comes down here to spend summers, and I've got some property around these parts, too—some land in this very town. And if there's any what-do-you-call-it to pay—"

"Any bail?" suggested the squire.

"That's it—bail. That's the word. If there's any of that to pay, I've got the securities right here," and Mrs. Newcome shook the chatelaine-bag vigorously.

"You are very kind," said Mr. Warren, amused in spite of himself. "But I'm hoping we shall not have need of bail."

But in the midst of it there came the ringing voice of the crier in the court-room adjoining, and the little party all filed into court again, old Mrs. Newcome bringing up the rear, with the basket on her arm, whence there emerged now and then a stifled wail, in spite of her whispered admonitions.

"We have closed our case," said the prosecuting attorney. And the defence was begun.

"George Warren!" called Squire Barker, and George, paling slightly at the ordeal, but doing his best to keep up a stout heart, took the stand.

He told his story with a frankness that was convincing, keeping nothing back; and at the close Squire Barker asked: "And did you, or did you see anybody else set a fire that night?"

"Certainly not," he answered. And there was no doubt that he had made a good impression.

But there were certain ugly facts that were made to stick out more embarrassingly on the prosecuting attorney's cross-examination.

"You will admit," he asked, "that you left on the second day following the fire, because you did not care to be questioned about it?"

"Yes, because we knew that our being in the hotel that night would look suspicious, if it were known," answered George Warren.

"Then you were going to conceal that fact, if you could?"

"Yes—I think we were—for awhile, at least."

"And so you ran away?"

"We didn't start out with the idea of running away."

"But you did run from the *Nancy Jane* when you found she was following and pursuing you?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I really can't tell you," said George Warren. "I realize now it was a foolish thing to do. But it was not because we were guilty."

"But you were all in the basement of the hotel a few moments before the fire started?"

"Yes, we were."

"That is all," said the prosecuting attorney, and George left the stand.

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Henry Burns, called next, did the best he could for his comrades.

"If it's anybody's fault, it's mine," he said. "You see, it was my suggestion that got us in there. I was the first to go inside, and the others came only after I had urged them."

But Squire Barker knew that this avowal, honest as it was, could not help them in the eyes of the law. So, having asked a few perfunctory questions, he turned the witness over to the prosecuting attorney. The latter brought out about the same points that he had made in the testimony of George Warren, and that was all.

It was quite clear that Squire Barker was only calling the boys from a sense of duty to them, to let them make the best impression they might upon the mind of the judge. It was the only suit he had to play.

Then followed Arthur and Joe, and at length Tom and Bob.

The squire was at the end of his resources now, as far as evidence could go. It remained but for him to do his duty in the minds of his clients and his townsmen, and he did it—to his own satisfaction, at least, in his address to the court. He painted the heroism of the boys at the fire in colours glowing as the flames. He enlarged upon the probability and the presumption of innocence. And he paid his respects to the colonel and the squire in a few stinging sentences that turned the eyes of the assembled audience upon them in indignation.

And when he was all done and the court-room turned with expectancy toward the prosecuting attorney, the latter simply said:

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"Your Honour, the people will submit their case without argument."

And so, with startling abruptness, the case had come to its crisis. There was nothing left but for the law to act.

There succeeded a deathlike stillness in the court-room. His Honour sat for some moments, with his eyes cast down upon his desk. He seemed loath to speak. Finally he arose and, with some effort, said, gently:

"In all my experience as attorney and as judge I have never before been placed in a position so distasteful to me nor so distressing. The case of these young men is most unfortunate. Their stories impress me as honestly told. Their characters are clearly such as are opposed to any such wanton destruction as is here alleged. And yet the circumstances are such that I should be blind to the duty of my office if I failed to hold them for trial. I hope that when their case shall come to trial this fall that they will have gathered evidence that shall show conclusively their innocence. In the meantime, deeply as I regret it, it becomes my painful duty to order

that they be held.”

Again an utter stillness in the court-room, broken only by the sobbing of a woman. The entire court-room waited silently for the next move, amazed at the suddenness of the conclusion. Six boys set their teeth hard and tried to look undismayed, but the face of each spoke only too plainly of his distress.

Then all at once the patter of feet broke the silence in the court-room, and a slight boyish figure, poorly dressed and unkempt, darted up the aisle, into the august presence of the court, and sought refuge in the seat next to that occupied by Mr. Warren.

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A court officer, who had been stationed at the door, lumbered in after the boyish figure.

“Officer,” cried Squire Ellis, irritably, “how came you to let this lad into the court-room? What does this mean? Put him out.”

“If you please, Your Honour,” said the officer, very red in the face, “I drove him away from the door once, but he dodged in past me again before I could stop him.”

“Remove him from the room at once,” said the court, sharply.

The officer advanced.

But Tim Reardon—for it was he—had in the meantime seized upon Mr. Warren, and, though labouring under an excitement so intense as almost to deprive him wholly of the power of speech, communicated something to him of the greatest importance. Mr. Warren, in turn, having repeated this communication to Squire Barker, the latter hastily arose.

“Your Honour,” he began, “this young man brings evidence of the most startling character, and which will, I am sure, reverse Your Honour’s decision. He—”

But here a sound from the street outside was borne in upon the court-room, which caused the squire to pause for a moment, while he and every person in the room listened in amazement.

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The noise outside increased, and now there came the sound of many voices, men and women and boys and girls shouting out some piece of news, and then a loud cheering. The tumult rapidly grew, until it seemed as if all in a moment the entire village was marching upon the court-house.

Despite the loud rapping for order of the court officers and the sharp order of the court for silence, many in the court-room rushed to the windows and looked out. A strange sight met their eyes. A procession was coming up the street, in the midst of which, his hands bound behind his back, a man was walking, while, grasping him by either arm as they walked beside him, were Jack Harvey and Joe Hinman.

Into the court-room the procession burst like an avalanche. The room had seemed somewhat crowded before, but now at least fifty or sixty more men wedged themselves in, with Harvey and his crew and the strange man still in the centre of them. The rest of the crowd that

followed, not being able to force themselves into the court-room, seated themselves on the stairs just outside, and formed a long line out into the street.

His Honour, powerless to stay this astonishing inrush of the townspeople, waited till the crowd had resolved itself into something like order, and then, rapping for silence, demanded to know the cause of this invasion of and assault upon the dignity of the court.

There was a moment's silence and delay, and then a broad-shouldered youth pushed his way through the crowd and walked toward the witness-stand.

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"Here!" cried His Honour. "Officer, stop that young man. Let the business of this court proceed in its regular order. Mr. Barker, does the court understand that you ask to have the case reopened on the ground of newly discovered evidence?"

"Yes, Your Honour," replied the squire, gravely.

"And this young man, do you wish to make him your witness?"

"I do, Your Honour," answered Squire Barker. "Although I am not certain as to just what he has to testify to, I wish to have him made our witness."

"State your name to the court," said Squire Barker, as the youth ascended the witness-stand.

"Jack Harvey."

"And am I correctly informed that you have important testimony to give before this court in this case?"

"I have the man that set the fire," replied Harvey.

"And can you produce him?"

"He is here in this room," answered Harvey.

And at this moment the crowd parted and allowed to pass a man who walked doggedly forward, with eyes downcast, hands firmly bound behind his back, while with him walked the remaining members of Harvey's crew.

"Is this the man whom you say set the fire?" queried Squire Barker.

"Yes," said Harvey.

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"And how do you know he set the fire?"

"He's confessed it, because he knew there was no way out of it for him. Haven't you?" demanded Harvey, turning to the man.

The other nodded his head sullenly.

The uproar that greeted this acknowledgment was deafening. It was several moments before order could be restored in the court-room, and then the news borne rapidly to those outside gave rise to a second tumult, which again stopped the proceedings of the court.

Then, when order had been finally restored, Harvey narrated the extraordinary events that

had followed the meeting of the man in the pasture, down to his capture and confession; a confession that included the admission that he was none other than the man Chambers, and that he had set fire to the hotel for revenge.

There never was anything like the scene that followed in all the history of court procedure in the county from time out of mind. It did not take the court long, however, to declare that the youthful prisoners, whom he had felt it his solemn duty to hold for trial, were honourably cleared, and were free to go at liberty. It did not take long, considering the fact that the prisoner pleaded guilty, to hold him for trial. Nor did it take long for good-hearted Judge Ellis to descend from the bench and shake hands with the boys, each and every one of them, and congratulate them upon their complete exoneration.

Once outside the court-room, however, what a storm and tumult of congratulation awaited them. The first thing they knew there was a rush for them, and up on the shoulders of a crowd of excited fishermen they went, and were borne along, amid cheering. And Harvey, too, though he struggled against it, was borne aloft, while the news of his brave capture of the man Chambers was shouted out to all in the town.

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In the midst of it all two figures were espied, slinking along toward the boat-landing, anxious to escape notice. A din of yells and catcalls and hisses told them they were discovered, and the colonel and the squire, sorry pictures of dismay and humiliation, quickened their steps and made their escape, thankful enough to escape unharmed from the indignant villagers.

"Harvey," said George Warren, as he stood grasping the other's hand about two hours later, as the boys formed a little group on the deck of the steamer that was heading for Southport, "you have more than evened the thing up. Tom and Bob saved you from drowning; but you have saved us all from disgrace, and I'm not sure but what I'd rather drown than go through a disgraceful ordeal like this again."

"No," said Harvey, clasping the hand of the other warmly. "I'm still the one that's in debt. They saved me from more than drowning. They saved me from disgrace, too."

"Let's call it even, anyway," said Henry Burns, "and shake hands all around."

Some weeks later, as Henry Burns and George Warren sat on the veranda of the Warren cottage, looking out across the cove, a graceful yacht turned the headland and came up into the harbour.

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"She looks familiar," said Henry Burns. "Where have we seen her before? Why, it's the *Eagle*, or the *Sprite*, or whatever her real name may be. I wonder what she's doing here. She was seized by the county and her owners advertised for. I wonder if they can have been discovered."

"Let's go down and take a look at her," said George Warren. "She is the prettiest thing that ever came into this harbour."

As they walked down to the shore a boat put off

from the yacht and a man pulled in to land.

"Can you tell me where I can find either Henry Burns or Jack Harvey?" he inquired, addressing the two boys.

"I don't know about Harvey," answered Henry Burns, "but I can inform you about the other person. What do you want of him?"

"Here's a note for you, if you mean that you're Henry Burns," said the man.

"That's funny," said Henry Burns. "It's the first note I've got since I've been here. I wonder who can have written it."

Henry Burns deliberately tore open the envelope and unfolded a letter. He glanced hastily at the contents, stopped short, and gave a cry of surprise.

"George," he said, solemnly, "will you hit me once, good and hard, so I can tell whether I am dreaming or not?"

"I hardly think there's any need of that," answered the other, laughing. "You seem to be about as wide-awake as usual."

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"Well," said Henry Burns, "if you won't hit me, just read that letter to me aloud, anyway. Perhaps I'll believe it if I hear you read it."

"It seems to be addressed to you and Jack Harvey both," said George Warren. "Perhaps I need his permission, too, to read it."

"No you don't. Go ahead," demanded Henry Burns.

The letter read as follows:

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"MAYVILLE.

"HENRY BURNS AND JACK HARVEY,

*"My dear Young Men:—*You have each of you proved yourselves heroes in the events of the last few weeks. To you, Henry Burns, I am indebted for the rescue of my devoted Jerry, my pet and companion of many years. To you and your companions, I am, indeed, indebted for my own life. To you, Jack Harvey, I am indebted for the saving from disgrace of these young friends of mine. As you may know, the yacht captured from the man Chambers was condemned by the county officials, advertised, and finally put up at auction and sold, her former owner, if there ever was another besides Chambers, not having claimed her. She was, I am informed, a very expensive boat; but as there were few bidders among the fishermen, I was enabled to bid off the boat at a figure easily within my means. This letter is to inform you that I have presented the yacht to you, to be owned equally by you two. The papers will be made out later and sent to your parents or guardians. Hoping that you will enjoy many happy days aboard her, I remain,

"Sincerely yours,

"ANNA NEWCOME.

"P. S. Don't upset her and get drowned."

"Henry, old fellow," cried George Warren. "Let

me congratulate you. You are the two luckiest—”

But Henry Burns was running as fast as his legs could carry him in the direction of Harvey’s camp.

THE END.

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The Farrier's Dog and His Fellow.

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An account of the adventures of four children and their pet dog on an island, and how they cleared their brother from the suspicion of dishonesty.

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The Hunter of the Pine Gloom

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The Return to the Trails

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The King of the Golden River: A

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Written fifty years or more ago, and not originally intended for publication, this little fairy-tale soon became known and made a place for itself.

A Child's Garden of Verses.

By R. L. STEVENSON

Mr. Stevenson's little volume is too well known to need description. It will be heartily welcomed in this new and attractive edition.

Transcriber's Notes

- 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.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE RIVAL CAMPERS; OR, THE ADVENTURES OF HENRY BURNS

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