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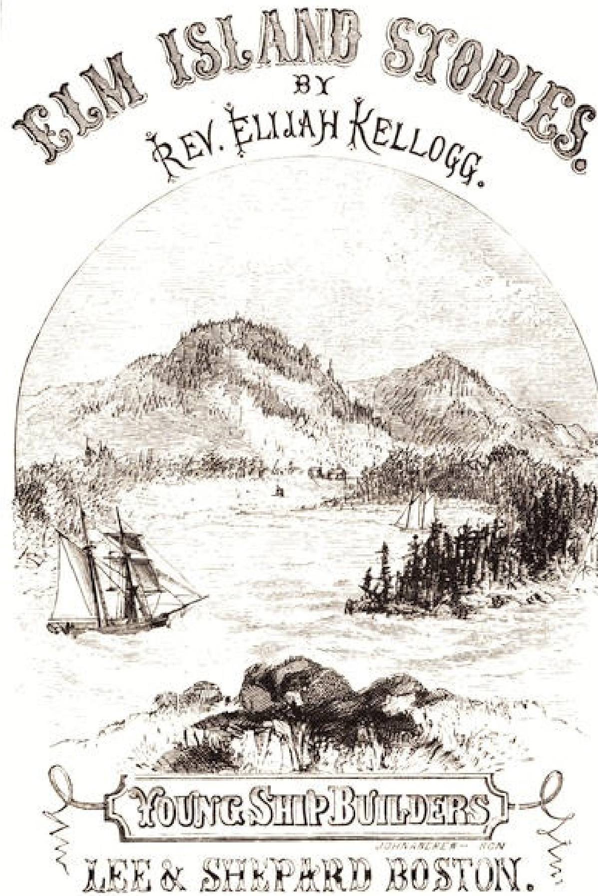
The Disaster to the West Wind. Page 67.



ELM ISLAND STORIES.

THE YOUNG SHIP-BUILDERS OF ELM ISLAND.

BY

REV. ELIJAH KELLOGG,

AUTHOR OF “LION BEN OF ELM ISLAND,” “CHARLIE BELL OF ELM

ISLAND,”
“THE ARK OF ELM ISLAND,” “THE BOY FARMERS OF ELM ISLAND,” “THE HARD SCRABBLE OF ELM ISLAND,” ETC.

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PREFACE.

The natural progress of this series has brought us to a period in the history of our young friends, when, instead of labors in a measure voluntary, pursued at home, amid home comforts, they toil for exacting masters or the public, enter into competition with others, feel the pressure of responsibility, learn submission, and are tied down to rigid rules and severe tasks. The manner in which they meet and sustain these new and trying relations shows the stuff they are made of; that the fear of God in a young heart is a shield in the hour of temptation, the foundation of true courage, and the strongest incentive to manly effort; that he who does the best for his employer does the best for himself; that the boy in whose character are the germs of sterling worth, and a true manhood, will scorn to lead a useless life, eat the bread he has not earned, and live upon the bounty of parents and friends.

ELM ISLAND STORIES.

1. LION BEN OF ELM ISLAND.
2. CHARLIE BELL, THE WAIF OF ELM ISLAND.
3. THE ARK OF ELM ISLAND.
4. THE BOY FARMERS OF ELM ISLAND.
5. THE YOUNG SHIP-BUILDERS OF ELM ISLAND.
6. THE HARD-SCRABBLE OF ELM ISLAND.

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THE YOUNG SHIP-BUILDERS
OF
ELM ISLAND.

CHAPTER I.

LEARNING A TRADE.

The question, What shall I do in life? is, to an industrious, ambitious boy, desirous to make the most of himself, quite a trying one.

Thoughts of that nature were busy at the heart of John Rhines; he now had leisure to indulge them, as, upon his return from Elm Island, he found that the harvesting was all secured, and the winter school not yet commenced. The whole summer had been one continued scene of hard work and pleasurable excitement. Missing his companions, being somewhat lonesome and at a loss what to do with himself, he would take his gun, wander off in the woods, and sitting down on a log, turn the matter over in his mind. At one time [10] he thought of going into the forest and cutting out a farm, as Ben had done; he had often talked the matter over with Charlie, who cherished similar ideas. Sometimes he thought of learning a trade, but could not settle upon one that suited him, for which, he conceived, he had a capacity. Again, he thought of being a sailor; but he knew that both father and mother would be utterly opposed to it. While thus debating with himself, that Providence, which we believe has much to do with human occupations, determined the whole matter in the easiest and most natural manner imaginable. John Rhines, though a noble boy to work, had never manifested any mechanical ability or inclination whatever. If he wanted anything made, he would go over to Uncle Isaac and do some farming work for him, while he made it for him.

It so happened, while he was thus at leisure, that his father sent him down to the shop of Peter Brock with a crowbar, to have it forged over. (The readers of the previous volume well know that Ben, when at home, had tools made on purpose for him, which nobody else could handle.) This was Ben's bar. Captain Rhines had determined to make two of it, and sent it to the shop with orders to [11] cut it in two parts, draw them down, and steel-point them. John, having flung down the bar and delivered the message, was going home again, when Peter said,—

"Won't you strike for me to draw this down? It's a big piece of iron. My apprentice, Sam Rounds, has gone home sick; besides, when I weld the steel on, I must have somebody to take it out of the fire and hold it for me, while I weld it."

"I had rather do it than not, Peter. I want something to do, for I feel kind of lonesome."

Stripping off his jacket, he caught up the big sledge, and soon rendered his friend efficient aid.

"There's not another boy in town could swing that sledge," said Peter. "Do you ever expect to be as stout as Ben?"

"I don't know; I should like to be."

"Are you done on the island?"

"Yes."

"They say you three boys did a great summer's work."

"We did the best we could."

"I know that most of the people thought it wasn't a very good [12] calculation in your brother Ben to go off and leave three boys to plan for themselves, and that there wouldn't be much done—at any rate that's the way I heard them talk while they were having their horses shod."

"That was just what made us work. If a man hires me, and then goes hiding behind the fences, and smelling round, to see whether I am at work or not, I don't think much of him; but if he trusts me, puts confidence in me, won't I work for that man! Yes, harder than I

would for myself. But what did they say when they came home from husking?”

“O, the boot was on the other leg then; there never was such crops of corn and potatoes raised in this town before on the same ground. Has your father got his harvest in?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I’ve got a lot of axes to make for the logging swamp; my apprentice has got a fever; I must have some one to strike; I tried for Joe Griffin, but he’s going into the woods, and Henry too; why can’t you help me?”

“I don’t know how.”

“All I want of you is to blow and strike; you will soon learn to strike fair; you are certainly strong enough.”

“Reckon I am. I can lift your load, and you on top of it.” [13]

“Well, then, why can’t you help me? I’m sure I don’t know what I shall do.”

“If father is willing, I’ll help you till school begins.”

The result was, that John, in a short time, evinced, not only a great fondness, but also a remarkable capacity for the work, made flounder and eel-spears, clam-forks, and mended all his father’s broken hay-forks and other tools.

John worked with Peter till school began. The day before going to school, he went to see Charlie, as passing to and from the island in winter was so difficult they seldom met.

To the great surprise of Charlie, Ben, and Sally, who never knew John to be guilty of making anything, he presented Charlie with two iron anchors for the Sea-foam, with iron stocks and rings complete, and Ben with an eel-spear and clam-fork, very neatly made.

“What neat little things they are!” said Charlie, looking at the anchors. “Where did you get them?”

“Made them,” replied John, “at Peter’s shop.”

“Why, John,” said Ben, “you’ve broken out in a bran-new place!”

[14] John then told him that he had been at work in the blacksmith’s shop, how well he liked it, and that, after school was out, he meant to ask his father to let him learn the trade.

“John,” said Ben, “Uncle Isaac, Joe Griffin, and myself have been talking this two years about going outside gunning. If I go, I want to go before the menhaden are all gone; for we shall want bait, in order that we may fish as well as gun. It is late now, and the first north-easter will drive the menhaden all out of the bay.”

“I heard him and Joe talking about it the other day; they said they calculated to go.”

“Well, tell them I’m ready at any time, and to come on, whenever they think it is suitable.”

John and Charlie went to the shore to sail the Sea-foam,—a boat, three feet long, rigged into a schooner,—and try the new anchors. While they were looking at her, Charlie fell into a reverie.

“Didn’t she go across quick, that time, Charlie?”

No reply.

“Charlie, didn’t she steer herself well then?”

Still no answer.

“What are you thinking about, Charlie?”

“You see what a good wind she holds, John?”

“Yes.”

“And how well she works, just like any vessel?” [15]

“Well, then, what is the reason we couldn’t dig out a boat big enough to sail in, and model her just like that? These canoes are not much better than hog’s troughs.”

“It would take an everlasting great log to have any room inside, except right in the middle.”

“We could dig her out very thin, and make her long enough to make up for the sharp ends.”

“It would be a great idea. I should like dearly to try it.”

The boys now went to bed and talked boat till they worked themselves into a complete fever, and were fully determined to realize this novel idea; for, as is generally the case in such matters, the more they deliberated upon and took counsel about it, the more feasible it seemed; then they considered and magnified the astonishment of Fred and Captain Rhines when they should sail over

in their new craft, and finally settled down into the belief that, if they realized their idea, it would not fall one whit short of the conception and construction of the Ark herself.

But the main difficulty—and it was one that seemed to threaten failure to the whole matter—was, where to obtain a log, as one of sufficient size for that purpose would make a mast for a ship of the line, and was too valuable, even in those days, to cut for a plaything, as it was by no means certain that she would ever be anything more: there were indeed trees enough, with short butts, large enough for their purpose, had they wanted to make a common float, or a canoe, with round ends, like a common tray; but, as they were to sharpen up the ends vessel fashion, give her quite a sharp floor, and take so much from the outside in order to shape her, it was necessary that the tree should be long, as well as large, to be recompensed by length for the room thus taken from the inside, and leave sufficient thickness of wood to hold together. [16]

While Charlie was debating in his own mind whether to ask his father to permit him to cut such a tree, John, with a flash of recollection that sent the words from his lips with the velocity of a shell from a mortar, exclaimed, jumping up on end in bed,—

"I have it now! there's a log been lying all summer in our cove, that came there in the last freshet, with no mark on it, more than thirty feet long, and I know it's more'n five feet through: it's a bouncer, I tell you; but it's hollow at the butt, and I suppose that's what they condemned it for; but I don't believe the hollow runs in far. It's mine, for I picked it up and fastened it." [17]

"But you are going to school. You can't help me make it; and we should have such a good time. It is too bad!"

"Well, I can do this much towards it. I don't care a great deal about going to school the first day; they won't do much. I'll help you tow it over, and haul it up; and if you don't get it done before, when school is done, I'll come on, help you make sugar, and finish the boat."

"Then I won't do any more than to dig some of it out. I won't make the outside till you come."

In the morning they went over to look at it, and found the hollow only extended about four feet. It was afloat and fastened with a rope, just as John had secured it in the spring. They towed it home without attracting notice, as they considered it very important to keep the matter secret till the craft was completed.

"Then," said Charlie, "if we should spoil the log, and don't make a boat, there will be nobody to laugh at us."

Putting down skids, they hauled it up on to the grass ground with the oxen, and, with a cross-cut saw, made it the right length. As all above the middle of the log had to be cut away, and was of no use to them, it was evident, that if they could split it in halves, the other half would make a canoe, clapboards, or shingles. [18]

"This is a beautiful log," said Charlie. "It is too bad to cut half of it into chips. It is straight-grained and clear of knots; we will split it."

"Split it!" said John; "'twould take a week!"

"No, it won't. We can split it with powder."

"I never thought of that."

They bored holes in the log at intervals of three feet, filled them part full of powder, and drove in a plug with a score cut in the side of it. Into this they poured powder, to communicate with that in the hole. They then laid a train, and touched them all at once, when the log flew apart in an instant, splitting as straight as the two halves of an acorn.

"I'll take the half you don't want, boys," said Ben, who, unnoticed, had watched their proceedings; "it will make splendid clapboards."

During the winter, on half holidays, and at every leisure moment, John Rhines was to be found at the blacksmith's shop. At length he could contain himself no longer, but went to his father and asked permission to learn the blacksmith's trade of Peter. John anticipated a hard struggle in obtaining his father's consent, if indeed he obtained it at all, as there was a large farm to take care of, plenty to do at home, and enough to do with. But Captain Rhines, who had always said, if a boy would only work steadily, his own inclinations should be consulted in choice of occupation, was so rejoiced to find he didn't want to go to sea, of which he had always been [19]

apprehensive, that he yielded the point at once.

“It is a good trade, John,” said he, “and always will be; but I wouldn’t think of learning a trade of Peter.”

“Why not, father?”

“Because he’s no workman; he’s just a botcher.”

“Who shall I learn of?”

“I’ll tell you, my son; go to Portland and learn to do ship-work; there’s money in that; ship-building is going to be the great business along shore for many a year to come. You’ll make more money forging fishermen’s anchors, or doing the iron-work of a vessel, in one season, than you would mending carts, shoeing old horses and oxen, making axes, pitchforks, and chains in three years. My old friend, Captain Starrett, has a brother who is a capital workman, a finished mechanic, learned his trade in the old country—and his wife is a first-rate woman; she went from this town. I’ll get you a chance there.”

Captain Rhines went to Portland in the course of the winter, and secured an opportunity for John to begin to work the first of May.

CHAPTER II.

GUNNING ON THE OUTER REEFS.

Ben thought it was now a favorable time to do something to the house, and made up his mind to speak to Uncle Isaac and Sam when they came on for their gunning excursion, in order to obtain the aid of one to do the joiner, and the other the mason work, for he and Charlie could do the outside work. While preparing the cargo of the Ark, Ben had laid by, from time to time, such handsome, clear boards and plank as he came across, which were now thoroughly seasoned, having been kept in the chamber of the house. He also had on hand shingles and clapboards.

They now began to remove the hemlock bark from the roof, and replace it with shingles. To work with tools, to make something for his father and mother, was ever a favorite employment of Charlie.

Aside from this, his great delight was to make boats; his house under the big maple was half full of boats, of all sizes, from three [22] inches to two feet long. As he sat by the fire in the evenings, he was almost always whittling out a boat. When he went to Boston, in the Perseverance, he sought the ship-yards and boat-builders’ shops. He had a boat on each corner of the barn, one on the top of the big pine, and one on the maple, besides having made any number for John, Fred, and little Bob Smullen.

He was now greatly exercised in spirit in respect to the boat he was to make from the big log. He had resolved to make a model, and then imitate it, and was racking his brain in respect to the proportions; for he was very anxious she should be a good sailer.

He had not a moment to spare while they were shingling the house, it being necessary to do it quickly, for fear of rain; but the moment the roof was completed, he hid himself in the woods, and with blocks set to work upon the model.

While thus busied, he recollected having heard Captain Rhines say, that if anybody could model a vessel like a fish, it would sail fast enough. He thought a mackerel was the fastest fish within his reach.

“There are mackerel most always round the wash rocks,” said he. [23] “I’ll model her after a mackerel.”

The next morning, just before sunrise, he was off the reef, in the “Twilight,” and succeeded in catching three mackerel and some rock-fish. Not wishing any spectators of his proceedings, he hid the biggest mackerel in some water, to keep him plump, took the others, and went in to breakfast. He next took some of the blue clay from the bed of the brook, that was entirely free from stones and grit, and would not dull a razor; and, mixing it with water and sand, till it was of the right consistence, put it into a trough. Into this paste he carefully pressed the fish; then he took up the trough, and, finding a secret place at the shore, where the sun would come with full power, he placed it on the rocks, and sifted sand an inch thick over the clay and fish, and left it to harden.

In the course of three days, he found the fish had putrefied, and the clay gradually hardened under the sand without breaking. He now swept off the sand, exposing it to the full force of the sun till it was completely dry; then he made a slow fire, and put the trough and clay into it, increasing the heat gradually till he burned the trough away, and left the clay with the exact impress of the [24] mackerel in it, as red and hard as a brick.

“There’s the shape of the mackerel, anyhow,” said Charlie, contemplating his work with great satisfaction; “but how I’m going to get a model from it is the question; however, there is time enough to think of that between this and spring.”

He deposited his model in his house under the great maple, and devoted all his time to helping his father improve the appearance of the house.

Our readers will recollect that the logs, of which the house was built, were hewed square at the corners and windows; so Ben and Charlie just built a staging, and, stretching a chalk line, hewed the whole broadside from the ridge-pole to the sill square with the corners. They accomplished this quite easily at the ends, but on the front and back it was more difficult to hew the top log under the eaves; but they worked it out with the adze.

Originally the house had but two windows on a side, and, as these were on the corners to admit of putting in others, it looked queer enough. They now cut out places for two more in a side, and intended, after having smoothed the walls, to clapboard them; but their work was interrupted for the time by the arrival of Uncle Isaac, Joe Griffin, Uncle Sam, and Captain Rhines, to go on the long-talked-of gunning excursion. [25]

"I don't see," said Uncle Isaac, "how you do so much work; I think it is wonderful, the amount you and this boy have done since we were here."

"There's one thing you don't consider," said Ben: "a person here is not hindered; there's not some one running in and out all the time, and he is not stopping to look at people that go along the road; he's not plagued with other people's cattle, and don't have to fence against them; he's not out evenings visiting, but goes to bed when he has done work, and the next morning he feels keen to go to work again. It's my opinion, if a man is contented, he will stand his work better, live longer, and be happier, on one of these islands than anywhere else."

As they were to start at twelve o'clock at night, they went to bed at dark. Captain Rhines slept on board the vessel, as he could wake at any hour he chose. He was to call the others if the weather was good; if not, they were to wait for another chance. It was bright moonlight; a little wind, north-west, just enough to carry them along, and perfectly smooth. The place to which they were bound was an outlying rock in the open ocean, more than seven miles beyond the farthest land, upon which, even in calm weather, the ground swell of the ocean broke in sheets of white foam, and with a roar like thunder; but when a strong northerly wind had been blowing for a day or two, it drove back the ground swell, and when the northerly wind in its turn died away, there would be a few hours, and sometimes a day or two, of calm, when there was not the least motion, and you might land on the rock; but it was a delicate and dangerous proceeding, requiring great watchfulness, for although there might be no wind at the spot, yet the wind blowing at sea, miles distant, might in a few moments send in the ground swell and cut off all hope of escape. As the north wind made no ground swell, the rock could be approached on the south side, even when a moderate north wind was blowing. [26]

They were familiar with all these facts, and had accordingly chosen the last of a norther, that had been blowing two days, and was dying away.

Some hours before day they arrived at the place—a large barren rock, containing about three acres, with a little patch of grass on the highest part of it, and a spring of pure water, that spouted up from the crevices in the rock; a quantity of wild pea vines and bayberry bushes were growing there, among which, in little hollows in the rock, the sea-gulls laid their eggs, without any attempt at a nest. [27]

As they neared the rock, they sailed through whole flocks of sea-birds; some of them, asleep on the water, with their heads beneath their wings, took no notice of them; others, as they heard the slight ripple made by the vessel's bows, flew or swam to a short distance, and then remained quiet.

Not a word was spoken save in whisper, when, at a short distance outside the rock, the sails were gently lowered, and the anchor silently dropped without a splash to the bottom. The "decoys," that is, wooden blocks made and painted in imitation of sea-birds, and the guns, were put into the canoe, and landing in a little cove, they gently hauled the canoe upon the sea-weed, and anchored their decoys with lines and stones a little way from the rock, so as to present the appearance of a flock of sea-fowl feeding, and, lying down, awaited daybreak.

The sea-fowl lie outside during the night, but as the day breaks they begin to fly into the bay after food and water, and when they see the decoys, they light down among them and are shot; they are also shot on the wing as they fly over; and in those days they were very numerous among all the rocks and islands. [28]

It was a terribly wild and desolate place; the tide at half ebb revealed the rock in its full proportions; on the shore side it ran out into long, broken points, ragged and worn, with innumerable holes and fissures, fringed with kelp, whose dark-red leaves, matted with green, lay upon the surface of the water; while on the ocean side, the long, upright cliffs dropped plump into the sea, and were

covered with a peculiar kind of sea-weed, short, because, worn by the ceaseless action of the waves, it had no time to grow: all impressed the mind with a singular feeling of loneliness and desolation.

These hardy men, born among the surf, and by no means given to sentiment, could not repress a feeling of awe, as they lay there silent, and listened to the roar of the sea, that rolled in eddies of white foam among the ragged points, being raised by the north wind, while on the other side there was not a motion.

There is something in the hoarse roar of the surf, when heard in the dead hours of night on such a spot, that is more than sublime—it is cruel, relentless. As we listen to it in such a place, from which there is more than a possibility that we may not escape, we realize how impotent is the strength or skill of man against the terrific rush of waters. We call to mind how many death-cries that sullen roar has drowned, how many mighty ships that gray foam has ground to powder, and look narrowly to see if the giant that thus moans in his slumbers is not about to rouse himself for our destruction. Yet to strong natures there is an indescribable charm that clings to places and perils like these, and does not fade away with the occasion, but lives in the memory ever after. These men could have shot sea-fowl enough near home, without fatigue or peril; but that very safety would have diminished the pleasure. [29]

It was evident that thoughts similar to those we have described were passing through Ben's mind.

He said, in a whisper, "Uncle Isaac, do you suppose the sea ever breaks over here?"

"I suppose it does," was the reply; "but only when a very high tide and a gale of wind come together. Old Mr. Sam Edwards came on here once in November, and his canoe broke her painter and got away from him, and he had to stay ten days, when a vessel took him off; but they had a desperate time to get him; and when they got him he couldn't speak. He piled up a great heap of rocks to stand upon, to make signals to vessels, and to keep the wind off; and when he went on the next spring they were gone." [30]

"But there is white clover growing here, and red-top, which shows that the salt water cannot come very often, nor stay very long when it does come."

It was now getting towards day; they had three guns apiece, which they loaded, and placed within reach of their hands. As the day broke, the birds began to come, first scattering, then in flocks; as they came on, they continued to fire as fast as they could load, the birds falling by dozens into the water, until the birds were done flying, the sun being well up.

They now took the canoe and picked up the dead and wounded birds, many of the latter requiring a second shot, then going on board the schooner with their booty, got their breakfast, after which they ran off ten miles to sea, on to a shoal, to try for codfish; and as they had menhaden and herring for bait, they caught them in plenty.

"Halloo!" said Ben; "I've got a halibut; stand by, father, with the gaff." [31]

They caught three more in the course of the forenoon. After dinner they split and salted their fish, and cutting out the nape and fins of the halibut, threw all the rest away, as in those days they did not think it worth saving.

"Now," said Uncle Isaac, "what do you think of having a night at the hake?"

They ran into muddy bottom near to the rock, anchored, and lay down to sleep till dark, and then began to catch hake. The hake is a fish that feeds on the muddy bottom, and bites best in the night.

Just before day they went on to the rock again, and shot more birds than before. Uncle Isaac and the others were so much engrossed with their sport, that they thought of nothing else. But Ben, who was naturally vigilant, and had noticed that there was a little air of wind to the south, and the sea had a different motion, kept his eye upon it, and shoved the canoe to the edge of the water. All at once he exclaimed, in startling tones,—

"To the boat! The sea is coming!"

They seized their guns, and sprang into the canoe.

"I'll shove off," said Ben. [32]

Uncle Isaac and Captain Rhines took the oars, while Uncle Sam, on his knees, was ready to bale out what water might come in.

The great black wave could now be seen rolling up higher and higher as it came. Ben, giving the canoe a vigorous shove, which sent her some yards from the rock, leaped in, and grasped the steering paddle, keeping her directly on to meet the threatening wave. As she met it and rose upon it, she stood almost upright; and for a moment it seemed as if she would fall back and be dashed on the rock; but the powerful strokes of the resolute oarsmen, added to the momentum she had already attained, forced her up the ascent, and they were safe. Had they been twice her length nearer the rock, they had been lost, as the sea, arrested in its progress by the rock, "combed" (curled over), when nothing could have saved them.

"A miss is as good as a mile," said the captain, as he looked back and saw the spot where they had so lately stood white with foam.

"I've left my best powder-horn," said Ben.

"We've left a couple dozen of birds," said Uncle Isaac; "but we've enough without them."

[33] They now dressed the fish they had caught, went to sleep, and slept till noon; then, as they had a fair wind home, debated, while sitting in the little cabin, what they should do more.

"We have some bait left," said Uncle Isaac; "we ought to do something more."

"Hark!" cried the captain, whose ear had caught a familiar sound; "mackerel, as I am a sinner!"

Rushing on deck, they saw mackerel all around the vessel, leaping from the water, their white bellies glancing in the sun. In a moment lines were thrown over with bait, and soon numbers of them were flapping on the deck.

It was now near sundown, the wind began to blow in fitful gusts, and once in a while, amid the constant dash of waves, a great sea would come and break with a roar far above the general dash of waters. But they were too eager in the pursuit of their prize to heed the weather.

At length a few drops of rain falling on the captain's bare arms caused him to look up and around.

He instantly exclaimed,—

"Haul in your lines; we must be out of this; we are full near enough to these breakers to have them under our lee, and night coming on."

[34] It was a most perilous position to the eye of a landsman, and not without risk to them. The vessel was rolling heavily at her anchor less than a quarter of a mile from the rock, and abreast of the middle and highest part of it, while its long, shoal points stretched out each way for more than a mile, white with foam; the whole ground also, for three or four miles around the rock, was full of shoal spots and sunken reefs, which made a bad, irregular sea; and the roar from so many breakers was terrible. But if there is anything that will do its duty in a heavy head-beat sea, it is an old-fashioned pinkie.

As the little craft, gathering way, came up to the wind, the sea poured in floods over her bows, while, with whole sail and her lee rail under water, she jumped through it, and gradually drew off from the dangerous reefs.

Leaving the long reefs to the leeward, they now kept away before it with a fair wind for home. Taking in all but the foresail, they went along under moderate sail, that they might split their fish as they went, and before dark.

When they reached the island, it was quite dusk. The sea was pouring in sheets of foam upon the rocks, and the white froth, drifting to leeward, had filled the main channel; so that to enter it [35] seemed, to an inexperienced eye, to be rushing into the very jaws of destruction; but, as they dashed along by the very edge of the surf that fringed the "Junk of Pork," just when the little vessel, rising on the crest of a tremendous wave, seemed to be rushing directly on the rocks, Ben, who stood at the fore-sheet, hauled it aft, the captain put down his helm, and the vessel, luffing up, shot through the froth and around the point into the quiet harbor in front of the house. Uncle Isaac let go the anchor, and in a moment she was peacefully riding where there was not a ripple, with the roar of surf all around her, and bunches of white froth drifting lazily alongside.

It is these strong contrasts which make the charm of life along shore, and that so attach rugged spirits to the sea; and though those who live among these scenes do not talk about them as others do,

who seldom witness them, yet they feel them, and they are a part of their life. Taking out the birds and guns, they put them into the canoe to take on shore. Charlie met them there, and was dumb with astonishment at the sight of so many birds.

They were wet, tired, cold, and hungry, for they had been fishing day and night; but as they entered the house, all was changed. A blazing fire was roaring in the great chimney, and flinging its cheerful light on the bright pewter on the dressers and snow-white floor. [36]

The table stood in the floor, covered with smoking victuals, and Sally, with her handsome face shining with joy, stood ready to greet her husband. Sailor was at her side, wagging his tail with frantic violence, ready to jump upon his master as soon as Sally should release him. There were also warm water, soap, and towels to wash the “gurry” from their hands, and the salt of the spray from their faces. Great was the physical and mental happiness of these tired, hungry men, as they sat down to eat, conscious that they had succeeded in their efforts, and obtained the means of comfort and support for their families.

Perhaps some of our readers may think it strange that Ben should want to go fishing when he had been engaged in that business all summer; but the fish caught in the hot weather were salted very heavily, in order to keep them, and that they might bear exportation to all parts of the world; but these were to be slack salted for their own use.

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CHAPTER III.

INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS.

Before his father and friends returned home, Ben agreed with Uncle Isaac and Sam to come and commence work on the house whenever he should send for them, and at the same time made an arrangement with his father to take some fish and lumber to Salem in the schooner, and procure for him some bricks, hearth-tiles, window-glass, door-hinges, latches, materials for making putty, and other things needed about the house.

"My nephew, Sam Atkins," said Uncle Isaac, "who is a capital workman, is coming home to stay a good part of the winter. He works on all the nicest houses in Salem. I'll bring him on with me."

It may not be amiss, for the information of those who have not read the first volume of the series, to glance for a moment at the house, in respect to which all these improvements were contemplated. [38] Ben wanted to dig a cellar, a few rods off, and build a good frame house, of two stories; but Sally preferred to finish the old walls. She said it was large enough, that the timber walls would be warmer than any frame house, and she loved the first spot. "Better save the money to buy cows, or to help some young man along that wanted a vessel."

The kitchen extended the whole length of the house, and occupied half its width. At the eastern end a door opened directly to the weather; there was no entry. In the corner beside the door was a ladder, by which access was gained to the chamber through a scuttle in the floor.

Against the wall at the other end were the dressers, and under them a small closet. There was no finish around the chimney, and on either side of it two doors, of rough boards, hung on wooden hinges, opened into the front part of the house, which was in one large room. The cellar, which only extended under the front part of the house, was reached by a trap door.

The floors were well laid, of clear stuff, and the kitchen floor was white and smooth by the use of soap, and sand, and much friction.

The first thing Ben did when his men, Uncle Isaac, Atkins, and Robert Yelf, came, [39] was to build a porch, into which was moved Charlie's sink, and at one end of which a store-room was made, where Sally could do part of her work, while everything was in confusion.

During the time the joiners were at work upon the porch, Ben and Charlie dug a cellar under the rest of the house, hauled the rocks from the shore, and Uncle Sam built the wall, and also took up the stone hearths in the front part of the house, and laid them with tiles, and built two fireplaces. He also laid a hearth with tiles in the kitchen, leaving a large stone in one corner to wash dishes on.

"Ben," said Uncle Sam, "I told you, when I laid your door-steps, that they were the best of granite, and would make as handsome steps as any in the town of Boston, and that whenever you built a new house, if I was not past labor, I would dress them for you. I have brought on my tools, and now am going to do it."

"I'm very much obliged to you, Uncle Sam, but I am able and willing to pay you for it now."

"No, you ain't going to pay me; 'twill be something for you to remember me by."

They now set up their joiner's bench in the front part of the house, [40] where they could have a fire in cold days. Ben and Charlie worked with them, and the work went on apace. At Sally's request, they began with the kitchen, removing the dressers from the western end, and finishing off a bedroom, leaving room sufficient at the end for a stairway to go down into a nice milk cellar, which Uncle Sam had parted off, and floored with brick, and the joiners put up shelves, with a glass window in the end, and another in the top of the door that led to it from the kitchen. They also replaced the dressers in the kitchen. At the eastern end they made an entry, on one side of it a dark closet to keep meats in from the flies, and on the other chamber stairs, instead of the ladder, and under these cellar stairs, replacing the old trap door.

They then finished the room, ceiling it, both the walls and

overhead. It was not customary then to paint. Everything was left white, and scoured with soap and sand. Carpets were not in vogue, and floors were strewn with white sand.

Sally was jubilant, and declared it was nothing but a pleasure to do work, with so many conveniences.

"I thought I was made," said she, "when I got a sink, and especially a crane, instead of a birch withe, to hang my pot on. Now I've got a sink, a crane, porch, meal-room, cellar stairs, chamber stairs, milk cellar, and kitchen, all ceiled up." [41]

In the front room the work proceeded more slowly, as there was a good deal of panel-work, and this occupied a great deal of time.

There were then no planing mills, jig saws, circular saws, or mortising machines, but all was done by hand labor. There were no cut nails then, but all were wrought, with sharp points that split the wood, which made it necessary to bore a great deal with a gimlet.

A happy boy was Charlie Bell in these days, as Uncle Isaac and Atkins gave him all the instruction in their power; and to complete the sum of his enjoyment, after he had worked with them six weeks, Uncle Isaac set him to making the front and end doors of panel-work, under his immediate inspection. He also had an opportunity to talk about the Indians, and seemed to be a great deal more concerned to know about their modes of getting along, and manufacturing articles of necessity or ornament, without tools of iron, than about their murdering and scalping.

Uncle Isaac could not, from personal knowledge, give him much information in respect to these matters, as, at the time he was among them, they were, and had been for a long period, supplied, both by the French and English, with guns, knives, hatchets, needles, and files; but he could furnish Charlie with abundant information which he had obtained from his Indian parents; for, as they have no books, but trust to their memories, they, by exercise, become very accurate, and their traditions are, in this way, handed down from father to son. [42]

"But," said Charlie, who had heard about Indians having cornfields, "how could they cut down trees and clear land with stone hatchets?"

"They didn't cut them down; they bruised the bark, and girdled them, and then the trees died, and they set them on fire."

"I should think it would have taken them forever, most, to clear a piece of land in that way."

"So it did; but they did not clear one very often. When they got a field cleared, they planted corn on it perhaps for a hundred years."

"I should think it would have run out."

"They always made these fields by the salt water, and put fish in the hills. They taught the white people how to raise corn."

"I have heard they made log canoes. How could they cut the trees down with their stone hatchets? and, more than all, how could they ever dig them out?" [43]

"I will tell you, Mr. Inquisitive. An Indian would take a bag of parched corn to eat, a gourd shell to drink from, his stone hatchet, and go into the woods, find a suitable tree,—generally a dead, dry pine, with the limbs and bark all fallen off,—and at the foot of it would build a camp to sleep under. Then he would get a parcel of wet clay, and plaster the tree all around, then build a fire at the bottom to burn it off. The wet clay would prevent its burning too high up. Then he would sit and tend the fire, wet the clay, and beat off the coals as fast as they formed, till the tree fell; then cut it off, and hollow it in the same way."

"I should think it would have taken a lifetime."

"It did not take as long as you might suppose; besides, time was nothing to them. They did no work except to hunt, make a canoe, or bow and arrows. The squaws did all the drudgery."

Uncle Isaac now went home to stay a week, and see to his affairs, and Atkins with him. In this interval, Charlie began to think about his long-neglected boat. He had already the exact model of the fish, but he wished to get it in a shape to work from. Mixing some more clay and sand, he filled the mould with it, into which he had pressed the fish, having first greased it thoroughly, that it might not stick. He now set it to dry, putting it in the cellar at night. When thoroughly dry, he turned it out, made an oven of stones, and baked it, so that it was in a state to be handled without crumbling. He did not wish Ben or Sally to observe his proceedings; and, as it was too [44]

cold to stay in the woods or barn, he resorted to his bedroom. Uncle Isaac, when there, slept with Charlie, and kept his chest beside their bed.

Charlie was sitting on the bed, with the model in his hand, looking at it, and contriving how to work from it; and so intently was he engaged, that Uncle Isaac, who, unknown to him, had returned, and wanted something from his chest, came upon him before he could shove it under the bed.

“What have you got there, Charlie?”

“O, Uncle Isaac, I’m so sorry to see you!”

“Sorry to see me, Charlie? Indeed, I’m sorry to hear you say so.”

“O, I didn’t mean that,” replied Charlie, excessively confused. “I—I—I—only meant that I was sorry you caught me with this in my hand.”

[45] He then told Uncle Isaac what he was about, adding, in conclusion, “You see, when I am trying to study anything out, I don’t like to have folks that know all about it looking on; it confuses and quite upsets me.”

“But if you ever make the boat, you will have to make it out of doors, in plain sight.”

“Yes, sir; but if I succeed in making a good model, I know I can imitate it on a large scale, and shan’t be afraid then to do it before folks; but if I can’t, why, then I will burn the model up, and nobody will be the wiser for it, or know that I tried and couldn’t. I’m not afraid to have any one see me handle tools.”

“You have no reason to be, my boy. Yet, after all, it was a very good thing that I surprised you before you got any farther; for, had you built a large boat after these lines, she never would have been of any use to you.”

“Why not?”

“Because this is precisely the shape of a mackerel, to a shaving.”

“Well, don’t a mackerel sail?”

“Yes, sail like blazes, *under* water; but I take it you want your boat to sail on top of water. All a fish has to do is to carry himself through the water; but a boat or vessel has to carry cargo, and bear [46] sail. A vessel made after that model wouldn’t stand up in the harbor with her spars in, and a boat made like it would have to be filled so full of ballast, to keep her on her legs, that she would be almost sunk; and the moment you put sail on her, in anything of a working breeze, her after-sail would jam her stern down, and she would fill over the quarter.”

Charlie looked very blank indeed at this, which seemed at one fell blow to render abortive all his patient toil, and annihilate those sanguine hopes of proud enjoyment he and John had cherished, when they should appear in their new craft among the fleet of dug-outs, then below contempt, and witness the look of mingled astonishment and envy on the faces of the other boys, especially as he began to feel a growing conviction that what Uncle Isaac had said was but too true. Still struggling against the unwelcome truth, he replied, after a long pause, “But a mackerel keeps on his bottom.”

“Yes, because he’s alive, and can balance himself by his fins and tail; but he always turns bottom up the minute he is dead.”

“I heard Captain Rhines say, one time, that if a vessel could be [47] modelled like a fish, she would sail. I thought he knew, and so I determined to try it.”

“Captain Rhines does know, but he spoke at random. He didn’t mean *exactly* like a fish, but somewhat like them,—sharp, and with a true taper, having no slack place to drag dead water, but with proper bearings.”

“Then this model, with proper alterations, would be the thing, after all,” said Charlie, a gleam of hope lighting up his clouded features.

“Sartain, if you should—”

“O, don’t tell me, Uncle Isaac, don’t! It’s no use for me to try to make a boat if I can’t study it out of my own head. I think I see what you mean. I thank you very much, and after I try and see what I can do, I want you to look at it, and see how I’ve made out, and tell me how and where to alter it. I hope you won’t think I am a stuck-up, ungrateful boy, because I don’t want you to tell me.”

“Not by any means, Charlie; it is just the disposition I like to see

in you. I have no doubt you will think it all out, and then, my boy, it will be your own all your life.”

“Yes, sir; for, when I went to school, I minded that the boys who were always running up to the master with their slates, or to the bigger boys, to be shown about their sums, were great dunces, while the smart boys dug them out themselves.” [48]

“I never went to school, but I suppose they forgot how to do them as fast as they were told.”

“That was just the way of it.”

The next day there came a snow-storm and a severe gale; the sea roared and flung itself upon the ramparts of the harbor as though it would force a passage; but, with roaring fires in the two fireplaces, the inmates of the timber house worked in their shirt sleeves, and paid very little attention to the weather.

“It is well you got on when you did, Uncle Isaac,” said Ben; “but you will have to stay, now you are here, for there will be very little crossing to the main land for the rest of the winter.”

“But what if any of my folks are sick? I told Hannah to make a signal on the end of the pint if anything happened.”

“In case of necessity, Charlie and I could set you off in the schooner.”

While Uncle Isaac was putting up the mantel-piece in the front room, which had a great deal of old-fashioned carving about it, he set Atkins and Charlie at work upon the front stairs; thus Charlie was so constantly and agreeably occupied as to have but little leisure to spend upon boats. But when this job was over, which had been most interesting and exciting, he began to give shape to the ideas that had been germinating in his brain at intervals during the day, and in his wakeful hours at night. [49]

He wanted some plastic material that would become hard when dry, with which to make his alterations, and determined to use putty. Leaving that portion of his model which was to be under water as it was, he made it fuller from that mark, by sticking on putty, and then, with his knife and a chisel, paring off or adding to correspond with his idea of proportions. For a long time did he puzzle over it, striving in vain to satisfy himself, and several times scraped it all off to the bare brick. At length he came to a point where he felt he could accomplish no more.

The next night, at bed-time, with a palpitating heart, he brought it forward for Uncle Isaac’s inspection. After looking at it long and carefully, he said,—

“I wish Joe Griffin was here. I ain’t much of a shipwright, though I have worked some in the yard, and made a good many spars for small vessels; but he is, and has worked in Portsmouth on mast ships. But I call that a beautiful model, and think it shows a first-rate head-piece. She’s very sharp, and will want a good deal of ballast; so there won’t be much room in her as far as depth is consarned; but then she’s so long ’twill make up for it. She’s a beauty, and if you can ever make another on a large scale like her, I’ll wager my life she’ll sail. I suppose you’ll kind of expect me to find some fault, else you’ll think I’m stuffing you. It strikes me, that in the run, she comes out from the first shape a thought too quick; that it would be better if the swell was a leetle more gradual, not sucked out quite so much; but then I don’t want you to alter it for anything I say; but I’m going to call Ben and Robert Yelf up to see it.” [50]

“O, don’t, Uncle Isaac! Father knows all about vessels, and Mr. Yelf is a regular shipwright.”

“So much the better; they’ll be able to see the merits of it.”

Ben and Yelf made the same criticism as Uncle Isaac, upon which Charlie amended the fault, till they expressed themselves satisfied.

“That boy,” said Yelf, as they went down stairs, “if he lives, and gives his mind to it, will make a first-rate ship-builder.”

“Ever since he has been with me,” was the reply, “he has been, at leisure moments, making boats. I believe he has a fleet, great and small, as numerous as the whole British navy.” [51]

Not the least industrious personage among this busy crew was Ben Rhines, Jr.

From morning to night, with a devotion worthy of a better cause, he improved every moment, doing mischief, till his mother was, at times, almost beside herself. One moment she would be startled by a terrific outcry from the buttery. Ben had tumbled down the

buttery stairs; anon from the front entry he had fallen down the front stairs; then, from the cellar, he was kicking and screaming there.

This enterprising youth, bent upon acquiring knowledge, was determined to explore these new avenues of information. Twice he set the room in a blaze, by poking shavings into the fire, and singed his mischievous head to the scalp, and had a violent attack of vomiting in consequence of licking the oil from Uncle Isaac’s oil-stone. His lips were cut, and he was black and blue with bruises received in his efforts. Despite of all these mishaps, Ben enjoyed himself hugely; he had piles and piles of blocks, great long shavings, both oak and pine, that came from the panels and the banisters; he would bury the cat and Sailor all up in shavings, and then clap his hands, and scream with delight, to see them dig out; he would also hide from his mother in them, and lie as still as though dead; he could pick up plenty of nails on the floor to drive into his blocks, and didn’t scruple in the least to take them from the nail-box if he got a chance. The moment Uncle Isaac’s back was turned, in went his fingers into the putty; he carried off the chalk-line, to fish down the buttery stairs, and, when caught, surrendered it only after a most desperate struggle.

“What a little varmint he is!” said Uncle Isaac. “If he don’t break his neck, he’ll be a smart one.”

“I believe you can’t kill him,” said Sally, “or he would have been dead long ago. He’s been into the water and fire, the oxen have trod on him, and a lobster shut his claws on his foot; why he ain’t dead I don’t see.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE WEST WIND.

It was now the middle of March, and the lower part of the house was finished.

"Ben," said Uncle Isaac, "we want to go off now. Charlie can finish these chambers as well as I can."

"I have not seasoned stuff to finish but one of them now, and hardly that. It's too rough to go off in your canoe; stay till Saturday afternoon, and part off some bedrooms up stairs with a rough board partition, and make some rough doors, so that we can use them for sleeping-rooms, and then Charlie can finish them next winter, for he will have to go to making sugar soon. If you'll do that I'll set you off in the schooner."

Uncle Isaac parted off the chambers, and they now had plenty of room. They put the best bed in one of the front rooms; the family bedroom was off the kitchen, and there were bedrooms above.

[54] Charlie was now desirous to complete his boat, but his mother wanted the flax done out. He therefore concluded to put it off till John came on to help him make sugar.

When Uncle Isaac reached home, John's school had been out a week; but the weather was so rough he could not reach the island; and when he did arrive, Ben and Charlie were just finishing up the flax. The boys now cleared out the camp, scoured the kettles, put fresh mortar on the arch, hauled wood, and prepared for sugar-making. They resolved to tap but few trees at first, in order to have more leisure to work on their boat. The greatest mechanical skill was required to shape the outside. This pertained entirely to Charlie; but the most laborious portion of the work was the digging out such an enormous stick, and removing such a quantity of wood at a disadvantage, as, after they had chopped out about a foot of the surface, it would be difficult to get at, and the work must be done with adze and chisel, and even bored out with an auger at the ends. They decided to remove a portion of it before shaping the outside, as the log would lie steadier. Charlie accordingly marked out the sheer, then put on plumb-spots, and hewed the sides and the upper surface fair and smooth.

[55] He then lined out the shape and breadth of beam, and made an inside line to rough-cut by, and at leisure times they chopped out the inside with the axe, one bringing sap or tending the kettle, while the other worked on the boat.

"John," said Charlie, stopping to wipe the perspiration from his face, "I'm going to find some easier way than this to make a boat; it's too much like work."

"There is no other way. I've seen hundreds of canoes made, and this is the way they always do."

"Don't you remember when we were clearing land, that we would set our nigger[1] to burning off logs, and when it came night, we would find that he had *burned* more logs in two than we had cut with the axe?"

"Yes."

"Uncle Isaac told me one night, that the Indians burned out canoes, and I am going to try it."

"I thought they always made them of bark."

"He said they sometimes, especially the Canada Indians, made them of a log, in places where they had a regular camping-ground, and didn't want to carry them."

[56] "You'll burn it all up, and we can never get another such a log."

"You see if I do."

Charlie got a pail of water, and made a little mop with rags on the end of a stick, then got some wet clay, and put all around the sides of the log where he didn't want the fire to come. He then built a fire of oak chips right in the middle, and the whole length. The fire burned very freely at first, for the old log was full of pitch, and soon began to dry the clay, and burn at the edge; but Charlie put it out with his mop, and forced it to burn in the middle.

When the chips had burned out, Charlie took the adze, and removed about three inches of coal, and made a new fire.

“Not much hard work about that,” said John, who looked on with great curiosity.

They now went about their sugar, once in a while stepping to the log to remove the coal, renew the fire, or apply water to prevent its burning in the wrong direction.

When he had taken as much wood from the inside as he thought it prudent to remove before shaping the outside, he began to prepare for that all-important operation; but as he was afraid the clear March sun and the north-west winds would cause her to crack, he built a brush roof over her before commencing. [57]

Now came the most difficult portion of the work, as it must be done almost entirely by the eye, by looking at the model and then cutting; but as the faculties in any given direction strengthen by exercise, and we are unconsciously prepared by previous effort and application for that which follows, thus Charlie experienced less difficulty here than he had anticipated, and at length succeeded in making it resemble the model, in Ben’s opinion, as nearly as one thing could another. Now their efforts were directed to finish the inside; and, having used the fire as long as they thought prudent, they resorted to other tools, as they wished so to dig her out as to have the utmost room inside, and to make her as light as possible. The risk was in striking through by some inadvertent blow. Though it may seem strange to those not versed in such things, yet Charlie could give a very near guess at the thickness by pressing the points of his fingers on each side, and when he was in doubt, he bored a hole through with a gimlet, and then plugged it up. They at length left her a scant inch in thickness, except on the bottom and at the stern and bow. There she was so sharp that the wood for a long distance was cut directly across the grain. [58]

“I wish,” said Charlie, “I had shaped the outside before digging her out at all.”

“Why so?” said John.

“Because, in that case, I could have left more thickness at the bow; but I couldn’t leave it outside and follow the model.”

In order to avoid taking the keel out of the log, and to have all the depth possible, they put on a false keel of oak; as the edge was too thin to put on row-locks, they fastened cleats on the inside, and put flat thole-pins in between them and the side, which looked neat, and were strong enough for so light, easy-going a craft, that was intended for sailing rather than carrying; they also put on a cut-water, with a billet-head scroll-shaped, and with mouldings on the edges.

As it was evident she would require a good deal of ballast, to enable her to bear sail, they laid a platform forward and aft, raised but a very little from the bottom, merely enough to make a level to step or stand on; but amidships they left it higher, to give room for ballast.

[59] Their intention was, at some future time, to put in head and stern-boards, or, in other words, a little deck forward and aft, with room beneath to put lines, luncheon, and powder, when they went on fishing or sailing excursions; but they were too anxious to see her afloat to stop for that now. They therefore primed her over with lead color, to keep her from cracking, and the very moment she was dry, put her in the water.

Never were boys in a state of greater excitement than they, when, upon launching her into the water, with a hearty shove and hurrah, she went clear across the harbor, and landed on the Great Bull. They got into the Twilight, and brought her back, and found she sat as light as a cork upon the water, on an even keel, and was much stiffer than they expected to find her. She was eighteen feet long, and four feet in width, eighteen inches deep.

Having persuaded Sally to get in and sit down on the bottom,—for as yet they had no seats,—they rowed her around the harbor.

“Now we can go to Indian camp ground, or where we are a mind to,” said Charlie.

“Yes,” replied John, “we can go to Boston; and if we want to go anywhere, and the wind is ahead, we can beat: how I do want to get sail on her!”

[60] There was still much to be done—a rudder and tiller, bowsprit, thwarts for the masts, and masts’ sprits, a boom and sails to make. They did not, however, neglect their work; but now that they had succeeded in their purpose, and the agony was over, though still

very anxious to finish and get her under sail, they tapped more trees, and only worked on her in such intervals as their work afforded. In these intervals Charlie made the rudder, and tiller, and thwarts for the masts.

We are sorry to say that he now manifested something like conceit, which, being a development so strange in him, and so different from the natural modesty of his disposition, can only be accounted for by supposing that uniform success had somewhat turned his head, and produced temporary hallucination.

From the time he made his own axe handle, when he first came on the island, till now, he had always succeeded in whatever he undertook, and been praised and petted; and even his well-balanced faculties and native modesty were not entirely unaffected by such powerful influences.

Ben advised him to secure the mast thwarts with knees, as is always done in boats, to put a breast-hook in the bow, and two knees in the stern, to strengthen her, as she was dug out so thin, [61] and the wood forward and aft cut so much across the grain; but, flushed with success, Charlie thought he knew as much about boat-building as anybody, and, for the first time in his life, neglected his father's counsel. He thought knees would look clumsy, and that he could fasten the thwarts with cleats of oak, and make them look neater; and thus he did. They were now brought to a stand for lack of material, cloth for sails, rudder-irons, and spars.

Elm Island, although it could furnish masts in abundance for ships of the line, produced none of those straight, slim, spruce poles, that are suitable for boat spars. It was very much to the credit of the boys, that, although aching to see the boat under sail, and well aware that Ben would not hesitate a moment, if requested, to let them leave their work and go after the necessary articles, they determined to postpone the completion of her till the sugar season was over. Meanwhile, they painted her, and, after the paint was dry, rowed off in the bay: they also put the Twilight's sail in her; and, though it was not half large enough, and they were obliged to steer with an oar, they could see that she would come up to the wind, and was an entirely different affair from the Twilight, promising great [62] things.

They hugged themselves while witnessing and admiring her performance, saying to each other,—

"Won't she go through the water when she gets her own sails, spars, and a rudder!"

It must be confessed, Charlie was not at all sorry to see the flow of sap diminished; and no sooner was the last kettle full boiled, than off they started for the main land.

Immediately on landing, Charlie bent his steps towards Uncle Isaac's, on whose land was a second growth of spruce, amongst which were straight poles in abundance.

John, after bolting a hasty meal, hurried to Peter Brock's shop; there, with some assistance from Peter, he made the rudder-irons, a goose-neck for the main-boom, another for the heel of the bowsprit, which was made to unship, a clasp to confine it to the stem, and the necessary staples.

When Charlie returned the next night with his spars, they procured the cloth for the sails, and went back to the island.

Ben cut and made the sails; and, in order that everything might be in keeping, pointed and grafted the ends of the fore, main, and [63] jib-sheets, and also made a very neat fisherman's anchor; but he persisted in making the sails much smaller than suited their notions.

They had some large, flat pieces of iron that came from the wreck that drove ashore on the island the year before; these they put in the bottom for ballast, and upon them, in order to make her as stiff as possible, some heavy flint stones, worn smooth by the surf, which they had picked up on the Great Bull.

Until this moment they had been unable to decide upon a name, but now concluded to call her the "West Wind."

They put the finishing touch to their work about three o'clock in the afternoon, and, with a moderate south-west wind, made sail, and stood out to sea, close-hauled.

All their hopes were now more than realized; loud and repeated were their expressions of delight as they saw how near she would lie to the wind, and how well she worked. The moment the helm was put down, she came rapidly up to the wind, the foresail gave one

slat, and she was about; then they tried her under foresail alone, and found she went about easily, requiring no help.

[64] "Isn't she splendid?" asked John; "and ain't you glad we built her?"

"Reckon I am: what will Fred say when he sees her? and won't we three have some nice times in her?"

"It was a good thing for us, Charlie, that we had Ben to cut the sails and tell us where to put the masts."

They avoided the main land, as they did not wish to attract notice till they were thoroughly used to handling her, and knew her trim; and, after sailing a while, hauled down the jib, kept away, and went back "wing and wing."

"Some time," said Charlie, "we'll go down among the canoes on the fishing-ground, and when the fishermen are tugging away at their oars with a head wind, go spanking by them, the spray flying right in the wind's eye."

At length, feeling that they knew how to sail, they determined to go over to the mill and exhibit her.

Notwithstanding their efforts to keep it secret, the report of their proceedings had gone round among the young folks. Some boy saw John at work upon the rudder-irons in Peter's shop, though he plunged his work into the forge trough the moment he saw that he was observed.

[65] Little Bob Smullen also saw Charlie hauling down the spars with Isaac's oxen, and when he asked Charlie what they were for, he told him, "To make little boys ask questions."

The wind came fresh off the land, which suited their purpose, as they wished to sail along shore on a wind, and desired to display the perfections of their boat to the greatest advantage, and above all show her superiority to the canoes, which could only go before the wind, or a little quartering. The wind was not only fresh, but blew in flaws; and as they could not think, upon such an occasion, of carrying anything less than whole sail, they put in additional ballast, and took a barrel of sap sugar, which Fred was to sell for them, and five bushels of corn, to be ground at the mill.

They were to spend the night at Captain Rhines's, intending in the morning to go down to Uncle Isaac's point and invite him to take a sail with them. Charlie considered that the best part of the affair.

They beat over in fine style, fetching far to the windward of the mill, in order to have opportunity to keep away a little and run the shore down, intending to run by the wharf, and then tack and beat back in sight of whoever might be there. [66] When about half a mile from the shore, they were espied by little Tom Pratt, who was fishing from the wharf. He had heard the talk among the big boys, and, rushing into the mill, he bawled out, "It's coming! it's coming! I seed it! that thing from Elm Island."

Out ran Fred, Henry Griffin, Sam Hadlock, and Joe Merrithew. In a few moments another company came from the store and the blacksmith's shop, among whom were Captain Rhines, Yelf, and Flour.

John was steering, and every few moments a half bucket of salt water would strike in the side of his neck and run out at the knees of his breeches, while Charlie baled it out as fast as it came in.

"Only look, Charlie! see what a crowd there is on the wharf! I see father and Flour, and there's old Uncle Jonathan Smullen, with his cane."

"I see Fred and Hen Griffin," said Charlie: "when we get a little nearer, I mean to hail 'em."

"Slack the fore and jib sheets a little, Charlie. I'm going to keep her away and run down by the wharf."

As they ran along seven or eight hundred yards from the wharf, [67] Charlie, standing up to windward, waved his cap to Fred, and cheered. It was instantly returned by the whole crowd.

At that moment a hard flaw, striking over the high land, heeled her almost to upsetting; and as she rose again, she split in two, from stem to stern. Charlie, who was just waving his hat for a second cheer, went head foremost into the water. One half the boat, to which were attached the masts, bowsprit, and rudder, fell over to leeward; the cable, which was fastened into a thole-pin hole, running out, anchored that part, while the other half drifted off before the wind towards Elm Island.

John and Charlie clung to the half that was left, while the barrel of sugar, the corn, both their guns, powder and shot, went to the bottom.

It was but a few moments before Captain Rhines, with Flour and Fred Williams, came in a canoe, and took them off.

Every one felt sorry for the mishap, and Fred felt so bad that he cried.

It was the first boat that had ever been made or owned in the place, or even seen there, except once in a great while, when a whaleman or some large vessel came in for water, or lost their way; the inhabitants all using canoes, as did also the fishermen and coasters.

[68]

As the anchor held one half the boat, it furnished a mark to tell where the contents lay; and while Fred and Henry Griffin were towing back the other half, the rest grappled for and brought up the corn, guns, and sugar, not much of which was dissolved.

It was a bitter disappointment to Charlie and John, but they bore it manfully, and went up to Captain Rhines’s to put on dry clothes and spend the night, Fred walking along with them, striving to administer consolation.

“I wouldn’t feel so bad about it, Charlie,” said he; “we’ve got the other half; why couldn’t you fasten them together again?”

“So you could, Charlie,” said John, “and she would be as good as ever.”

“But what would she look like? No, I never want to touch her again; let her go; but I know one thing, that is, if I live long enough, I’ll build a boat that will sail as well as she did, and not split in two either.”

Uncle Isaac, hearing of the shipwreck, came in to Captain Rhines’s in the evening to see and comfort the boys.

“It’s not altogether the loss of the boat makes me feel so bad, Uncle Isaac,” said Charlie.

[69]

“I’m sure I don’t see what else you have to feel bad about.”

“It’s because father told me to fasten her together with knees, and put a hook in the eyes of her; but I thought I knew so much, I wouldn’t do it. I wanted her to look neat; and see how she looks now! I never was above taking advice before, and hope I never shall be again.”

Notwithstanding Charlie’s resolution never to touch the boat again, he changed his mind after sleeping upon it.

The two boys now reluctantly separated, as it was time for John to go to his trade. Fred and Henry set Charlie on to the island, putting the masts, sails, &c., in their canoe, and towing the two halves. Ben never said to Charlie, “I told you so,” but did all he could to cheer him up, and told him he had made a splendid boat; that he watched them till they were half way over, and that she sailed and worked as well as any Vineyard Sound boat (and they were called the fastest) he ever saw. The boys put the pieces of the boat and the spars in the sugar camp, and then Henry and Fred returned.

[70]

Charlie seemed very cheerful and happy while the boys were there; but when they were gone, he put his head in his mother’s lap, and fairly broke down. Sally was silent for some time: at length she said,—

“Charlie, I think your goose wants to set. I should have set her while you was gone, but the gander is so cross, I was afraid of him.”

Charlie started up in an instant. This was a tame goose, that had mated with a wild gander they had wounded and caught, and Charlie was exceedingly anxious to raise some goslings, and instantly put the eggs under the goose.

The wild ganders have horny excrescences on the joint of their wings, resembling a rooster’s spur, with which they strike a very severe blow, and are extremely bold and savage when the geese are sitting. They seize their antagonist with their bills, then strike them with both wings, and it is no child’s play to enter into a contest with them.

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[71]

CHAPTER V.

HAPS AND MISHAPS.

It is frequently the case that trials, which are very hard to bear at the time, prove, in the end, to be the source of great and permanent benefit. The sequel will show that the wreck of the West Wind, which was so galling to Charlie and John at the moment, was, in the result, to exert a favorable influence upon their whole lives.

The spring was now well advanced, and there were so many things to occupy Charlie’s attention that boat-building was altogether out of the question. Indeed, for a time, he felt very little inclination to meddle with it, and thought he never should again. There were sea-fowl to shoot, and Charlie had now become as fond of gunning as John. The currant bushes were beginning to start, the buds on the apple, pear, and cherry trees in the garden, whose development he watched as a cat would a mouse, were beginning to swell, and early peas and potatoes were to be planted. The robins [72] also returned, and began to repair their last year’s nests, bringing another pair with them,—their progeny of the previous summer.

Charlie was hoping and expecting that the swallows, who came in such numbers to look at the island and the barn the summer before, would again make their appearance; but, notwithstanding all these sources of interest and occupation, and though he felt at the time of his misfortune that it would be a long time, if ever, before he should again think of undertaking boat-building, it was not a fortnight before he found his thoughts running in the accustomed channel, and, as he tugged at the oars, pulling the Twilight against the wind, he could but think how much easier and pleasanter would have been the task of steering the West Wind over the billows; and he actually found himself, one day, in the sugar camp, looking at the pieces of the wreck, and considering how they might be put together; but several other subjects of absorbing interest now presented themselves in rapid succession, which effectually prevented his cogitations from taking any practical shape.

A baby, whose presence well nigh reconciled Charlie to the loss of the boat, made its appearance. He was exceedingly fond of the [73] little ones, and was looking forward to the time when he could have the baby out doors with him.

Mrs. Hadlock had come over to stay a while, and one day undertook to put the baby in the cradle; but little Ben stoutly resisted this infringement on his rights. He fought and screamed, declaring, as plainly as gestures and attempts at language could, that the cradle was his; that he had not done with it, and would not give it up. In this emergency, Charlie bethought himself of the willow rods (sallies), which the boys had helped him peel the spring before, and determined to make the baby a cradle, which should altogether eclipse that of Sam Atkins. The rods being thoroughly dry, he soaked them in water, when they became tough and pliant. He stained part of them with the bright colors he had procured in Boston the year before, some red, others blue and green. He then wove his cradle, putting an ornamental fringe round the rim, and also a canopy over it. The bottom was of pine, but he made the rockers of mahogany that Joe Griffin had given him. When the willow was first peeled, it was white as snow, but by lying had acquired a yellowish tinge, and was somewhat soiled in working. Charlie therefore put it under an empty hogshead, and smoked it [74] with brimstone, which removed all the yellow tinge, and the soil received from the hands, making it as white as at first. When finished, it excited the admiration of the household, none of whom, except Ben, had ever seen any willow-work before.

“Well, Charlie,” said Mrs. Hadlock, “that beats the Indians, out and out.”

“It will last a great deal longer than their work,” said he; “but I don’t think I could ever make their porcupine-work.”

Ben, Jr., appreciated the new cradle as highly as the rest, instantly clambered in, and laid claim to it, and was so outrageous, wishing to appropriate both, though he could use but one at a time, that his father gave him a sound whipping. He fled to Charlie for consolation, who, to give satisfaction all round, made him a willow chair, and dyed it all the colors of the rainbow.

Charlie now prepared to give a higher exhibition of his skill. He selected some of the best willows of small size, and made several beautiful work-baskets, of various sizes and colors. He then took some of the longest rods, of the straightest grain, and with his knife split the butt in four pieces, two or three inches in length; then took a piece of hard wood (granadilla), made sharp at one end, and with four scores in it; inserting the point in the split, he put the other end against his breast, and pushed it through the whole length of the rod, thus dividing it into four equal parts. He then put the quarters on his thigh, and with his knife shaved off the heart-wood, leaving the outside sap reduced to a thin, tough shaving, like cloth. This he made up into skeins, and kept it to wind the rims and handles of his baskets. He told them that a regular workman had a piece of bone or ivory to split the rod with, and an instrument much like a spoke-shave to shave it to a ribbon, but he made a piece of wood and a knife answer his purpose. [75]

Charlie's West India wood was constantly coming into use, for one thing or another, and Joe Griffin could not have given him a more acceptable or useful present.

He also used his skeins of willow for winding the legs of the three chairs he made, one for his mother, one for Hannah Murch, and one for Mrs. Hadlock. The legs were made of stout willow, and wound with these bands.

He presented work-baskets to his mother, Mrs. Rhines, and her daughters, and Aunt Molly Bradish, and expressed his determination to make some baskets the next winter to send over to the mill, that people might see them. [76]

What was his delight on going out one night, after supper, to get some willows he had put to soak in the brook, to see a company of swallows he disturbed fly off in the direction of the barn, with their bills full of clay! Following them, he saw, with great joy, some of them fly into the holes he had cut in the barn, while others deposited their burdens beneath the eaves outside.

By that he knew that two kinds of swallows had come to take up their abode, and were building their nests—barn-swallows and eave-swallows.

He was not long in getting to the house with the glad tidings, which delighted his mother as much as himself.

"I think," she said, "eave-swallows are the prettiest things in the world, they look so cunning sticking their heads out of a little round hole in their nest!"

"Yes, mother, and I've seen them two stories on Captain Rhines's barn—one nest right over the other."

It seemed as if a kind Providence had determined to remunerate Charlie for his disappointment in respect to the boat. He kept his goose, with her goslings, in a large pen near the barn, while the wild gander was let out every day to go where he liked. The great body of wild geese were now gone; but a few stragglers from broken flocks still remained, and were not considered worth the attention of gunners. [77]

A brush fence ran across the island behind the barn, dividing the field from the pasture. Great was Charlie's surprise, when coming one day to dinner, he saw the gander in conversation with a wild goose through the fence. He could not fly over the fence, as one wing was mutilated, therefore was trying to persuade the goose to fly over to him. The goose, on the other hand, being lonely,—the rest of the flock probably having been shot,—was desirous of company, but afraid to venture. The gander would walk along one side of the fence, and the goose the other, a little ways, and then stop and talk the matter over. Charlie ran and made a hole in the fence, right abreast the back barn doors, while they were down under the hill out of sight, and opened the barn doors that led into the floor, then hid himself and watched them. They continued walking along till they found the gap, when the gander instantly went through, and joined the goose, making the most strenuous efforts to entice her to follow him through the hole, and finally succeeded; he evidently wished to coax her to the barn, but the goose held off; she would venture a little way, and then go back, her head erect, turning in every direction, and her eyes flashing like balls of fire. It seemed as if the gander would fail in his efforts, and she appeared about to rise and fly away. [78]

At this juncture, Charlie, in his concealment, flung some corn around the barn door: the gander now redoubled his efforts; he

would run ahead, pick up some corn, then run back and tell her how good it was. The goose, evidently hungry, now approached slowly, and began to pick the corn, a train of it extending into the floor; Charlie was so excited he could hear his heart beat. He now crawled out of the barn, and concealed himself outside, and the goose, following up the scattered kernels, entered the floor, when Charlie slammed the door to. He could hardly believe that he had a veritable wild goose unhurt; he flew into the house, where they were all through dinner, and replied to his mother's question, of where he had been, by taking her and Ben by the hand and dragging them to the barn, where they found the wild goose on the collar beam, and [79] the gander on the floor, vainly striving to entice her down. After being chased from beam to beam, she buried herself in the hay, when they caught her and clipped her wings.

The flax being done out, Sally, with a good smart girl to help her (Sally Merrithew), had linen yarn to bleach to her heart's content. One forenoon, about eleven o'clock, Ben and Charlie were in the field; Sally had spread some linen yarn on the grass to whiten, and gone in to get dinner. All at once a terrible outcry arose from the house; Sally was screaming, "Ben! Ben! get the gun;" the baby was bawling for dear life, and Sailor barking in concert.

The cause of the outcry was soon manifest. A large fish-hawk was seen sailing along in the direction of the eastern point, with two skeins of Sally's yarn in his claws, screaming with delight at the richness of his prize.

"Why don't you fire, Ben?" screamed Sally.

"It's no use," said Ben; "he's out of range."

"Well, get the axe and cut the tree down this minute."

"I will, mother," said Charlie, running to the wood-pile for the axe.

[80] "Stop till after dinner," said Ben, who had not the most distant idea of cutting the tree down; however, he felt very sorry for Sally, and like a prudent general, permitted her feelings to exhaust themselves. "If I've got to cut that great pine down this warm day, I think I must have a cup of tea." He well knew the soothing effect of a cup of tea.

When they were seated at table, he said,—

"What a nice dinner this is, Sally! you do make the best bread, and such nice butter!" Not a word about the fish-hawk. But as dinner was most over, Ben began to unfold his purpose. "Sally," said he, "do you love that little creature?" pointing to the baby.

"How can you ask such a question?"

"Haven't you taken a great deal of comfort in making his little dresses? and wouldn't you feel bad if some one should come and tear down this house, break the furniture, and destroy all that we've worked, scrubbed, and contrived so long to collect around us, for these little ones?"

"Why, Ben, how you talk! Of course I should. But what makes you talk so? Who's going to hurt us?"

[81] "Nobody, I hope; but suppose somebody had taken some little thing from us,—an axe, a shovel, or a milk pan,—would you want their house torn down over their heads for it?"

"No; I'd say the worst is their own."

"But you want me to cut down that tree, and break that poor fish-hawk's nest to pieces, that she has built stick by stick, lugging them miles through the air in her claws, just because she took two skeins of yarn to line her nest with, it's so much better than eel-grass, and which we shall hardly miss; besides, she don't know any better than to take what she wants, wherever she can find it."

At this appeal Sally cast down her eyes and colored; at length she said,—

"You are right, Ben, I know; but it was so provoking, after I had worked so hard to spin and scour that yarn, the first, too, that we have ever had, of our own raising, to see it going off in the claws of a fish-hawk!"

"Well," continued Ben, "this fish-hawk came and built here the first spring we lived here, and kind of put herself under our protection, building her nest so near the house, where we pass under it every day; they are harmless creatures, and never pull up corn, like the crows or blue jays; nor carry off lambs, like the eagles; nor pick out their eyes when they get mired or cast, as the ravens [82] do. There's a noble disposition in a fish-hawk: they are industrious,

work hard for a living, and maintain their families by their own labor; they won't pick up a dead fish, or eel, or feed on a dead horse or cow, like an eagle or carrion crow, but will have a live fish, that they have taken fresh from the sea; they won't be beholden to chance, nor anybody, for their living, but earn it, as every honest person should, in the sweat of their face. Once when I was a boy, just for fun, I put the eggs of two fish-hawk's nests into one. I was over here with father after they were all hatched out, and there was the nest, heaping full, the little hawks screaming, and the old ones springing to it, working like good ones to bring up such a family. There were some great lazy eagles sitting in the tops of the pines, and every once in the while, when the hawks would get a good large flounder, they would give chase and take it away from them. O, how mad I was! Two or three times I got up my gun to shoot; but father wouldn't let me, because he said that to shoot an eagle was bad luck." As he concluded, he looked at his watch, and said, "We've been only an hour and a half at dinner; and what of it?" he continued, putting his great brawny arms on the table, that creaked [83] under the weight. "This is the comfort of the farmer's life—he is his own employer. Now, if I was a sailor, the mate would come forward, and sing out, 'Turn to there, men;' if I was a fisherman, and the fish didn't bite, there'd be my expenses going on; if I was a shipmaster, I must hurry into port, and then hurry just as fast out, and if I made a bad voyage or a long passage, the owners would look sour; but now, if I am sick, or happen to feel lazy, the grain will grow, the cows give milk, and the sheep make wool, all the same."

It is evident Ben felt remarkably happy about this time, one reason of which was, that he had determined to put Joe Griffin in the Perseverance, who was going to fish a short distance from the shore. Henry Griffin and Robert Yelf were going with him, and Uncle Isaac before and after haying: thus Ben was going to have a good time farming—the work he liked best.

"Sally," said Mrs. Hadlock, "I wouldn't worry about the yarn; it's nothing to what old Aunt Betty Prindle met with."

"What was that, mother?"

"She had a shawl that had been her grandmother's; a beautiful one it was; came from foreign parts, and cost a sight in its day; but [84] having been worn for so many years, you know, it would naturally get soiled. She had been wanting to wash it for a great many years, had often threatened to, and indeed more than once set a time to do it; but when the time came her heart failed her; even after the water was hot, she was afraid to put it into the tub, for fear it would fade. I think she would have done it once, but her darter Patience, who knew it would fall to her when the old lady was done with it, discouraged her. At last, one spring, just about this time of year (she lived, you know, with her son Richard), she determined that, come what might, she *would* wash it. One morning she said to her granddarter, 'Lois Ann Prindle, do you go straight down to Aunt Olive Cobb's and Peggy Sylvester's, over to Mrs. Joe Ransom's, and the widder Tucker's, give my compliments, and ask them to come over and take a cup of tea (*green* tea, mind) with me this afternoon.' They all came; and when tea was over, she said, 'You know, neighbors, I am an old parson, and can't, in the course of nature, expect to live many years. I do want to see this shawl washed before I'm taken away; but our Patience has always discouraged me; but she's gone to Cape Porpoise to stay a month, and I'm determined to [85] have it in the tub before she comes back; that is, if you think it will do; and I want you to pass your judgment on't.'"

"The old lady meant to have plenty of advice," said Sally.

"That was so that Patience couldn't put all the blame on her, in case it faded," replied Ben.

"The shawl was brought out," said Mrs. Hadlock, "and laid across their knees, when judgment was passed on it; every one but the widow Tucker thought it would wash, and if it was their shawl, they should wash it; but she said, 'she knew it wouldn't wash, for the Wildridge family, in old York, had jest such a shawl, and they washed it, and it faded dreadfully; but there,' said she, looking out of the window, 'comes black Luce, Flour's wife; she is a great washer and ironer, and knows more about it than all of us.' Luce was called in, and said, 'if they put a beef's gall in the water, it would set the color, and it wouldn't fade a mite.' 'Then I'll wash it, I declare to man I will, for Enoch Paine's going to kill an ox this week, and our Patience won't be home till long arter that.'

"Aunt Betty procured her beef's gall, got her water hot, and put it in.

[86] "'Here it goes,' said she, 'hit or miss,' dropping the shawl into the tub. She washed and spread it out on the grass to dry, and every two or three minutes ran out to look at it. At length it began to dry at the edges, and she saw it wasn't going to fade one mite. Down went her flatirons to the fire. 'Lois Ann, run right down to the neighbors you went to before, tell them the shawl is drying beautifully. I am going to iron it, and want them to come up and take tea to-night, and see it. Tell Luce to come, too, and arter we've done, she shall have as good a cup of green tea as ever she had in her life.'"

"She was a good old soul," said Ben; "she didn't forget old Luce."

"Not she; but, as I was saying, she got her table out, and irons hot; but just as she opened the door to bring in the shawl, she saw a fish-hawk rising from the ground with it in his claws. Almost beside herself, she screamed for Richard, who came running from the field; but long enough before he could load the gun, the hawk was out of sight behind a high hill back of the house; and when I heard Sally screaming for Ben, it brought it right up."

[87] "Why couldn't they have followed, seen where he went to, and cut the tree down?" asked Charlie.

"Because, child, it was all thick woods. You couldn't see, only right up in the air, without climbing a tall tree, and before they could do that he was out of sight."

"Did the women come?"

"Yes; but instead of rejoicing with the poor old lady, they did their best to console her. She didn't live but a week after that. Some thought the loss of the shawl, and thinking what Patience would say when she came, shortened her days; but I don't. She was very old, and had been very feeble all the winter before."

"Did they ever find it?"

"Yes; some men, who were clearing land two miles off, cut down a tree, the next summer, that had a fish-hawk's nest on it; and there was the shawl, all rotten and covered with the lice that are always on young fish-hawks."

"The hawk is welcome to the yarn, mother."

"That's right, Sally; that is spoken like a child of mine, and a good, thoughtful girl. If the Lord had told you, two years ago, that he would give you all he has sent you in that time, by the way of the Ark, if you would give a couple of skeins of yarn to a fish-hawk, you [88] would have been very glad to have done it. These are all his creatures, and he careth for them, and feeds them all. The robins, in their nests, open their little mouths for God to feed them. The Scripture says, 'He feedeth the ravens, and not even a sparrow is forgotten before God.'"

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CHAPTER VI.

PARSON GOODHUE AND THE WILD GANDER.

During the last year Sally had woven cloth for curtains to her best bed, and also for the windows of the rooms, when they should be finished; but for the last two or three weeks she and Sally Merrithew had been very busily employed bleaching the linen, making the curtains, and scouring the woodwork, which had been soiled in the putting up. It was not the fashion to paint in those days—everything was scoured.

The cause of this extraordinary industry was at length revealed by Sally herself, who said to Ben, "Now that the house is done, I've got good help, the baby is well, and mother is here, I think we ought to have a meeting. I'm afraid we shall get to be just like the heathen, for we can't get to meeting but once or twice in the winter, and not a great deal in the summer. I want Parson Goodhue to come on to the island, preach a lecture, and make us a real good visit. He's our old minister that we have known and loved ever since we were children, and we haven't seen him since we were married, except in the pulpit." [90]

"Nothing would suit me better, and I think we'd better have it right off, before Joe goes away with the schooner; then we can bring him on and take him back in her, while she's sweet and clean."

"Yes, and we can have Joe and Henry Griffin to sing, and Uncle Isaac to lift the tune. Your father will come, and bring the girls. They are first-rate singers; so is Fred Williams; and we can have as good singing as they do in the meeting-house on Lord's day."

"I'll go off to-night, and if he can come, we'll have the meeting next week."

Notwithstanding Ben differed so much from the minister in respect to temperance, it produced not the least alienation of feeling. Ben, though very firm in his opinions, had not a particle of bitterness in his composition. On the other hand, he was much attached to the pastor, who was a very devoted man, and greatly beloved and respected by his people, although he thought him in an error respecting that matter, still his ideas were in harmony with the almost universal sentiments and practice of the age in which he lived. He was a good man, by no means a free liver, and sought what he supposed to be the good of his people with all his heart. Wedded to this pernicious habit by early usage, and the example of those he had been accustomed to revere as models of all that was great and good, he failed to perceive its fatal tendency, although the proofs were daily accumulating before his eyes, and also that the distinction between the use and abuse, which he and Captain Rhines strongly insisted upon, was, in the great majority of cases, a distinction without a difference. [91]

It was determined, in family conclave, that the lecture should be at four o'clock, after which all were to sit down to a meat supper, the meats having been roasted beforehand, and served up cold, with hot tea and coffee.

"This will be the first time Mr. Goodhue was ever here, Sally," said Ben, "and the first time, I expect, in his life, that he was ever invited anywhere to eat and not offered spirit. We've got turkeys, ducks, and chickens, enough of everything. We'll let him and all the rest know that it is not for the sake of saving that we don't put spirit on the table; and you know what Bradish set out to say at the husking, if Joe Griffin hadn't knocked the wind out of him."

Seats were made in the parlor, kitchen, and porch for the audience; but the spare room, which was most elaborately finished, where Uncle Isaac had displayed his utmost skill in carved and panel-work, and in which was the buffet, was carefully prepared for the reception of the minister. There were curtains to the best bed and windows, which Sally had woven and bleached as white as snow; the bed-ticks were also woven by her, and filled with the feathers of wild geese she had picked herself. The sheets and pillow-cases were scented with orange balm. On the mantel-piece were some beautiful shells and coral, which Ben had brought home from sea; the secretary, also, which his father had given him, inlaid with various kinds of wood, was in this room. As to the remaining furniture, it was of the homeliest kind, as Ben had not purchased [92]

any since his means had increased. The looking-glass was six inches by eight in size, and the chairs were bottomed with ash splints. In those old times, instead of painting or carpeting floors, they kept them white by scouring and covering with sand. It was the custom of housewives, on important occasions, to cover the floor with sand, and then, with the point of a hemlock broom, make marks in the sand resembling the backbone of a herring. Sometimes they [93] deposited the sand in little heaps, like pepper on the surface of a ham, and representing various figures; but Sally Merrithew went far beyond this. She covered the floor of the minister's room with the finest of sand, and then, with her fingers, made the exact impress of a little child's naked foot in different places; also the representation of star-fish, diamonds, horses, oxen, and various other things. This was a vast deal of work to bestow upon a thing that was destroyed the moment you stepped on it; but it looked very pretty when you first opened the door, and that was enough for Sally. If Parson Goodhue only looked at it once, she was more than satisfied.

Clocks were not common then, and time was kept by hour and minute glasses; and there would not have been any other time-keeper on Elm Island had not Ben's profession as a sailor put him in the way of having a watch; but whenever he took his watch with him, Sally resorted to the hour glass, and the sun-mark in the window.

When the day arrived, Ben and Charlie went over in the Perseverance, as she was now ready for sea, and returned with Joe and his crew, Captain Rhines and his girls, Uncle Isaac, the Hadlocks, and others, among whom was Fred Williams. The most [94] important personage of all was Parson Goodhue. The saucy little craft, her sails limed and snow-white, her decks white as a holy-stone and sand could make them, her masts scraped and slushed, with a little yellow ochre in the grease, her hull, mastheads, and spars gayly painted, and rigging fresh tarred, seemed, as she flung the foam from her bows and shot into the little harbor, proud of her burden.

The parson was brought ashore from the vessel in the large canoe; and as the beach was wet, Ben took him in his arms and set him down on the grass ground, without ruffling a feather; here he was met and welcomed by Sally.

Our young readers might be interested if we should describe the dress of this good man, whose arrival had excited so much interest, and caused such a commotion, on Elm Island; it was the usual dress of the ministers of that day, and quite remarkable.

A dark-blue broadcloth coat of the finest material, with a broad back, wide skirts, and a very long waist. It reached below the knees, the front edges on both sides being cut to the segment of a circle, from the end of the collar to the bottom of the skirts, the two edges [95] just meeting in the middle over the abdomen, there fastened, when fastened at all, with a single hook and eye; the collar was quite wide, and laid over flat on the back; there was one row of black enamelled buttons in front, about the size of an old-fashioned Spanish milled dollar, with button holes to correspond to the size of the buttons, but which were never used, as the coat was never fastened except by the single hook and eye. The vest was of black kerseymere, reaching some six inches or more below the hips, with broad and deep pocket-flaps on each side, covering a capacious pocket. It was buttoned from the hips, close to the throat, with enamelled buttons as large as an English shilling, and finished round the neck with a narrow collar, three fourths of an inch wide. The lower corners of the vest were rounded off, so as always to hang open. To complete the dress, was a pair of dark-blue small clothes, buttoned tight around the body above the hips, and worn without suspenders, as they had not then been invented. A pair of heavy black silk stockings reached above the knee, under the small clothes, which were buttoned down close over the stockings below the knee, and there fastened by silver buckles. On his feet he wore a pair of round-toed shoes with short quarters, and fastened by a pair [96] of large silver buckles that covered the whole of the instep. On his head he wore a large full-bottomed wig of silvery whiteness, fitting close to the head, the hair from the whole head being shaved twice a week, to permit the wig to fit close to the head. The back part of this wig, on the "bottom," as it was technically called, was very large, and consisted of a mass of curls, of the kind that young ladies now call frizzled; and as the collar of the vest was narrow, and the collar of the coat laid flat on the back, the bottom of the wig could

reach quite near to the shoulders without interfering with any part of the dress. Surmounting all was a large three-cornered cocked hat of the finest beaver, but without any nap; this, with cravat and ample bands under the chin, both of snowy whiteness, formed the costume of the venerable man, who, on the beach of Elm Island, received the congratulations of Sally and Mrs. Hadlock, and was regarded by these rebellious Yankees, who had recently flung off the yoke of monarchy, with a veneration as great as that of a true-bred Briton for his anointed king.

In cold weather this dress was supplemented by a long blue broadcloth cloak, with a small cape, thrown over the shoulders, but never fastened in front. In this dress, with no covering for his legs from the knee to the foot except silk tight-fitting stockings, without boots or buskins (the latter being much worn by all except seamen, to keep the snow out of the shoes), he preached sermons three quarters of an hour in length, in a meeting-house without fire, and quite open. [97]

Why the good man did not freeze is to us a mystery only to be solved by concluding, with Aunt Molly Bradish, that "'twas all ordered."

At the meeting they got along splendidly with their singing, Uncle Isaac lifting the tune and taking the lead. The whole company thought they had never heard such a sermon; that the good man excelled himself; while *he* spoke in the highest terms of the singing.

In respect to the supper, it needed not the encomiums freely lavished upon it, as the performances of the reverend gentleman and all concerned afforded more substantial evidence than figures of rhetoric could furnish of their appreciation of its merits.

In short, it was a most pleasant and profitable season to all. No one seemed to enjoy himself less, not even Captain Rhines and the minister, for the lack of spirit. [98]

"One thing is sartin, Benjamin," said Uncle Isaac, as they sat down together in the porch, to enjoy a quiet pipe; "which is, that people can enjoy themselves, be sociable and neighborly, without liquor."

"Yes, and feel better after it's over," was the reply.

Capacious as Ben's house now was, it could by no means lodge all the company. A field bed was made in the parlor and kitchen, with additional bed-clothes which Ben had borrowed from his mother and Mrs. Hadlock.

The schooner's crew slept on board; Fred and Charlie, to their entire satisfaction, in the haymow, as it was long since they had met, and they had many things to talk over.

They dug a great hole in the hay and lined it with the mainsail of the West Wind, got a meal bag and stuffed it with chaff for a pillow, then taking the foresail for a covering, they lay spoon-fashion, and talked themselves to sleep.

"Charlie," said Fred, "I'll tell you what I've been thinking about: there are a good many people that fish in big canoes; they catch a great many fish in the spring and summer, and even in the winter, when there comes a spell of good weather, that they dare go out, because, you know, they have to row in. Well, they say, if I will put some goods in the mill, that they will bring their fish to me, and take pay in goods. Then some that fish in schooners, say, if I will put up some flakes, they will bring their fish to me, and give me one quintal in fifteen for making them." [99]

"I'd do it, Fred; I think you'll stand in your own light if you don't; you know you've got a wharf at the mill to land fish and goods, and a place in your mill for your goods, measures, a scale and weights, counter and shelves: you are all fixed."

"Not by a good deal. If I take fish from the canoes, I must have a fish-house to salt and keep them in, and a pair of large scales to weigh them, and the fish-house must be large enough to store a fare of fish, or two or three, till they are made and marketed. Then it will cost something to put up flakes; though father says he'll give me the timber to build the house and flakes, and let me use his oxen to haul the timber to the spot, and the logs to the mill for the boards. But then I can't sell these fish till fall, and in the mean time I must buy salt and goods, and I don't like to run in debt. I have but little money, and I ain't one of the kind to go into a thing without making some kind of calculation as to how I'm coming out." [100]

"I'll tell you what you do, Fred: go and cut your frame, and logs

for boards; haul your frame logs to the spot, and roll them up on skids all ready to hew, and your logs for boards to the mill; cut and haul your stuff for flakes; Joe Griffin won't be gone more than a fortnight or three weeks; when he comes back, I'll get him and his crew, father, and some more, and we'll hew your frame out, raise it, and make your flakes in two days. I can board and shingle it, and make the doors for you, and you can pay me in goods."

"You are very kind, Charlie; it's just like you; but even with all these helps, I've not half money enough; three hundred and fifty dollars won't go far in buying goods."

"What kind of goods do you want?"

"The most, of molasses, tea, coffee, and salt. O, I forgot the tobacco. Rum I don't drink, and won't sell. These are the heaviest. I shall want some sugar, nails, a few pots and kettles, medicines, calico, powder and shot; the rest I can barter for round here. You know it takes a good while, and is a great deal of expense, to get goods from Portland or Boston here. You must be able, when you go, to buy enough at once to last a good while." [101]

"Now, Fred, listen to me: you, John, and myself have always been together, like the fingers on one hand; we put our ventures into your hands, and you did well for yourself and us: now, what is to hinder John and me from putting more goods in your store to sell at half profits. I've got four hundred dollars, John has got three hundred dollars; there's seven hundred dollars: we'll put that into tea and coffee; we'll get Captain Rhines to go to Boston or Portland, and buy it for us, put it in your hands to sell at half profits; then you can have your own money to get other things. You can put a few goods in, and go right to taking fish from the canoes, and by the time the large vessels get along, we will get our goods."

"Charlie, you are a friend indeed; but will John be willing to do it?"

"Yes; John Rhines will be willing to do anything that is good and noble. He started the matter the first time; I mean to get the start of him now. I'll write to him to-morrow; there's a vessel going to Portland with timber, and the money is over to his father's."

"Then," said Fred, "I'll go to Portland in her, and get a few things. I can salt the fish in our barn till I get the fish-house built, and put any dry fish I may make in the mill." [102]

"I don't believe but I can coax Joe Griffin to go in, and Flour; he's got money in Captain Rhines's hands; I know father will."

It now being well towards morning, they went to sleep. The next day, Charlie not only persuaded Joe Griffin, but Uncle Isaac and his father, to help Fred.

"I'll tell you," said Captain Rhines, "what you had better do. It's a poor calculation for Fred to take what he has got and go buy a small quantity—he can't make anything. I'll take him and Charlie in the Perseverance, and we'll go right to Boston and get the whole. I'll get Mr. Welch to buy for me; he will do it better than I can."

"But we've not heard from John," said Charlie.

"Well, I've got the money, and I'll take it with me. We'll run into Portland and ask him. I'll get Flour to put his in. I'll put in the tea and tobacco, because I expect to trade with Fred, and I want to be sure that they're good."

The company now prepared to depart; but Ben persuaded Parson Goodhue to stay, telling him that the vessel was going to Boston the next day, and they would set him ashore at the mill wharf as they went along. [103]

While Ben and Charlie were gone to the main land with their friends, the minister was left with Sally and Mrs. Hadlock. He amused himself by taking a walk over the island, admiring its beauty, and looking at the crops. Charlie had told him he had a wild goose and gander, and also some goslings, the progeny of a tame goose and the wild gander. After returning to the house and resting a while, he expressed a strong desire to see them.

"I can find them, Mrs. Rhines, if you will tell me in what direction to go."

"I don't think you had better go alone, sir, for the gander is in the pen, and is quite cross."

"Indeed, Mrs. Rhines, I trust you don't think I'm afraid of a goose."

But Sally persisted in going with him.

The reverend gentleman was very much pleased with the goslings, who bore a strong resemblance to both parents; but he was especially delighted with the wild gander, which was a splendid fellow, and, from being well fed, was large and plump.

“I feel that I must get over in the pen, Mrs. Rhines; the gander seems perfectly docile.”

[104] “Don’t, Mr. Goodhue, I beg of you; he is very savage, I assure you.”

He, however, persisted in getting into the pen, despite her entreaties.

“Only observe how affectionate and quiet he has become in captivity; intercourse with human beings has doubtless exerted an ameliorating influence upon his naturally savage nature: you will notice, Mrs. Rhines, that he does not open his mouth and siss, as even the tame ganders will do; indeed, I have always thought the study of natural history a most delightful and fascinating recreation: it is, in one sense, a revelation.”

As we have before observed, suspenders were not worn in those days; and any exertion often caused the breeches to work down, and the waistcoat to work up, so as to render the linen visible between them.

Parson Goodhue and the Wild Gander. Page 105.

[105] In walking over the island and climbing the fence, the good man had so exerted himself, that a large fold of shirt appeared, and hung over the waistband. The gander came up to him, put his head very gently against him, took hold of it, and, while the attention of the minister was directed to the goslings and the tame goose, filled his mouth with the cloth; at length, having with the utmost gentleness obtained a firm hold, the gander suddenly spread his great wings and began to thrash the minister about the head and face, with the force of so many flails. His cocked hat was knocked off in an instant; the wig followed suit. Blinded and confused, he jumped back, falling prostrate upon his back: he was now at the mercy of his antagonist, who, with the knobs of horn on his wings, inflicted blows upon his face and bare scalp, that drew blood at every stroke, the wild goose seconding the efforts of her mate by viciously nipping his legs and hands.

His screams were heard by Sally, who, deceived by the apparent good nature of the gander, had gone to the house to see to the baby. She threw her shawl over the gander’s wings, and seizing him by the neck, choked him off, and thrust him into the pen made for the tame goose to sit in, then assisted the parson to rise.

He was indeed in a sorry plight; the blood was streaming from his face and scalp, his clothing was soiled by the impurities of the yard, his face covered with straw and feathers which the wings of the gander had flung over him, and that stuck in the blood. The wild goose, with that strong, sharp bill, with which they will pull up eel-grass by the roots, had torn holes in the black silk stockings, and [106] even torn the skin beneath.

Sally was affected to tears by this wholesale desecration of the person of one she had been accustomed from infancy to look up to with reverence. The wig, which had been the great object of her veneration, and the cocked hat were trampled under foot by the parson in his first attempts to escape. This, indeed, was no trifling matter, as the wig could only be dressed and curled once a year; and for this it was necessary to go to Boston, and it took a

professional hairdresser a whole day.

The good man, however, was much less disturbed than Sally, and after he had been put to rights by her and Sally Merrithew, took quite a cheerful view of the matter, affirming, that though Paul passed through many perils, he much doubted whether he had ever been in peril by a wild gander.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARLIE GETS NEW IDEAS WHILE IN BOSTON.

When Ben returned, he was no less concerned than Sally, and instantly proceeded to administer consolation in a more practical form, by proposing that he should take passage with his father and the boys to Boston, have the wig dressed, and procure an entire new suit, and he would pay the bills.

But the good man’s troubles were not ended yet. The barbers were accustomed, when they dressed wigs, to put them on blocks of wood, made in the form of a head. It so happened that, there being a great deal of work in the barber’s shop, all the blocks were in use. The barber, for want of a block, clapped the wig on the head of his negro apprentice to dress it. A band of music came along, and the negro, jumping up, ran out to listen. He went by a carriage-maker’s shop, when a man, who was at work painting wheels, struck with the ludicrous appearance of a negro with a snow-white wig, poured a whole paper of lampblack on his head. This finished up the wig. [108] But Captain Rhines, after laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks, procured another.

Charlie spent every leisure moment, while in Boston, in the ship-yards and boat-builders’ shops.

Mr. Welch, who had become thoroughly acquainted with Charlie while visiting Elm Island, invited him and Fred to come with Captain Rhines to dinner. He soon wormed out of Charlie all he had in view respecting Fred, which caused him to become interested in the boy, and he gave him much good advice in respect to business, concluding his remarks by telling him he would buy all the fish he could cure, and give him the highest market prices, according to quality.

Mr. Welch invited, and insisted on, Captain Rhines coming to tea, as he had some private matters he wished to talk over with him.

“My old friend,” said the merchant, deeply moved, taking both the captain’s hands in his the moment they were alone, “my oldest son, who bears my name,—a name which I have ever striven to connect with everything good and honorable,—is little better than a drunkard. He is both indolent and vicious. His conduct has broken my heart, and is fast bringing my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.”

[109] Captain Rhines, not knowing how to reply, remained silent; but the pressure of the hand, and the tears that gathered in his eyes, attested, beyond the power of words, his sympathy.

“He is,” continued the parent, “of large business capacity, attractive in his manners, and makes friends, though of violent temper when aroused.”

“Why don’t you send him to sea? Let him see the hard side of life, come to misery, and learn to submit.”

“I would, but it would kill his mother. She thinks his temper is so violent he would kill some one, or be killed himself.”

“Nonsense! begging your pardon. He may be very violent with you or his mother; but let the mate of a vessel get afoul of him, and he would knuckle fast enough. I wish I was going to sea now; I’d engage to bring him to his bearings, and not hurt him, either.”

“His mother would never consent to his going to sea. But I’ll tell you what I’ve been thinking of ever since I was at Elm Island. That is a place free from temptation. He resembles me in many things. Like me, he is extravagantly fond of gunning and fishing, and has keen appreciation of everything beautiful in nature. [110] I thought, if he could spend a summer in that beautiful spot,—he likes you and Ben; he couldn’t help liking Charlie and Sally,—perhaps it might aid him to rally, for I think of late he has made some effort in that direction. His mother has often spoken of it, and says she would not be afraid to have him go to Elm Island.”

“She need be under no apprehension of his hurting Ben, and Ben certainly won’t hurt him.”

“It is not altogether in respect to Elm Island that I wished to speak. But while I was there, I became acquainted with Mr. Murch—Uncle Isaac, as everybody there calls him. He is certainly a most remarkable man. I don’t know what it is, but there’s something

about him impresses and influences one in spite of himself. I couldn't help feeling, while I was talking with him, that I wanted him to have a good opinion of me, and was vexed with myself for wishing that I knew what he thought of me."

"Let me tell you, my friend, you couldn't have a greater compliment than Isaac's good opinion."

"But the most remarkable thing is the liking that your John and Charlie, and, as far as I could see, every other boy, seems to have for him, and the influence he has over them. Why, John told me— [111] and Charlie says the same—that this young Williams was a bad, mischievous boy, so bad that they were determined not to play with him, and would have given him up had it not been for Mr. Murch. Now, if he can work such miracles, why, if my poor boy was down there, couldn't he, with God's help and blessing, do something for him?"

"It is quite a different case. These were boys; your son is—"

"Twenty-two next March."

"They were on the same level with Isaac. Your son is educated, and Isaac would seem like an old codger to an educated man."

"He wouldn't hold to that opinion long when he came to be acquainted with him. It is too late now for this year. But if you think Benjamin would be willing,—I should expect to pay his way, of course,—I should like to try it, if I could get him to go."

"Anything that I or Ben can do, we will be glad to. Our hearts and homes are open to you."

"You are very kind, and I will think more about it; there's time enough. Now, my dear friend, permit me to say a word to you. I am considerably older than yourself. Our friendship is of long standing. It dates back to the year you was twenty-one, and came to Boston [112] mate of the first vessel I ever owned any part of. We ought by this time to *know* each other as well as we *love* each other. I feel as if I must tell you there is but one thing you lack. Do, my old friend, give your heart to God. Let us be one in feeling and sympathies here, as we are in every other respect. In this bitter trial which has come upon me, it has been my stay and comfort. If I could not have cast my burden on the bosom of the Savior, I should have gone mad. There are sorrows to which wealth can offer no alleviation, but there are none beyond the aid of divine grace."

Captain Rhines was touched to the very heart, and most of all by the noble spirit manifested by his friend, who, when crushed to the earth by individual grief, turned from his own sorrows to seek his good.

"I have, indeed," he replied, "endeavored to live a moral life. I was the child of godly parents, have been blessed with a pious wife, and am a firm believer in the truths of the gospel; but I know that I need more than this—that I must be born again. It is impossible for a man of ordinary intelligence and capacity to follow the sea, as I have for more than thirty years, without at times feeling deeply his [113] accountability. Oftentimes at sea, and at other times at home, when Mr. Goodhue, a good, faithful man, has talked with me, I have resolved—I have resolved to pray, but never have done it; yet I trust I shall."

"Life is uncertain. We may never meet again. Kneel down with me."

They knelt together, and Mr. Welch pleaded with his Maker for the salvation of his friend; and, as they parted, Captain Rhines promised him that he would take the matter into serious consideration, and endeavor to pray for himself. "The same energy and resolution, my dear friend, that carried the Ark through the storms of the Gulf Stream into the harbor of Havana, and at one stroke won a fortune for yourself and son, will carry you into the Ark of Safety, and perhaps be the salvation of your whole family."

During their stay in Boston, Mr. Welch derived great pleasure from talking with Charlie. It was a relief to the heart of the worn and weary old man to listen to the conversation of the fresh-hearted boy, full of hope and buoyancy. He entered into all his plans, and drew from him his little secrets, which helped to withdraw him from his own griefs. Charlie told him about his great disappointment by [114] the wreck of the West Wind, and he didn't know how it would be, but thought some time he should try to build a boat with timbers. Aware of Charlie's love of the soil, and all connected with it, he took him into his orchard, where his gardener was putting in grafts, and

told him to show Charlie how to set them, and also how to bud. The first thing he said, after he found he could perform the operation, was, “O, how glad father and mother will be!”

“I wish he was my boy,” was the thought that arose in the mind of the merchant, as he perceived how love for his adopted parents colored every impulse of his heart.

“Has your father got his ground ready for his orchard? If he has, you might take some trees home with you.”

“No, sir, but he will have it ready in the fall.”

“But haven’t you got some room in the garden, where you could put a few trees temporarily, and then take them up?”

“O, yes, sir.”

“Well, you can take home some apple and pear trees that have never been grafted, and the scions, and graft them yourself. It will be good practice for you; and then, when you get the ground ready, [115] you can put them in the orchard. Are there not wild cherry trees and thorn bushes on the island?”

“Yes, sir, plenty of both. Lots of cherry trees came up on the burns.”

“Well, you can graft the cherries with cherries, and the thorns with pears.”

“How nice that will be!”

“But you must graft the thorns close to the ground, and bank the earth up around them, that the pear may take root for itself.”

“Why is that, sir?”

“Because the pear will, in a few years, outgrow the thorn bush, and will break down just as it begins to bear. The pear and the thorn follow their own nature and habits of growth.”

“That is very singular, sir.”

“Yes, but so it is. Look at that apple tree just before us.”

The tree to which Mr. Welch referred had been grafted about two feet from the ground when it was little, and the graft jutted over the lower portions all around three or four inches.

“These trees,” said Mr. Welch, “are both apple trees, but the upper one is a larger growing variety; still there is not the difference there is between a thorn bush and a pear tree, so that one breaks the other down. It’s just like religion, Charlie; religion [116] don’t alter a person’s color or size, or give him senses; but it gives him different tastes, turns sour to sweet, and leads him to a better improvement of what faculties he already has. Who runs out land down your way, Charlie?”

“Squire Eveleth, sir; but he’s getting quite old and feeble, and can’t go into the woods; and people often come for father to run land and measure timber.”

“Has your father got instruments?”

“He has calipers and a rule to measure timber; but he hires Squire Eveleth’s compass and chain when he runs land.”

“Would you like to learn surveying, Charlie?”

“O, yes, sir, I like to learn anything; but I would like to learn that uncommon well.”

“You might pick up a good deal of money in that way in a new country, where people are always buying and selling land, and the stump leave of timber.”

“Yes, sir; I suppose I might.”

“When you will write me that you have learned to survey, I will send you a compass, and all the instruments you want.”

“I thank you very much indeed, sir; I will get father to learn me this winter.”

[117] When Charlie left, Mr. Welch gave him some books that treated of agriculture, text-books to study surveying, a gauge, bevel, carpenter’s pocket rule, and a case of instruments to draw geometrical figures.

“What a pretty craft this is!” said Mr. Welch, as he stood on the wharf to see them off; “she certainly don’t look or smell much like a fisherman.”

“She hasn’t been a fishing since last fall,” replied the captain. “Ben, you know, is a deep-water sailor, and keeps to his old notions. Nobody, I guess, ever caught a fisherman holy-stoning his decks, and they don’t slush the masts any higher than they can reach.”

“She’s a beauty; but she seems small to go to the stormy coast of

Labrador, the Bay of Fundy, and those places where fishermen go."

"Small! Believe me, I would sooner take my chance for life on a lee shore, or lying to in a gale of wind, in her, than in any *ship* I was ever in. A chebacco boat will beat square to windward where a ship couldn't hold her own; lie to and keep dry till all is blue; and drug them, they will live forever. I served my apprenticeship in a chebacco boat; I ought to know something about them."

[118] Having a fair wind, Captain Rhines did not touch at Portland on his way up to Boston; but going home, he put in there, saw John, and told him what disposition he had made of his money, of which John highly approved.

The goods they had bought and brought home were put into the mill. Charlie got up his "bee," built the fish-house and flakes, and Fred soon covered them with fish. As it took but three good days to make the fish sufficiently to put them in the house, it soon assumed the air of a business place.

Fred's stock of goods was so much larger than before, that the store in the mill was enlarged, additional shelves put up, and many conveniences added; he also got rid of trusting anybody, as so large a portion of his goods were sold on commission. In order to render it easier to keep accounts, each one put in separate articles. Teas and tobacco belonged to Captain Rhines; hardware, iron, and nails, to John; molasses, to Charlie; and so on; the smaller articles Fred purchased himself.

Charlie made Fred a sign-board, and he took it to Wiscasset and had it lettered. Every day, often before sunrise, Fred was to be seen taking fish from the pickle and putting them on the flakes, or salting [119] them as they came from the boats, or turning them on the flakes, every now and then running to the store to wait on some customer.

The good minister recognized the hand of Providence in the affliction which resulted in a new suit from top to toe; yet it may well be doubted whether he ever again became so fascinated with the study of natural history as to pursue it in a goose pen, or to take for his subject a wild gander.

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[120]

CHAPTER VIII.

NO GIVE UP TO CHARLIE.

Charlie lost but very little time, after his arrival at the island, before he began to set out his trees, and, having completed this work, was ready to graft them. He wisely determined not to graft them all, fearing, as he was new in the business, they might not take.

Going to the brook, he procured some blue clay, made it soft with water, mixed the hair and manure of cattle with it, and after putting in his scions, covered the cleft with the composition (the use of wax was not known then); but the clay, after all, is better, though it takes three times as long to put it on, and is less agreeable to handle.

He then covered the clay with tow, and almost every day went to look at them, to see if they were going to take, and then grafted a large number of thorn bushes and wild cherry trees.

The crops were now in the ground, Fred set up in business again, and the baby in his new cradle. The swallows had completed their nests, and were twittering from the eaves of the barn. A pair of robins had established themselves at the fall of the brook, in the birch that flung its shadow over Sally's tubs, and the spout which Charlie had made to carry the water into them; adjoining to which was a little green plat bordering the brook, and fringed with wild flowers that had come to Elm Island with the birds; here was where Sally washed and bleached her linen, singing meanwhile, as though washing was the most delightful occupation in the world.

Robins are a right sociable bird, and they didn't seem to be the least mite disturbed by Sally's operations, but, whenever she sang, replied to her with all their heart. Whenever she left the tub to sprinkle water on the linen spread out to whiten, they would light on the edge of it and sing. More tardy in their arrival than the others, but not less welcome, were four bobolinks. Many times in a day, Charlie would come racing down to the brook, and say,—

"Mother, do listen to that fellow, singing on the top of that fire-weed; don't he go it as if it did him good? Come, mother, let's you and I sing;" and they would strike up, "Johnny has gone to the Fair."

When all these excitements were over, those natural impulses which can never be suppressed for any great length of time began to assert their claims, and Charlie's thoughts to run in their wonted channel; his fingers itched to be once more handling tools. He began to talk with his father, while they were hoeing together, in respect to the best kinds of wood for boat-building, who told him that ships' boats were generally built of oak, both plank and timbers, because they had to undergo a great deal of hard usage, and were often beached with heavy loads in them; but that he had seen a great many boats made of pine and spruce; that they were more buoyant, would carry more, were lighter to handle, and if kept afloat, and off the rocks, were just as good. We would observe here, that the covering of a boat is called plank, though it has only the thickness of a board.

Ben also told him that cedar was an excellent material to build boats of; that in Bermuda he had seen vessels of thirty tons built entirely of cedar; that it was strong enough, very durable, and would not soak water; that a boat built altogether of cedar would live forever in a sea, they were so buoyant, just like an egg-shell, top of everything; you couldn't get any water into them; and that was the wood whale boats were built of.

The moment Charlie began to talk with his father on this subject, the smouldering fire began to burn. He remembered how gloriously the West Wind was streaking it just as she split in two; again he heard the music of the water at her bows, and felt it rushing along under her counter, and thought how gracefully she rose on a sea, as he put his helm down to shake out a flaw.

Long before night he had decided to build a boat that could not split in two, and also the material he would use. There were some large straight-grained sticks of cedar on the beach, which had been cut to put into the Ark, that would make excellent plank. As soon as he left off work at night, he hurried through his chores, then took his axe and went into the woods.

During his visits to Boston and Portland, he had spent most of his leisure time in the ship-yards and boat-builders' shops. During his last visit he had seen three boats in different stages of progress. One of them had the stem and stern-post fastened to the keel, and a couple of floor timbers put on; another was completely timbered, and one streak of plank, the one next to the top, put on. He asked the builder why that one alone was put on. He said that was the [124] binding streak, which kept the boat in shape, and confined all the timbers, and that now the boat might be laid by, and finished at any time, as she would not get out of shape; that the top streak was left off in order that the sheer (crook) of the boat might be taken out of that.

Although he did not even then think seriously of trying to build a boat, or do anything more than fasten the West Wind together and secure her with knees, yet his mechanical turn led him to measure the depth, length, and breadth of beam of this boat, the distance apart of the timbers, and the size of them, and to notice the manner in which they steamed the plank to bend them. He also perceived that the transom of a boat (square end of the stern), instead of being made of timber, and covered like that of a vessel, was made either of one or two pieces of plank, and fastened to the stern-post.

Thus he knew what material he wanted. Finding an oak, the body of which would afford material for stern, keel, transom, and thwarts, and the limbs make knees and breast-hooks, he cut it down, and hauled it to the beach, intending to lash the cedar to it, and towing them both to the mill, have them sawed to answer his purpose.

[125] "I wouldn't go to all that trouble," said Ben. "The first rainy day that comes, we will take them into the barn, and saw them with the whip-saw." (During the winter Charlie had learned to saw with it.) He decided to build her in the barn, where were a large workshop and bench, and he could work there rainy days.

He built an arch, with stones and clay mortar, near the barn, set the small sap kettle in it, and made a steam box to steam his planks, in order to bend them. His next operation was to haul the two halves of the West Wind to the barn, and fasten them together. With pieces of thin board he took the exact shape of her side in different places —in the middle, a little forward of that, then nearly to the stem forward, and nearly to the stern aft. These moulds reversed would answer equally well for the other side.

The first rainy day, Ben helped him saw out his oak and cedar; he stuck the cedar up to season. The next two days being too wet to hoe, he made the keel, stem, and stern-post by that of the old boat, and put in the deadwood.

The extreme ends of a boat or vessel, being too thin to admit of timbering, are filled up by putting in knees and timber, which afford support to both the stem and stern-post, and a place to fasten the [126] upright timbers that form the extremity of the bow and stern. This is firmly bolted to the keel, and called the deadwood.

Taking the shape of the stern, he by this cut out his transom from a whole piece of plank, and secured it to the stern-post. There is quite a difference between the timbering of a vessel and a boat. The timbers, which form what is called a frame in ship-building, reaching from the keel to the top, are numerous, and are named floor timbers, futtocks, top timbers, and naval timbers, or ground futtocks. The floor timbers are placed at right angles with the keel, forming the flat bottom or floor of a vessel, which gives her buoyancy and stability to carry sail, and the other timbers are fastened to these, the futtocks first, forming the curvature of the side, and the top timbers last. But a boat has only two timbers in a frame. The boat-builder puts his floor timbers on the keel, and fastens them there, then makes all the rest of the frame in one piece, which he calls a naval timber, which laps by the floor timber to the keel, is fastened to it, and forms the side. Builders now make their timbers out of plank, which they steam and bend to suit them. [127] They pursued this course in England, and some other parts of Europe, even at that period; but in this country they used the natural crooks, branches, and roots of trees, and even to this day, in Maine, boats are built in this way, though not by professional builders. They use natural crooks for breast hooks, knees, and floor timbers, and sometimes for sharp risers, and the V-shaped timbers that form the ends, but bend all the rest. Some of them bend knees and breast hooks by slitting the timber to let one part crowd by the other; thus they can make the angle to suit them. And latterly, at

East Boston, a ship has been built in which all those great timbers that make the frame and knees of a vessel were steamed and bent.

You must remember, young readers, that Charlie was compelled to dig everything out as he went along. He was very differently situated from an apprentice, who has the instructions of his master, and learns all the rules of his art step by step. He was alone on Elm Island, thrown entirely on his own resources, and with only such information as he had derived from transient visits to a boat-builder’s shop.

He now wanted a mould for his floor timbers. As he had taken the [128] whole measure of the side to the keel, this gave him the rise (crook) of the floor timbers, but he was at loss how long to make them. However, he had now become so full of boat that nothing would stop him.

The Perseverance lay at anchor in the harbor, having come in for bait. He cut out the ceiling in two places to look at her floor timbers, and made his, as he thought, of a proportionate length.

He now drew two lines on the barn floor as long as the keel, and as far apart as it was thick; then, placing his naval timber moulds against this line, he marked out the shape and length of the floor timbers, and made moulds for them, cut the rabbet on the keel, and at the stem and stern, to receive the plank. He then took his moulds, and, going to the woods, cut limbs and dug out roots to correspond to the shape of them, and with broadaxe, saw, and draw-shave, brought them to the right shape and dimensions, which was ten times the work it would have been to get them out of plank sawed at the mill to the right thickness, and bend them.

Fastening his timbers to the keel, and measuring the width of the West Wind, he brought them by cross-pawls to the same width. He [129] next took some long, narrow strips of boards, called ribbands, and fastening one of them to the stem, he brought it along the heads of the floor timbers, and nailed it to the stern-post and floor timbers. He put another along the tops of the naval timbers, and one between; then made moulds for all the other timbers by shoving them out against these ribbands, and shaping them by his eye. After the timbers were all in, he carefully adjusted the tops by crossbands and shores on the outside, till a plumb-line, dropped from the centre of one stretched from stem to stern, struck the centre of the keel; then, by measuring from each side to this line, he knew she was just as full on one side as the other. He also ascertained that he could get the bevel of the timber by the ribbands by taking off the wood wherever they bore on the edges of the timbers.

As the boat sharpens, the timbers straighten, and take the form of the letter V. As they no longer require bending, the boat-builders saw them from straight plank, and crow-foot (notch) them to the keel, and at the stem and stern-post, and scarf them to the deadwood; but Charlie procured crotches, as there were plenty of them in the woods, where the branches of trees forked, presenting the most acute angles.

[130] Working a narrow plank all around the inside for the thwarts to rest on, called a “rising,” he put them in, planing and putting a bead on the edges, and rubbing them smooth with dog-fish skin, Charlie’s substitute for sand-paper, although he could not knee them till the boat was farther advanced. He now found that she was not widest amidships, but that her greatest breadth was forward of the middle timber. Thus, in taking a fish for his guide he had obtained what is now ascertained to be the best proportion for speed.

He felt pretty nice when he had accomplished all, as he had done it by rising as soon as it was light, working at night as long as he could see, and on rainy days. He thought he had done the thing, and won the victory.

Looking all around to see if anybody saw him, he began to dance around the boat, and sing, “I’ve done it! I’ve done it! I’ve got something that won’t split in two now! What will Fred, John, and Uncle Isaac say to this? Won’t I be proud showing her to Uncle Isaac and Joe Griffin! I must finish her up nice, for their eyes are sharper than needles. There’s Sam Chase, who laughed when the West Wind split in two, and said he was glad of it—mean, spiteful creature! I guess he’ll laugh t’other side of his mouth this time. [131] Now, I should like to wrestle with somebody, or do something or other. Guess I’ll go look at the apple trees, and see if the scions have taken. There’s the horn for supper. Well, I’ll go after supper. It was well for me it rained this forenoon, or I should not have accomplished all this.”

After supper, as Charlie sat playing with the baby, and telling his father of his success with the boat, in came Ben, Jr., in high feathers, with both hands full of scions, and covered with tow, and flung them into his mother's lap, laughing and crowing as though he had done some great and good thing.

"O, you little torment!" cried Charlie; "if you haven't pulled out all the scions Mr. Welch gave me!"

It was even so. Ben, attracted by the bunches of clay covered with tow, and the scions sticking up through them, had made a clean sweep, and pulled out or broken off every one.

"Only see, mother!" said Charlie; "they've nearly all started! There's one got two leaves, and there's two more with the buds opening!"

"I've a good mind," said his mother," to give him a good whipping."

Ben, who loved Charlie with all his heart, seeing he was angry with him, began to cry as if his heart would break.

"Don't cry," said Charlie, mollified in an instant. "I wouldn't whip him, mother. He didn't know any better. I'm glad I didn't graft all of them."

To change his thoughts, he took his gun and Sailor, and, getting into the Twilight, pulled over to Griffin's Island.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARLIE LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE.

When Charlie first sat down to his oars, he was not in so happy and jubilant a frame as when leaving the barn, after having completed the timbering out of his boat; but as he pulled away from the island, the calm hour, the beauty of the sea and shore, the glassy surface of the bay touched by the rays of the setting sun, gradually tranquillized his perturbed feelings.

"I have learned to graft, at any rate," he soliloquized, "and I can get some more scions of Mr. Welch." And by the time he was half way to the island he had begun to sing and talk aloud to himself.

Charlie's love for the soil had by no means become weakened through his devotion to boat-building; and now that the distress was over, and he felt that he could do it, he bethought himself of other matters that required looking after.

[134] The garden must be seen to right away, the beets and carrots must be weeded, the honeysuckle nailed up, the beans and squashes hoed, and sticks put to the peas.

"There," said he, "is that cabbage rose-bush, Mary Rhines gave me, ought to have a hoop to hold it up. I'll make one, like a Turk's head, out of willow, and stain it, and plane out three stakes of oak to hold it up; and I'll stain them; it's the last green dye I've got; but I don't care."

Charlie now had two objects in view: one was, to shoot a seal, and the other, and more important one, to learn to growl like them. In summer evenings, seals are very fond of resorting to the ledges at half tide, and to the sand spits, where they lie and suckle their young, where they feel safe, and much at home, growl, and are very sociable. The many ledges lying off Griffin's Island were frequented by seals; but one in particular, called the Flatiron from its shape, was a favorite resort, because, while the others were within gunshot of the island, this was far beyond the range of any ordinary gun. Charlie, knowing this, had brought, in addition to his own gun, Ben's great wall piece, the barrel of which was seven feet in length, and the stock looked as if it had been hewed out with an axe. Uncle Isaac had often threatened to make a new stock for it. [135] Notwithstanding its bad looks, it was a choice gun for long distances, and threw the charge where it was pointed.

This ledge also possessed another attraction for the seals, as it was flat, smooth, covered with a soft mat of sea-weed, and at the edges slanted off into deep water; thus they could put their watchman on a little ridge that rose up in the middle very much like the handle of a flatiron, and when he gave the alarm, the whole band could, in an instant, souse into the water.

Charlie knew that Uncle Isaac and Joe Griffin could imitate the noise of seals so exactly as to draw them on to the ledge, they supposing it to be another seal; and that Uncle Isaac had a seal stuffed, which he would set on a ledge, as though alive, and then, concealing himself, make a noise like them. The seals, hearing the noise, and seeing the stuffed one, would endeavor to crawl up, and thus afford a shot. Charlie was an excellent singer, and a pretty good mimic, and hoped by practice to obtain sufficient accuracy to deceive a seal; and he wanted to kill one to stuff, that he might try Uncle Isaac's plan.

[136] Landing, and crossing the island, he approached the bank abreast the ledge. Near this bank was a ridge of shelly rock, rising, about two feet from the grass ground, to a sharp edge, from which the land sloped gradually towards the centre of the island—just the place to lie and rest the big gun over the edge of the rock.

Although Charlie had no objection to shooting a seal, he was much more anxious to practise growling. It was little after high water: he crawled up behind the ledge, with the boat's sail over him, to keep off the dew, and lay down in the bright moonlight to watch the seals, who were swimming around the top of the rock, that was just beginning to get bare, preparing to go on to it. With the patience of a sportsman Charlie waited; gradually the rock was left above the water. At length one seal ventured to land; then others followed; and soon they began to converse. Charlie had practised a good deal, at home, by striving to imitate them from recollection,

and now had come over here that he might hear them more, and fix the sounds well in his memory: so he lay and listened a long time to the sounds, imitating them in a low tone, repeating them again and again. At length, flattering himself he had caught the tone quite perfectly, he concluded to try it on the seals; but the moment his voice rose on the air, every one of them went into the water. Charlie [137] was quite mortified at this; but it was evident they were not much alarmed, for they soon came back, and resumed their growling. After listening again for some time, and practising as before, he made another effort aloud, when, to his great joy, they remained; another attempt was equally successful; but the third time some false note startled the wary creatures, and off they slid from the ledge; but after swimming around a while they returned again.

Charlie, quite well satisfied now with his proficiency in the language, determined to shoot one of his instructors. He took aim at a big fellow who sat upon the highest part of the ledge and seemed to act as watchman, and fired the old gun. It was heavily loaded with buckshot, and the seal never moved after receiving the charge.

“So much for the big gun,” said Charlie.

On his way home he concluded not to meddle with the boat again till some rainy day, or till he had put the garden and flowers to rights.

After skinning his seal, cutting the skin as little as possible, he stuffed it with salt, intending to make a decoy of it. He rather thought he should get into it, as the Indian got into the hog’s skin to [138] kill poor Sally Dinsmore, thinking he could growl a great deal better in a seal-skin.

The mornings now were most beautiful; it was generally calm till ten or eleven o’clock; and a busier or more attractive spot than Elm Island presented it would be difficult to find. As the gray light of morning began to break, you would hear far off in the woods a single, sudden, harsh cry, breaking with explosive force from the mouth of an old heron, instantly followed by others; the squawks would add their contribution; then would follow the sharp screams of the fish-hawk, mingling with the crowing of cocks,—of which there were no less than three in the barn,—the clear notes of the robin, and the twittering of many swallows from the eaves, that, with their heads sticking out of little round holes in their nests, were bidding their neighbors good morning.

As the sun came up, all were stirred to new emulation; the bobolink, shaking the dew from his wings, poured forth his wild medley of notes; and faint in the distance was heard the bleating of sheep from Griffin’s Island.

As Charlie, mounted on a ladder, trained the honeysuckle over the front door and windows, he often paused to listen, and sitting upon the round of the ladder, inhaled the fragrance of the morning [139] air, or gazed from his elevation upon the beautiful scene before him —the noble bay, smooth as a mirror, touched by the full rays of the rising sun; the gray cliffs of the islands, frowning above, with their majestic coronal of forests; and the green nooks, here and there upon them, glittering with dew.

“I wish I was a bobolink—I do,” said he, as he listened to one, who, more ambitious than his mates, was striving to lead the choir, from the summit of a mullein stalk, with mouth wide open, wings and every feather on him in motion.

The old bush Mrs. Hadlock had given her daughter, sacred to the associations of childhood, was now bending beneath its weight of flowers, while close beside it blushed the cabbage roses, hanging in rich clusters over the edge of the ornamental hoop Charlie had put around the bush.

To his great joy, Charlie found, on inspection, that his grafts were not all destroyed. With the best intention in the world to do mischief, Ben, Jr., had not accomplished his intent. The clay had baked so hard around the scions, that he had broken part of them off, leaving a couple of buds; for Charlie had put one bud into the [140] cleft of each stock, and they were coming through the clay.

“I don’t care a cent’s worth,” cried he, when he saw this; “in two years I can get scions from these.”

He found that the pears and cherries that had escaped Ben’s notice had most of them taken, and were starting finely.

You seldom find boys who have more to occupy their attention and take up their time than Charlie had. He had wintered eight

ducks and a drake, and young ducks were everywhere, for he had kept the old ducks laying, and set the eggs under hens. He had fifty hens (for there was corn enough on Elm Island now), and troops of chickens. He also had four mongrel geese, the offspring of the wild gander and the tame goose, and six rabbits. He was raising two calves, intending to have a yoke of oxen, and there were two cosset lambs; one of the mother sheep had got cut off by the tide under the rocks on Griffin’s Island, and drowned; the other was mired, and the eagles had picked out her eyes. He had taught these cossets to drink cow’s milk. Ben, Jr., who was as bright and smart as he was mischievous, attended to feeding them, and they would follow him all around the premises; but even this was not all. Uncle Isaac, in [141] building fence that spring, had found a partridge nest, with fifteen eggs; as the parent had not begun to sit on them, he brought them over to Charlie, well knowing his fondness for pets.

“If you can tame them when they hatch,” said he, “you will do what was never done before.”

The day before, little Ben had come upon a hen that had stolen her nest in the edge of the woods, and was just beginning to sit. He came into the house full of the matter to his mother, who, taking the hen from the nest, put her under a tub to break her from wanting to sit. As there was no other hen that wanted to sit, Charlie put the partridge eggs in the same nest, and put the hen on them, as he was afraid she would leave them if he put them in a new place: he intended to keep watch of her, and as soon as the eggs were pipped, to take the mother and young into the barn.

Whenever Charlie had a little leisure amid his numerous avocations, he enjoyed a great deal in watching the proceedings of his large family, commonly as they retired for the night, as he was generally about the barn, and more at leisure then.

Although Charlie is now verging on early manhood, resolute to grapple with danger, and yielding to no difficulties, yet he was [142] peculiarly boyish in his tastes; this tendency, in part native, had been fostered by his isolated position, which compelled him to find enjoyment in different sources from boys in general; his pets were his companions. It is a great mistake to suppose that roughness is an attribute of courage. It was Nelson who said, as he was dying, to his comrade through whole days of bloodshed, “Kiss me, Hardy.”

Charlie had more moral and physical courage than Pete Clash, though he had never lost his childish innocence. He loved to see the hens calling their chickens together for the night, and collecting them under their wings, to see their little heads sticking out from under their mothers’ breasts, and chirping, as though saying, “Mother, it ain’t night yet; it ain’t time to go to bed;” or in another case, where the chickens had outgrown their swaddling-clothes, two of them roosting on their mother’s back. He also noticed the contrast between the hens, as they went to roost, and the swallows, whose nests were hung to the rafters and purlins, just above the high beams, on which they roosted. The hens seemed inspired with the very spirit of discord the moment the hour of retiring arrived. Madame Ebony, rejoicing in the dignity of age, and a grandmother, [143] was shocked that a yellow-legged, last year’s late chick, that had not yet laid a litter of eggs, and those she had laid not but a trifle larger than potato balls, should presume to roost next to her, and began picking at her to drive her off the perch, while Mrs. Yellowlegs exclaimed, “I’m a married woman! I’m as good as you are any day in the year! I’ll call my husband!”

In the midst of this brawl, the white rooster, who prefers to do all the fighting himself, flies up, and knocks them both down into the barn floor, when every hen in the barn screams out at the top of her voice, “Served them right!”

At length all is measurably quiet. A dispute commences between Mrs. Brown and Mrs. White, in which all take sides, as to which has had the most children. This is hardly over, and all about to compose themselves for the night, when the old white rooster espies a younger one on the end of the same beam, close to the eaves, and instantly calls out, “Ah, you thought I didn’t see you! Get off that beam, you miserable upstart!”

“I won’t. I’ve as good right here on this beam as you have. It ain’t any of your beam.”

[144] Upon this, outraged dignity, to avenge himself, goes walking along the beam, knocking the hens off, who, sputtering and fluttering, fly down into the floor, where they are followed by the

young upstart.

The pugnacious fowls have become quiet at last, except that occasionally some aggrieved one cries in angry tones, “You crowd,” while the other replies, “I don’t—’tis yourself.”

How different the swallows, who, having tarried later out of doors than the fowls, to catch the insects that are then abundant, now come gliding on swift and noiseless wing to their nests, through the holes Charlie had cut for them. Here all is harmony, love, and social affection. No bickerings, no struggle for preëminence, but, sitting on the edge of the nest, they bid each other good night in a pleasant twitter, and with head beneath their wing, sink to rest.

He also took pleasure in seeing the male swallow put flies into the mouth of his mate, as she sat patiently upon her eggs, or watch them feed their young on the wing. It amused him to see the ducks coming up from the brook in Indian file.

As he had derived much pleasure from watching the eave-swallows as they built their nests, he was equally interested in looking at them after they were built and filled with birds,—their heads protruding from the doors of their dwellings,—also the courage they displayed in driving intruders from their premises.

He found they were not quite so mild in their dispositions as the swallows that built within, and frequently engaged in contests with them, in which they were generally the aggressors.

CHAPTER X.

WHERE THERE’S A WILL THERE’S A WAY.

When Charlie had put his garden in order, and accomplished other necessary things, he began again to work at his boat.

If he had flattered himself that his difficulties were over when the boat was timbered out, he now found they had but commenced. It was now time to put on the binding streak. He measured up from the keel at the stem and stern for his sheer, and marked it on the timbers; then marked the depth of the old boat on the midship timbers, and measured down from these marks for the width of his top streak. He then worked a ribband along these marks from stem to stern. Those marks, which formed the guide for the lower edge of his top streak, also answered for the top of his binding streak. He had made the top streak of one uniform width, but he now perceived that the distance was so much greater from the keel to the gunwale of the boat, over the middle than at the ends, that he should get up [147] at the ends before he was more than two thirds up at the middle. He also saw that, by reason of the greater fulness aft, the planks must be wider at the ends aft than forward. He therefore divided them into proportionate widths to fill up; but as he thought he had noticed that the upper streak on boats was of a uniform width, he resolved to let that remain. He now measured down from the ribband for his binding streak, got it out by the marks, and put it on; but to his mortification it stuck up in the air at both ends. He could scarcely believe his eyes. He went over his marks again. They were all right, and yet the ends stuck up far above the marks. Had these marks been made on a flat surface, the plank would have gone on fair. It was the twist of the boat that threw them up. He now saw, to his cost, that planking a boat was quite a different thing from boarding a barn. The upper edge of the plank came all right along the marks, but the lower edge stood away off, and the moment he crowded that down to its place, up came the upper edge.

“Guess I’ve got a job before me now,” said Charlie. Foreseeing that he should spoil many plank, and that they would be too stiff to bend and work with as patterns, with Ben’s aid he sawed out some [148] oak pieces very thin, and as these were green, they would bend easily.

“Father, how do carpenters put plank on a vessel?”

“I don’t know. I never noticed.”

“Didn’t you put the wales and garboards on the Ark?”

“No; Joe Griffin and Uncle Isaac put them on, while you and I were towing rafts to the mill.”

But Charlie had not the least idea of relinquishing effort, or yielding to difficulties, however great.

There was one essential thing in Charlie’s favor. Timber was then worth very little, and it didn’t matter much how many patterns he spoiled. It was only the loss of labor in sawing the oak.

He now went resolutely to work.

“It must be done, and I can and will do it,” was Charlie’s motto.

After a great many trials, which produced no satisfactory results, he at length hit upon a plan. Noticing that his plank ran up when he brought it to, he took a board wide enough when brought to the timbers to cover the mark for the lower edge of the streak, notwithstanding its running up. He made his marks on the sides of the timbers where he could see them from the inside, and then getting into the boat, marked the distance on both edges at every [149] timber, then struck a line from mark to mark, leaving some wood “to come and go upon,” as the carpenter’s phrase is. In this way, by great care, cutting and paring, he brought his pattern to an exact fit, and got out his streaks by it, the same pattern answering for both streaks, both sides being alike.

It was an everlasting sight of work, but Charlie possessed that indispensable attribute to success, patient perseverance. Ships and boats, in their present state of perfection, are the results of the efforts of hand and brain for ages, each century adding its mite.

In boat-building, as in all mechanical employments, there are certain rules which are taught by masters to their apprentices, having themselves received them from others, by which hundreds of

men work, who could never have discovered them themselves. It was no marvel, then, that this boy, though a natural mechanic, did not know how to work plank, since, without instruction, he must begin at the bottom and work it out himself. He put on his top streak the same way as the others.

The two planks of a boat next the keel are called the garboards, and are the most difficult to put on, as the workman there has to contend with the peculiar twist which the planks of a boat receive at the stem and stern, and also to fit the plank to the circular rabbet at the ends. However, he was equal to the task. Taking a very wide, thin oak board, he steamed it a long time, till it was as limber as a rag; then he put the lower edge against the keel, and setting shores against it, jammed it into the timber the whole length. He then removed one of the end shores, so that he could take the plank off a little to see where to mark, and began to scratch and cut. [150]

When he had fitted the wood ends and the lower edge, he got inside, and scribed along the timbers for the width of the plank. It was slow work, but encouraged by feeling that ultimate success was only a question of time, he persevered till his pattern fitted to a shaving. By this he got out his two streaks, and put them on, only nailing sufficiently to keep them in shape, as he thought he might possibly wish to make some alteration in the width. When he had driven in the last nail, he flung his hammer the whole length of the barn floor, and stretched himself on the hay, completely tired.

“I don’t see what makes me feel so tired! I feel as tired as though I had been lifting rocks all day, and yet I’ve only been tinkering about this boat.” [151]

Charlie had in reality been sweating his brain, and experienced the fatigue which results from mental labor. Indeed, he was so wearied that Sally, after blowing the horn in vain for him to come to supper, went to look for him, and found him sound asleep on the hay. He now resolved to do no more on his boat till haying was over.

Perhaps some of our young readers, who have not Charlie’s mechanical turn, may be a little weary of these details. We shall therefore tell them, in confidence, why we have been so minute, and also why we intend to deal a little more—that is, after haying—in these technicalities.

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[152]

CHAPTER XI.

POMP’S POND.

No matter what year we were at Andover. There was then, and I suppose is now, in that staid old town, a certain pond, called Pomp’s Pond, in which grew any quantity of pond lilies, and some small fish.

These lilies grew in deep water, which was black, full of sediment and slime, and withal not very pleasant to go into. These lilies were in great request among the theological and Phillips Academy students.

The Academy boys were also very fond of fishing there; and the only available boat was a wherry, belonging to a man by the name of Goldsmith, who, to keep the boys from getting her, kept her at his house near by.

When any parties wished to hire her, he hauled her down with his oxen, and, when their time was up, hauled her back again.

[153] We were as fond of lilies and fishing as the next one; but the idea of being tied down to Goldsmith did not agree at all with our notions. We required a larger liberty, and altogether more searoom. We therefore resolved to build a wherry of our own, to go and come when we liked, moonlight nights and all. We had at first intended to make her large enough to take a friend or two with us, but the difficulty that presented itself at the outset was, where we should keep her. If we kept her at the pond, all the Academy boys would be in her from morning till night, and when we wanted her, they would be off in the pond, or the oars would be lost or broken, and besides, she would be too heavy to haul out and hide in the woods.

As a preliminary, we made a critical survey of the pond and surroundings, when it appeared that upon one side was a quagmire, abounding in cat-tail (cooper’s) flags, abutting on some sandy land covered with a thick growth of pitch-pine and brush. In view of these circumstances, we resolved to make a wherry only large enough to contain our own person, and so light that we could carry it on the shoulder, or, by tying the ends of our neckerchief together, and flinging it over the stem, drag it through this flag swamp, where no one could follow, and hide it in the woods. [154] We had also ascertained a fact not known to the boys—that the roots of the flag will support one; but if you step between, down you go.

What a nice thing it would have been, then, to have had some one tell us how to make the boat! But there was no one, and, like Charlie on Elm Island, we were flung upon our own resources; nor was material so plentiful with us as with him: however, we procured some apple tree limbs, where Jacob Abbot had been trimming his orchard, for timbers, and went into Mr. Hidden’s carpenter’s shop to build her.

I shan’t tell you how wide she was, but when we sat in the middle of her, there was very little room between our body and the sides; and in order to have her as light as possible, the planks were only three sixteenths of an inch thick, and the timbers and knees in proportion. It was necessary to keep a little ballast in, both to keep her steady, and to put at one end when we were in the other, and which, to economize room, consisted of some flat, thick pieces of iron. In so narrow a craft, which it required almost the skill of a rope-dancer to keep on her bottom, it is evident the seat must be [155] low: it consisted of a board laid across the bottom, with three cleats, three inches thick, nailed across the under side, to keep it up a little from the bottom; for though she was perfectly tight, as far as leakage was concerned, her planks were so thin, as, after a while, to soak water, which was at length in a great degree remedied by painting her; she was as light as an Indian canoe of the same size, which we, at one time, thought of making, but were prevented from want of bark.

When she was done, and a paddle made, one evening when there were stars, but no moon, we carried her on our shoulder to the sandy ground at the edge of the flag swamp, and dug a hole large enough to receive her, carrying all the earth dug out, in a basket, and throwing it into the pond; we then put her in the hole, and covered the mouth of it with brush that had lain a long time in the woods, so that nothing appeared to attract notice.

Great was the surprise of the visitors to the pond, the next

Saturday afternoon, to see a person in a boat, anchored, and quietly fishing.

Strenuous were the efforts of the Academy students to find where this new craft was kept, increasing in vigor as pond-lily time drew near. Every nook and corner of the woods was searched, and every bush peeped under in vain.

[156] It was equally idle to watch and see where he landed: all they knew was, that he disappeared among the flags, and before they could make their way through the mud and thick mat of bushes that margined that side of the pond, the boat was no longer visible, and he would be found sitting under a tree, or with his hands full of lilies.

Equally unsuccessful were all attempts to persuade him to let them get into her, a very good reason for which being the certainty of their upsetting, which the following occurrence will attest.

One sunshiny morning we were strolling with a friend, who has since made some stir in the world, along the shores of the pond in quest of berries. There were a great many lilies in bloom, some of which he desired to present to a *friend*.

“Come, K., go and get your boat and pick some of those lilies.”

“I will if you’ll give me your word that you will remain here, and not follow, to see where I take her from, or where I put her.”

“Well, I will; I’ll sit down on this rock, and won’t stir from it till you return. Let *me* go and get them,” he said, as we brought the little affair to the beach.

“You can’t go in her; you’ll upset.”

[157] “Tell me I can’t go in a boat! I was born and brought up on Cape Cod, and have been used to boats all my life.”

“Can’t help where you were born; going in a thing like that isn’t a matter of birthright. I have a cousin who is a watchmaker, and I used to sleep with him, but I can’t make a watch for all that; you’d have her bottom up in five minutes.”

“Nonsense; take my gun, and let me get the lilies.”

We took the gun and went into the woods; but it was not long before we heard the cries of, “Help! help!” and returning to the pond, found the surface covered with floating lilies, in the midst of which was a broad-brimmed hat, the boat bottom up, and our Cape Cod friend clinging to her.

Those were pleasant days, rainbow-tinted; and though more sombre hues have since succeeded, I love to look even on the sky from which they have faded.

There was a fine set of boys at Phillips Academy then, many of whom have nobly justified their early promise; while others, the centre of many loving hearts, have gone to early graves, like a leaf that falls in June. [158] It is sometimes hard to keep back the tears, as I recall those bright faces, and the pleasant hours we have spent together, especially in the Sunday school.

Gus Daniels was a splendid boy: how we all loved him! Well do I remember when he came to the mansion-house, fresh from home, a shrinking, diffident boy, and was set down at the breakfast-table, with a large company of theological students, too frightened to ask for anything, and trying to make himself as small as possible. We helped the little fellow, endeavored to converse with and assure him, and at dinner found him again beside us. The next Sunday morning found him in my class in Sunday school; and, as those will who are like attempered, we gradually grew together: how I loved him! and perceiving what was in him, I began to stimulate and encourage him to worthy effort; he leaped under it like a generous horse to the pressure of his rider’s knee. Many a Phillips Academy boy and Harvard student will remember him, who died just as he was putting on his harness. But then there was no shadow of the sepulchre, nor taint of disease, upon him. There was an innate attractiveness which made it pleasant even to sit in the same room with him, though no word was spoken, and his lovable and taking ways won every heart.

[159] The lilies were now in full bloom, and he, with others, had resolved upon a mighty and combined attempt to find the whereabouts of that mysterious boat. I was made aware, while quietly fishing, of the presence of a great number of boys on the the shore.

“Mr. K.!”

No reply.

“Mr. K.!”

> “In Zanadu did Kubla Khan
> A stately pleasure dome decree,
> Where Alph, the sacred river, ran,
> Through caverns measureless to man,
> Down to a sunless sea.”

“Speak louder, Gus.”

“*Mr. K.!*”

> “O’er Tempé’s god-frequented streams
> There broods a holy spell,
> And still in Greece, the land of dreams,
> Heroic memories dwell.”

“He’s talking to the fishes, Gus: he don’t hear.”

“He don’t want to hear: he suspects what we are after.”

A universal shout, that made the woods ring, now compelled attention.

“Good afternoon, boys.”

“Good afternoon, sir.” [160]

“This afternoon is so delightful, the place so quiet and conducive to reverie, I have insensibly fallen into reflection respecting a subject that has often been a matter of thought, and as often caused perplexity.”

“What may that be, sir?”

“Whether Vulcan didn’t dull his axe when he split Jupiter’s head open.”

“We have a matter that has caused us no little perplexity we want to know where you keep that boat, and we’re not going to leave till we do know.”

“I am glad to see young people, the strength of the country, have wants; wants are the foundation of all progress, both in science and the arts.”

“How so, Mr. K?”

“Because, Gus, when men begin to have wants they naturally try to gratify them, and the more they gratify them the more they have, and thus they better their position. For instance, I wanted pond lilies, and to catch fish; so I built this boat: that bettered my position, as you perceive,”—pulling up a pout,—“else, instead of sitting here quietly fishing and reflecting, I should, like you, be standing on the shore, looking and longing.”

“Well, we’re going to see.” [161]

“It would be very desirable, as it would remove a great deal of perplexity from your minds, and restore universal peace and satisfaction.”

“Why so?”

“Because you are now very much perplexed in opinion, and confused in your notions; some of you think I keep this boat under water, others in the top of a tree, and a few, that I have an ointment I got of an Indian, which, being rubbed on her, turns her into a cat-tail flag; but seeing is believing, and would at once remove all doubts and reconcile all conflicting opinions.”

“If you don’t let us see, we won’t come to your Sunday school class to-morrow.”

“Yes, you will, Gus, because you’ll have to; if you’re absent, you’ll be marked absent, and Uncle Sam will know the reason why.

> ‘Are ye not marked, ye men of Dalecarlia?’”

“O, if we could only find out, wouldn’t we hide her where he couldn’t find her!”

“This is a world of perplexities and disappointments; there is one thing I have always wanted to ascertain, but latterly have quite despaired of it; therefore I know how to sympathize with you.”

“What is that, Mr. K.?” [162]

“Where Hannibal got his vinegar.”

“If I live, I mean to ask Uncle Sam; he thinks he’s great on the classics; that’ll stick him.”

“I’ll get you all the lilies you want, boys.”

“That is not what we want; we want to have the boat, and get them ourselves.”

“I can appreciate that moral sentiment, Will Gunton, just as I receive greater enjoyment hauling up this fish,”—pulling in a pickerel,—“than you do from merely looking at me.”

“O, ye gods and little fishes, if he is not enough to provoke a saint.”

“I assent to that opinion likewise, for I vexed Dr. Woods yesterday.”

“In what way?”

“By asking him what the difference was between whoever and whosoever.”

“Well, if you won’t let us have the boat, or do anything for us, we won’t love you as we have done; Uncle Sam can’t mark us for that.”

“Yes, you will, Gus, for you can’t help it.”

“What’s the reason we can’t help it?”

“Can you help loving honey?”

“No, sir; because that is natural.”

“Is it not as natural to love those who love us?”

“If you loved us, you would gratify us, and let us have the boat.” [163]

“That is just the reason I don’t let you have it, because I know you would be drowned.”

“You only say that because you don’t want us to have the boat. You love us, but you won’t *do* anything for us.”

“No, I never did anything for you! Who writes your dialogues and declamations, and does a host of other unmentionable things? There is not a great deal of gratitude this year, I suppose, because it is so dry.”

“O, Mr. K., I’ll take it all back! I’m sorry I said it, and sorrier that I thought it.”

“If I don’t want you to be drowned, I am disposed to contribute to your enjoyment. I’ll take you all over to the North Parish Pond, where is a large boat, and sail you to your hearts’ content; that is, if you’ll be good boys and go away.”

“We are very much obliged to you, but we’ve made up our minds to see where you keep that boat, and we can’t give it up; that is what we came for. There are enough of us to surround the pond, flag swamp and all. You will have to give it up, Mr. K. We are resolved to know, if we stay here all night.”

“Resolution is a great thing in a young man. Resolution carried the great Washington across the Delaware. As I understand it, you are, one and all, resolved to know where I keep this boat.” [164]

“So say we all of us.”

“If I will let you see where I put her, will you be satisfied?”

A unanimous shout testified their assent.

“Well, then, look and see where I put her.”

The boatman, after stringing the fish, and hanging them around his neck, placing iron on the seat and paddle in order to keep them from floating up, pulled the plug out of the bottom of the boat, the ballast carried her down, and he swam ashore. There was one little detail of these proceedings that even their sharp eyes failed to notice. They did not see him fasten the plug of the boat to a fishing-line, the other end of which was attached to the boat, and drop it overboard to mark the spot. When the little piece of wood, only two inches long, was in the water, it was no longer visible from the shore, and would not be easily found, except by one who had taken the bearings of some objects on the shore from the boat itself. The boys on their way home congratulated themselves that Mr. K. had disappointed himself as much as them. At any rate, they would no more be tantalized by witnessing sport which they could not share. But the Fourth of July morning there was Mr. K. in the boat, getting lilies! [165]

“We might as well give it up, boys,” said Will Gunton; “we shall find where he keeps her when we find where Hannibal got his vinegar.”

Upon leaving those parts, we buried her like an Indian chief, with the paddle and anchor in her, and no Phillips Academy boy, or prowling theological student, has ever found the grave till this day, nor ever will.

We haven’t forgotten how these boys felt; therefore we would give such outlines that any boy of mechanical turn, who has tools, pluck, and patience, may by their aid build himself a safe and

serviceable boat.

Charlie’s boat, the dimensions of which will be given, is rather narrow, but it was all his log would allow, and he had not yet had experience enough to deviate from the copy.

But if a boy is to build a boat, he had better make her wider, five feet beam instead of four, to eighteen of length, or four feet six inches beam and fourteen feet in length; then she will be stiff, and need less ballast.

CHAPTER XII.

CHARLIE UNCONSCIOUSLY PREFIGURES THE FUTURE.

The hay harvest was now secured. From the additional land cleared on the island, and from the large field of natural grass on Griffin's Island, Ben had obtained a noble crop, and also one of rye.

He had a large piece of corn planted on a burn, also potatoes, flax, and wheat. The garden was in fine order, and everything wore the appearance of plenty and comfort. The land, at the burning of which Fred Williams had so nearly met his death, he had not planted again, as he intended it for an orchard, and did not want to wear it out.

On this piece Charlie and his father now set to work. They cut all the sprouts that had come up from the stumps, cut down a good many old stubs that had been left in clearing, picked up all the brands and pieces of logs, then mowed down all the fire and pigeon weed, that had come up in quantities, and when it was dry, set it all on fire.

Ben intended, in the fall, to set out his apple trees right among the stumps and ashes, and never to plough the ground, but to keep the growth of sprouts and weeds down with the axe and scythe.

When Charlie again resumed work upon his boat, a new train of thought took possession of his mind, which, although it troubled him not a little, led eventually to very important results. It was this—that notwithstanding he had succeeded thus far, received the praises of Ben and Sally, and felt sure he should complete his boat, yet thus far he had been, and would still be, a copyist; that he had taken the model of the West Wind from a mackerel, the model of this boat from the West Wind, and that all he had originated were the trifling alterations he had made in the first model. Resolved to be something better than an imitator, he set to work, and modelled a boat from a solid block, three feet long, and entirely different from the West Wind.

"There," said Charlie, "that is mine, at any rate; and now, if I take the shape of that with pieces of boards and imitate it, it will be my own contrivance."

It now struck him that this was a roundabout way to build a boat, and that no person could ever get his living building boats in the way he was doing—making a model, and then taking the shape of that with pieces of boards. There must be some general principles, as there were in framing buildings.

"There's some rule, I know," said he, "and I'll not strike another clip till I have done my best to find out what it is. I don't like to work altogether by guess, and in the dark."

He measured his boat. She was eighteen feet long, four feet beam (wide), and eighteen inches deep. He then measured from the keel up to where the top streak entered the stem, when he found it was a half more than the depth amidships. He then measured from the keel to where the top streak met the transom. It was a quarter more than the depth amidships. Thus the rise from the dead level at the middle was nine inches at the stem and four and a half at the stern. To be sure this made the boat curve very much; but it was the fashion in that day, both in respect to vessels and boats, to give them a great sheer. It was not without its advantages. They were safer, for when laden there was more of them out of water.

Charlie had given his boat a rank sheer even for that day; but, as usual, he had a very good reason for it. He wanted room inside, and, as he could have only the width the log would allow, he had compensated for it by giving her all the length he thought prudent. He next endeavored to gain all the room he could in height at the ends, and this rise of nine inches forward and four and a half aft would, when he came to finish, afford him a splendid chance for lockers, in which to put all those matters that boys want to carry. He measured her width at the forward floor timber on top. It was three feet. At the after floor it was three feet eight inches.

"At any rate," said he, "I have got some guide for the top. Now for the bottom."

He chalked it out on the barn floor to see what it looked like, and set down the dimensions in his book, then measured across the head of the middle floor timber.

“Whew!” cried he; “it’s just half the length of the beam. Wonder if they’re all in that proportion.” By measurement he found they were.

“Now there’s a rule for you. The length of the floor timbers is half the breadth of the beam. Just half as fast as she narrows above she narrows below. I’ve got a water-line.”

Down goes that in his book. But, upon reflection, he perceived this was not all he wanted.

[170]

“I thought I’d got what I wanted, but I haven’t. This will give me a water-line along the heads of the floor timbers, but not the shape of the bottom below; that’s what I want. There are no rules and regulations, after all; you’ve got to make a frame, set it up, work a ribband along, and squint at it, cut and cut, fuss and fuss, till you get it to suit your eye; or else make a model and go through all the slavery with pieces of boards that I have in building this boat thus far. O, it’s an endless job to build a boat.”

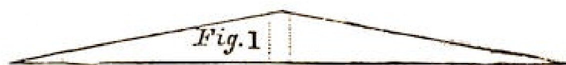
Vexed and disappointed, he flung his rule into the boat; when the slight irritation had passed by, he took up his rule again.

He flung it with such violence between the two garboard planks that it had taken their shape and that of the sharp riser beside which it fell, and being new, and the joint stiff, retained it.

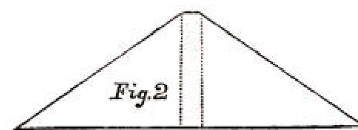
“How much that looks like the letter V! That’s quite a different shape from the midship timber.” He put the rule beside this timber, and spread it apart till the shape corresponded. “How shoal it is!” holding it up.

[171]

The sight put an idea into the head of the keen-witted boy in an instant. He perceived that the shape of the bottom below the heads of the floor timbers corresponded exactly to the depth from the heads of the floor timbers to the keel; he laid a long rule across the heads of the middle floor timber, and measured the distance from the centre of that rule to the keel; it was three inches: he measured the forward one; it was six; the after one; it was six and a half: she was sharper aft than forward. He found that there was a regular gradation in the depth from the middle timber, both forward and aft. He took a board the length of the floor timber, found the centre of it, which corresponded to centre of the keel; from this point he drew a line three inches in height, then drew two others of the same height at an inch distance on either side, to represent the width of the keel: he then drew two lines from the edges of the keel to the ends of the board (fig. 1), when he found that he had the exact shape of the middle floor timber, and of course of the bottom at that place: he then took the shape of the forward one (fig. 2).



He had mastered the carpenter’s principle of the dead rise, although he didn’t know what to call it.



[172]

“Hurrah!” shouted the exultant boy, flinging the mould up over his head with such force that it knocked two hens, who were just settling themselves for the night, from the roost, and excited a general uproar. “I’ve got something to start from now; it’s the rise from the keel that shapes the bottom. When anybody is going to build a boat, they always know the length, width, and depth, and from that they can get all the rest. If I am going to build a boat eighteen feet long, four feet wide, and eighteen inches deep, she would be at the forward frame three feet on top; aft, three feet eight inches; middle, four feet. A line drawn through these points to the stem and stern gives me her shape on top; a depth and a half forward and a depth and a quarter aft gives me her sheer; half of her width on top gives me her shape at the heads of the floor timbers. Then all I’ve got to do to shape her bottom is, to lay off my rise, making it greater or less according as I want her full or sharp, dividing it up on the timbers, till I have twice as much in the forward floor timber as amidships, and a little more than that aft. I have got the top and bottom; I can get the shape of the side between those points by my eye; if I can’t I must be a fool.” The forward and after floor timbers determine the shape of the boat forward and aft; the timbers after that are V shaped; they do not

cross the keel; and all that is necessary is to have a true taper to the stem and stern. "I feel kind of satisfied now; there seems to be some foundation, something to go upon; it ain't all mixed up: now I have got all these moulds, it wouldn't be half the work to timber out another boat of the same dimensions. Boat-building is real nice work after you know how; but to build a vessel—that would be the best. Now I'll go in swimming, then look at my birds and go and see how my grafts come on." [173]

The next night, as he was busily at work after supper, getting out his gunwale, a well-known voice exclaimed,—

"Halloo! What's all this?—steam-box, boat-building. I guess Elm Island will be a city soon."

"O, Joe! I'm so glad to see you."

"You be? I thought you didn't like to have critics round, when you were at work."

"O, yes, I do, *you*."

"Who timbered out that boat?"

"I did."

"Alone?"

"Yes, all alone; no soul helped me, or told me anything."

"Where did you get your moulds?"

"Took them from the West Wind;" and he showed Joe the moulds.

"Well, I never should have thought of that way. I should like to know how you got those streaks on, especially the garboards." [174]

Charlie showed him the patterns, and told him all about it, and how terribly he was puzzled.

"How long did it take you to get on them garboards?"

"Two days."

"I should have thought it would have taken you a week. It is done handsome, my boy,"—patting him on the back; "nobody can better that. But, life of me, why didn't you make a rule staff, and take spilings, instead of going to work in such a roundabout way as that? You couldn't have done it any better; but you could have done it in a quarter part the time, and no fuss about it."

"Then, there's a rule?"

"To be sure there is."

"What is a rule staff? What do you mean by taking spilings?"

"I'll show you by and by."

Charlie then told his friend the discovery he had made in relation to the floor timbers.

"That is what carpenters call the dead rise, and those middle timbers, that rise but little, are called dead flats. Now, my little boat-builder, I'll show you how to take spilings. I suppose you wouldn't be willing to take that garboard off again, because taking the spilings of a garboard is a little different from the rest." [175]

"Yes, I would; it isn't nailed fast."

"It is a little too narrow, though it is *put on* as well as I could do it."

Joe took one of Charlie's thin boards, planed and made one end of it as wide as the end of the streak he was to put on, and cut it something near the shape of the stem, and of the length he wanted his plank to be; this, he told Charlie, was a rule staff. He then put the end very near to the rabbet at the stem, and brought it along over the bow, close to the keel, just as it naturally came, without twisting sidewise, to the timbers, where he intended to make his butt, and fastened it; then took the rule, and measured, at frequent distances, from the outside edge of the rabbet at the stem, to the lower edge of the rule staff, till he had gotten round the sweep; then he measured only at the timbers, he made a scratch fit every measurement, and chalked down the measure on the rule staff.

He now took the rule staff and laid it on the board of which the streak was to be made, and with the compass set off all these distances, then took a ribband that would bend edgewise, put it on the compass pricks, and scratched the whole length of the plank. [176]

"You see," he said, "that this rule staff, being bent on, has followed exactly the twist of the timbers; so of course this line of pricks, taken from it, will do the same, and give the shape of the edge of the streak; that is all the rule staff does; now you must measure the width of your plank from them. I have made these measures at the end very near together, because I am working for a

very particular body, and I want my work to compare."

He now steamed the plank and put it on, when it fayed to a hair.

"Now, Charlie, before I fasten this plank, I want you to squint along the edge of it."

"I see a bunch on the luff of the bow."

"Now look at the counter."

"It is the same."

"We must take out a little there; I should have done it when I lined the plank, but I wanted you to see it; the twist throws the plank up: if you could take spilings of both edges, it would take it out."

"How nice that is? Why couldn't I have thought of it? I might by this time have had the boat all done and in the water. Are ships' planks put on in this way?" [177]

"Yes, somewhat; but they do not have to be so particular, except at the fore and after woods: they line them as crooked as they can, and then jam them down edgewise with wedges; and you can't do that with boat plank, but must cut to a sixteenth of an inch, if you want your work to look well."

"You are very good, Joe; now all my difficulties are over; but I'm glad you didn't come before."

"Why so?"

"Because, if you had shown me about the dead rise, I shouldn't have found it out myself. Joe, I'll tell you what I'm going to do, if I get this boat off."

"And she don't split in two, you mean."

"If she works well, I'm going to make one out of my own head, without any model to work from."

"I tell you what it is, Charlie: there will be some staring when you appear out in this craft."

"I guess there will; they all think what happened to the West Wind sickened and discouraged me; but I reckon they'll find out to the contrary. I do hope that neither Uncle Isaac, nor Fred, your Hen, Captain Rhines, nor any of them, will find it out till I come out. Don't tell; will you, Joe?" [178]

"You will soon finish her now; you can take a spruce pole, split it in two with a saw, and it will make a grand gunwale: that's what they use in Nova Scotia."

"A spruce pole! I guess I shall. I'll have a nice piece of oak, planed and rubbed with dog-fish skin. Do you know what I want to do, Joe?"

"It would be hard guessing; you have so many projects in your head."

"I want two things, and then I shall be satisfied."

"Then you are more easily satisfied than most folks."

"I want to build a vessel. Think I ever can?"

"Yes; you can learn to build a vessel as well as a boat; it's pretty much the same thing on a larger scale. But what is the other thing?"

"I want to own a piece of land: it's what none of my folks ever did, to own a piece of land; a man must be rich to own a piece of land in England."

"Well, you can certainly do that, for you have got money of your own, and can buy wild land for ten or fifteen cents an acre, and clear it yourself." [179]

"That's what I mean to do, when I get my money back from Fred, and find some place that just fills my eye, right by the water. I wouldn't take the gift of a piece of land that the salt water didn't wash. Then I must have a brook; I couldn't live without a brook."

"Nor I either: by the way, we are going to run to the westward and fish off the cape; I think very likely I shall run into Portland, and see John."

"Then I'll write him a letter; he don't know anything about this boat, for I hadn't thought much about building her when I saw him last."

Charlie finished his boat, putting four knees to each of the middle thwarts, and two to both the forward and after one. He was resolved this boat should not split in two. At the bow and stern he decked her over, and made a splendid locker forward and aft, with doors, and in which he could put powder, fishing-lines, and whatever he wished to take with him. Under the middle thwart he made a locker, just the

shape of a gun, with a door hung on wire hinges, so as to keep his [180] gun dry. He was already provided with spars, sails, rudder, and oars, as this boat was just the size of the West Wind. His paints were all gone, except a little vermilion that the English captain had given him, and there was none at the store. Indeed, there was seldom anything in the form of paint at the store, except lampblack, and red or yellow ochre, and they were used only on the inside of houses, or on vessels, and generally with fish oil. It was a rare thing that white lead or linseed oil was found there, it being so little called for. Captain Rhines's house was the only one in the place that was painted outside. He and some others had one room painted lead-color; the general custom being to keep the walls and floors white, and scour them. But Charlie was determined to have paint for this boat, and sent to Portland by Joe for both paint and oil.

The iron-work of the other boat was suitable for this, and she was now calked and all done except painting. Charlie had oiled the planks to keep them from renting, as he had no paint to prime her. How he longed for that paint to come! Indeed, he thought so much about it, that none of his usual sources of enjoyment seemed to afford him any gratification, or to occupy his thoughts. The flowers [181] were passed by unheeded, the song of birds won no regard, and even the baby received slight attention. He enjoyed himself most when occupied about that which was in some way connected with the boat. He passed a good many moments in thinking how he should paint her. As she was altogether too precious to lie aground even in the quiet harbor of Elm Island, he prepared a mooring for her. He borrowed Uncle Sam's drill, and made a round hole in a large flat rock, then dug up a small tree by the roots, cut it off about fifteen feet from the roots, removed the bark, shaved the trunk smooth, ran it through the hole in the rock, till the roots prevented it from going farther, and then put it off in the harbor. Over this pole, standing upright in the water, he slipped an oak plank, which floated on the water, and travelled around the pole as the wind veered, and slipped up and down on it as the tide rose and fell. To this traveller he fastened a rope, with an eye-splice in it to slip over the boat's stem, and then he could go to her in the Twilight.

When all these preparations were made, he began to think of a name. He didn't like to give her the name of the old boat, because he thought she had been unlucky, and it would revive unpleasant memories.

[182] "There's only one thing about her I should like otherwise," said he. "I wish she was pink-sterned and lap-streaked. These square sterns look chopped off to me. I think the eye requires that both ends should be alike. I wonder how a fish would look with a square stern? or a tree with a square top? Well, I'll build another, when I shan't be tied to the dimensions of a log, and can have her wider and deeper, with plenty of room to knock about in. This boat will be like old Captain Scott's boat, in Halifax, that was so small and full of trumpery, he said there wasn't room enough in her to swear. Well, I don't want to swear. I think it's real mean. So there'll be room enough for me."

All at once he thought of something to divert attention and occupy his leisure time, which was, to study surveying. The science of angles was congenial to his mechanical tastes, and he was soon so absorbed in the pursuit as well nigh to forget the paint, for which he had been longing. The evenings were growing longer, and he had a competent instructor in Ben. Ben also had another scholar, Seth Warren, who had come over to the island to study navigation.

[183] "Mother," said Charlie, one night, as they were milking, "do you suppose there will ever be a vessel built in this bay?"

"I don't know. Not in my day, I guess."

"Why not, mother? Didn't father build the Ark on this island? and couldn't he, and Captain Rhines, and Uncle Isaac build a vessel if they had a mind to?"

"Why, Charlie, the people here have hardly got their land cleared up, and got to living themselves. There are no carpenters but Joe Griffin and Robert Yelf, no blacksmith but Peter Brock, and he's worn out. Besides, there's nothing for a vessel to do, except to carry wood to Salem or Boston, or to fish. Your father and Captain Rhines had rather put their money into a vessel with Mr. Welch."

"Mother, carpenters and blacksmiths go wherever there is work. I'm sure there's lumber and spars enough here, and vessels come here to load. I don't see why a vessel couldn't be built here, where

there’s timber to build her, and lumber to load her, and take it to the West Indies, and get molasses and sugar to sell in Boston or Portland, just as Captain Rhines did the cargo of the Congress. I heard him say he had half a mind to keep her, load, and run her.”

[184]

“I never saw such a boy as you are, Charlie! You’re always planning out something. What in the world put this in your head, just now?”

“Because I was thinking what a sight of ducks, chickens, geese, and turkeys there are around this barn. Why, you can’t step, hardly, without treading on a hen or a duck! I can’t hardly pitch a fork full of hay off the mow without disturbing a hen’s nest! And only see the beets, onions, and potatoes there are! I was thinking, if there was only some vessel here going to the West Indies, what a slap you and I could make by sending a venture, as we did in the Ark! Why, only think how much butter you could send! Then, I thought, here is Seth Warren, learning navigation. He ought to have a vessel built for him here, instead of going to Wiscasset; and Joe Griffin and Robert Yelf ought to help build her, instead of going out of town to work, as they often do.”

“Well, Charlie, you were born twenty-five or thirty years too soon! Such things may do to talk about, but they can’t be done in the woods, in a new country.”

“Captain Rhines was born and brought up in the woods; but he’s been all over the world, for all that.”

[185]

“Well, Charlie, you’d better leave alone building castles in the air, and take that calf away. He’s biting the cow’s teats all to pieces.”

“I tell you, mother, there will be a vessel built in this bay before five years. You mark my words for it.”

“Perhaps there may—a wood-coaster.”

“No; a vessel to go to the West Indies.”

“Well, when I see it, I’ll believe it, and I’ll send a venture in her.”

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CHAPTER XIII.

BETTER LET SLEEPING DOGS ALONE.

When John Rhines went into the blacksmith’s shop, he found two other boys there, apprentices, who had been at work some time. They all boarded with the master, as was the custom at that day.

It was customary for the boys to do some chores about the house, cut and bring in the wood, and on Monday mornings, the water for the washing. It was also the wont of all mechanics, at eleven and four o’clock, to have a glass of liquor, and most of them had a luncheon—crackers and salt fish. Then the men on the roofs came down from their ladders, carpenters laid aside their axes, and masons their trowels, and all set down to “wet their eye,” as they called it. Thus apprentices were early initiated into the practice of dram-drinking.

The names of these boys—both of whom were older than John, and one of them nearly out of his time—were Sam Glacier and [187] William Lewis. The younger of these, Sam Glacier, had sprung from a very poor, low family, was of a jealous, suspicious disposition, didn’t love work, was careless, and rather slow to learn.

Sam was very glad when Rhines came, because he knew that the chores that he had been compelled to do would devolve upon Rhines; that he should be put behind the anvil, and Rhines would have to blow and strike for him. But in other respects he did not like John. Indeed, it was impossible that there could be any friendship between two natures so entirely opposite. Sam despised John because he *didn’t* swear, and would work whether Mr. Starrett was in the shop or not. John despised Sam because he *did* swear, and would sit on the anvil whenever his master’s back was turned. Sam despised John because he knelt down and said his prayers when he went to bed, and wouldn’t drink liquor at eleven and four o’clock. John despised Sam because he lay down just like a hog.

Sam spent his Sundays strolling about the wharves, sailing in boats, or getting together other boys, and spending the time in smoking and card-playing, and disliked John because he would not [188] go with him, and do as he did. John had not been in the shop a month before Sam saw that Mr. Starrett liked him a great deal better than himself, and didn’t hesitate to show it.

Sam, imputing this to the fact that John was the son of a rich and he of a poor man, was embittered against both him and his master. It was not, however, for any such reason. Mr. Starrett was a rugged, driving, resolute, generous-hearted man. Indeed, he was something of the turn of Captain Rhines, whom he considered one of the finest of men.

He wanted boys to work, and work hard, as he did himself; but he fed them well, treated them kindly, did all in his power to put them ahead as fast as they developed capacity, and, when the work permitted, gave them a few hours to themselves, and would let them have iron and coal to do any little job, and make any little thing to sell to boys or the neighbors.

The facts in the matter were just these: If Mr. Starrett sent Sam on board a vessel to back out bolts, or to drive them in, or to take the measure of anything, he would be gone at least twice as long as was needful, and very likely come back with the wrong dimensions; and after the work was done, it would all have to be done over [189] again, and perhaps the vessel all ready for sea except that. He would neglect to fore-lock a bolt. It would draw in a gale of wind, and cause serious damage. But if he sent John, it was all done well, and in the shortest time. There was another reason. He forged a great many anchors for fishermen, which was heavy work, and required a great deal of striking with a large sledge; and John always struck with a good will, was never tired, and would draw the iron more at one blow than Sam, or even Lewis, at two. No wonder then that Mr. Starrett liked John best, put him ahead, and gave him jobs, that, in the usual course of things, belonged to Sam. It was just the same at the anvil as everywhere else. The boy that does the best for his employer does the best for himself.

But the matter did not stop even here. It was the same in the house. Mrs. Starrett and Betty, the maid, conceived the strongest liking for John, and for equally substantial reasons as his master. If

asked to do anything, he did it willingly, and on this very account was more lightly taxed.

"I hate to ask John to wait on me," said Mrs. Starrett, "because he does it so willingly; for I know he works hard, and I had rather do it myself."

"He's a gentleman, every inch of him," replied Betty. "He wasn't brought up on a dunghill,—that's plain to be seen. I often bring water myself rather than ask him. But as for that Glacier, I made him wait on me by inches, he was so hoggish and lazy. If he gave me any of his impudence, I went straight to his master with the tale." [190]

It chanced one day that John was absent at dinner-time, his master having sent him to the wharf. A plate was set on for Sam that was cracked, and had a piece taken out of the edge. He was so put out about it that he went off without his dinner.

Mrs. Starrett told Betty to put it on for John when he came.

"I'll do no such thing! I'll not put him below that growling creature!"

"Do as I tell you, Betty."

When John came in, he sat down and ate his dinner, neither noticing nor caring whether the plate was cracked or not.

"There," said Mrs. Starrett, "what do you think of that?"

"That is just what I should expect," said Mr. Starrett, who happened to be in the house. "If you want a boy that's difficult, always growling, never satisfied, and all the time afraid he shall be imposed upon, get one that never had any bringing up, nor half enough to eat at home." [191]

There was another circumstance that tended to foster, even in the mind of Lewis, who was a very different boy from Glacier, a dislike to John; they were bound to serve a regular apprenticeship, John was not; and it was plain to see, that with his ambition and capacity he would get the trade and be working for wages long before they were out of their time.

The boys had but very little leisure; men worked then upon no ten-hour system, but from sun to sun.

Ship-carpenters worked till there was just light enough left to see to pick up their tools; and blacksmiths, during short days in winter, worked in the evenings. When they happened to have any leisure, Lewis, with Glacier and others, pitched quoits, jumped, and wrestled, or played pull-up, or ball, on a green plat, behind the shop. John was not invited to go with them; they considered him strait-laced, stuck up, and longed to take him down a peg or two.

One day, as they were going down a descending piece of ground, on their way to dinner, Lewis proposed to Glacier to trip him up. Glacier accordingly thrust his foot between John's legs, thinking to trip and throw him down hill; but he did not accomplish his purpose. John then, putting one hand on his shoulder, apparently with very little effort, sent him head foremost down the hill, and skinned his nose and chin in the fall. John was so quiet, free from all pretensions, amiable in his disposition, didn't swear, said his prayers, and went to meeting, that although they knew his strength, they thought it impossible for him to know anything about wrestling or scuffling; accordingly, after work that evening, they invited him to go behind the shop and wrestle. [192]

"You can throw him, Sam; if you can't, I can," said Lewis; "he is strong to strike with a sledge; but he don't know anything about wrestling."

Never were boys more mistaken: he flung Glacier and Lewis the moment he took hold of them, and every apprentice they could bring; and the worst of it was, he didn't seem to think it worth crowing over, or that he had found worthy antagonists. Mr. Starrett was mightily pleased when it came to his ears.

"I've twigged their motions," he said; "they've been itching this four weeks to impose upon John, just because he's a better boy than they are; they've found out now it's better to let a sleeping dog alone; better not meddle with anybody that's got any Rhines blood in them. I wonder what they would think of Ben, or this boy's grandfather. O, he was an awful strong man. I remember him when I was a small boy; he looked to me like a tree walking about." [193]

A short time after this circumstance, Mr. Starrett said to Glacier, —

"Sam, you've been with me more than two years. I've done my best to put you forward and learn you; but you are lazy and careless,

and don’t care whether you learn or not. Rhines has learned more in four months than you have in the whole two years. I shall now put him behind the anvil, and you must blow and strike for him.”

Sam was grouty, and did all in his power to plague John, and spoil his work. One day, when John was at work upon something where it was necessary to be accurate, he irritated him beyond the limits of forbearance.

“Glacier,” said John, “if you keep on striking after I make the signal to stop, and if when you take anything out of the fire to weld, you hold it askew, and don’t keep it in its place till it’s stuck, I’ll lay you across this anvil, and put the hammer handle on you till you see stars.” [194]

This settled the matter. Sam did very well after that, till he ran away, and a better boy came in his place. John now went on apace.

Just before noon, one day, he was strapping a dead-eye, when Joe Griffin came into the shop. If ever anybody received a hearty welcome, Joe did from John.

“How are father and mother?”

“First rate; they are all well at home, and on the island. Uncle Isaac and our Henry are with me in the schooner,” replied Joe, by way of summing up.

“What is Charlie doing?”

“O, Charlie, he’s in kingdom come; he’s put the nub on now.”

“Do tell; what is it?”

“You mustn’t mention it aboard the schooner; but he has taken moulds from the old boat that you and he split in two, timbered out and planked up a boat of the same size, and I’m going to get the paint to paint her; then he’s coming out, I tell you; and here’s a letter from him.”

“O, how I wish I could be there, to go with him! but the boy time, with Charlie and me, is about over; we have got to put our bones to it now. How is Fred Williams getting along?” [195]

“First rate; has all the fish he can make, and buys a good many. So they’ve put you behind the anvil, and set you to strapping dead-eyes. Pretty good job for a boy who has worked no longer than you have; they don’t set bunglers to strapping dead-eyes.”

It was now twelve o’clock; Mr. Starrett invited Joe to dinner, and gave John the afternoon to spend with his friend, and they went on board the Perseverance. John sat up half the night to make an anchor for Charlie’s boat, to send by Joe; he also made some iron bow pins for Uncle Isaac and Ben, and an eel spear for his father.

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CHAPTER XIV.

VICTORY AT LAST.

The sun had nearly reached the meridian, and the wind, due north, was of moderate strength; the time, the last week of August.

Henry Griffin had concluded to stay at home for one trip, and was fishing with Sam Hadlock, in a canoe, about three miles to the southward of Elm Island. Tempted by the fineness of the day, a large number of the neighbors were fishing near them. Among the rest, Uncle Sam, Captain Rhines, and Uncle Isaac, all in Captain Rhines's big canoe.

"What's that, Hen, coming down the bay?"

"Whereabouts?"

"Why, off the sou'west pint of Elm Island."

"A canoe."

"It don't look like a canoe to me."

In a short time Sam said,—

"That's not a canoe; she's got two sails, and is coming down 'wing and wing;' there's no canoe round here with two sails."

Henry now viewed the strange craft more narrowly as she came nearer. At length he said,— [197]

"That's not a canoe; she's painted, and has got a bowsprit. I know what it is. Charlie has built another boat, and he's showing off in her. That's it; I know it is. Good on his head."

"I thought he'd give up after the other one split in two."

"Give up! Them words ain't in his dictionary. If you want Charlie to do a thing, just trig the wheels, and tell him he can't. I know that's it, for I've suspected it all along."

"What made you suspect it?"

"A good many things. In the first place, I overheard him say to John, when he came out of the water, the day they got spilt, 'If I live, I'll build a boat that won't split in two;' and I know he never gives up anything. Another thing, he and I have always been very thick: whenever we've met, he has always urged me to come over to the island; but this summer he has never asked me once. Then the last time we were at Portland, there was some privacy going on between John and Joe, that they didn't mean I should know; there was a great long box that went to Elm Island. I know there was paint in it by the smell, and it was paint for that boat; that's what it was, though I don't see what it was so long for." [198]

The strange craft was now in full view, coming down before the wind and tide, like a race horse. There was evidently but one person in her, and he was hidden by the sails. Presently the helmsman altered his course a little, and jibing the mainsail, exposed himself to view.

"It's Charlie," cried Henry. "O, ain't he a happy boy this minute? See how straight he sits; and isn't she a beauty? How long she is! tremendous long!"

"How handsome she's painted!" said Sam. "I wish he would come here."

"He will; he's going alongside of Captain Rhines, and then he'll come here."

But, contrary to Henry's opinion, Charlie kept to leeward of the whole fleet of canoes, and stood right out to sea. He then hauled his wind, and brought both his sails on one side, Sam said, "to show *himself*."

"Yes," was the reply; "and he'll be coming back soon, to show what the *boat* can do. Here he comes, Sam," shouted Henry.

After running out to sea about half a mile, Charlie hauled aft his sheets, set his jib, and brought her on a wind.

"Look there, Hen! See her go right straight to windward! That jib is what takes my eye!" [199]

"How is he going to handle three sails alone, when he tacks, I should like to know?"

"He's got the jib-sheets to lead aft to where he sits. I've often seen that done."

"I think it's queer that our Joe, Captain Rhines, and Uncle Isaac,

who can do anything they are a mind to, should never have built a boat, but always went about in these dug-outs,—enough to wear a man’s life out to pull ’em.”

“What in the world is he doing now, Hen? He’s hauled down his jib, and taken in his mainsail.”

“He’s going to show what she’ll do under a foresail.”

“Look! He’s putting his helm down! If she’ll go about in this chop of a sea, without help from an oar, under a foresail, she’ll do more than I think she will.”

“There, she’s about, by jingo!”

“The Perseverance couldn’t beat that, Hen, and she carries sail well, too; but then he’s got a good deal of ballast in her, by the looks.”

“She is so crooked, and there is so much of her out of water, that he can carry sail hard on her. Sam, I’ll have that boat, if it costs all I’ve earned this summer to buy her.” [200]

“There goes up his mainsail and jib! He has let us see what she will do.”

“Yes, he knows very well that Captain Rhines, and we, and Uncle Isaac are watching him.”

“The captain will buy that boat, Hen. She’ll just take his fancy. What a nice thing she would be for him when he wants to run over to see Ben!”

“No, he won’t, Sam; for we will follow Charlie home, and if money will buy her, I’ll have her.”

“I don’t believe he’ll sell her, at any rate till he has shown her round a little. I’m sure I wouldn’t if I had a boat like that. I guess you and Captain Rhines will both have to wait till she’s an old story. He’ll want John and Fred to have a sail in her before he sells her.”

Charlie soon beat up alongside Captain Rhines, then came alongside Henry. When he was within a few yards, he hauled aft his main-sheet, flowed his fore-sheet, hauled his jib to windward, put his tiller hard down in the notch-board, and she lay to, just like a vessel, while he leaned over the gunwale, and talked with Henry and Sam. When he had shown them how she would lie to, Henry [201] flung him a rope, and the boat being made fast to the canoe, they had an opportunity to inspect her.

“Charlie, will you sell this boat?” asked Henry.

“I don’t know. I guess not.”

“Yes, you will, to me.”

Charlie’s taste had become somewhat chastened since he made the Twilight and West Wind. They rejoiced in painted ports, and all varieties of stripes and colors, but this boat was quite in contrast. She was bright-green to the water-line, white above, with a narrow vermilion bead on top. Inside, she was a straw-color up to the rising, above that blue—not a lead-color, made by mixing white lead and lampblack—but blue. The spars were white, the blades of the oars green, the rest white.

“Charlie, who told you how to build this boat?”

“Nobody. After I had her almost done, Joe told me how to take spilings.”

“‘*Wings of the Morning*,’” said Henry, looking at the stern. “What a singular name! What made you think of that name, Charlie?”

“I’ll tell you, Henry. I had been thinking for some time what I should call her, and one morning I went out just at sunrise. I stood on the door-stone, and looked off in the bay. The water was as [202] smooth as glass. There was an eagle sitting on the edge of his nest on the big pine. They are not shy of me at all, for I am very often up in the tree, and feed them. By and by he pitched off, and came sailing along slowly, moving his great wings, just clearing the ridge-pole of the house, and close to me. While I watched him, this came right into my head. I couldn’t get it out; so I put it on the boat.”

“Charlie, what was in that long box we brought down in the schooner?”

“Paint to paint this boat, and putty and oil.”

“I thought so. But what was the need of so long a box?”

“To hold this,” holding up the anchor. “John made it, and for this boat, while you were there.”

The canoes now began to run in. Charlie made sail, and soon left them all astern, tugging away at their oars against wind and ebb

tide. He had been at home a long time,—indeed, it was after supper,—when Henry and Sam came into the cove.

“Charlie,” said Henry, “I shall never pull a canoe any more. I must have that boat, for I am going to fish a good deal this fall. What will you take for her?”

[203] “I don’t want to sell her. I haven’t hardly been in her myself.”

“Well, there’s time enough to talk about that.”

“Come to the house, and get some supper. You won’t go from here to-night.”

After supper, Henry repeated his request for the boat, adding, “You don’t want her, Charlie. You only built her to see what you could do, and can build another. You are no fisherman; but I want her to catch fish in to sell to Isaac.”

“Yes, I do want her,” replied Charlie. “If I want to go anywhere, I must go by boat; for we are on an island, six miles from the main, and if I sell this boat, I must go in a canoe. I don’t like to pull a canoe any better than you do.”

“But it’s different with you. You can go to the main on pleasant days, and, if you are obliged to go in rough weather, you can take the Perseverance; while I go out fishing in the morning, when perhaps it is as pleasant as can be; before night it comes on to blow, and I’ve got to pull in, or go to sea. You know old Uncle Jackson was blown off, last winter, and never heard from; whereas, in that boat, with reefed sails, I could beat in any time. It might be a matter of life and death with me. [204] Come, Charlie, let me have her—that’s a good fellow! You can build another. I’ll give you a dollar a foot for her.”

That was a tremendous price in those days, when corn was four shillings a bushel, pork six cents a pound in the round hog; when the best of men, in haying-time, got only a dollar a day, and at other times could be hired for fifty or seventy-five cents. Besides, it must be remembered that Charlie had built this boat on rainy days, and at hours outside the regular day’s work.

“I’ll give you a dollar a foot,” continued Henry, “just for the boat. You may take everything out of her—sails, spars, anchor, and cable. The sails are larger than I want, for I don’t want to be bothered with reefing in cold weather. I can get Joe to cut and make sails for me. He’s a capital hand, I can tell you.”

“The truth is, Henry, I’ve built this boat by hard knocks. I’ve got up as soon as I could see to work on her, and have worked after I had done a hard day’s work, and was tired. I have puzzled over her till my brains fairly ached, and on that account think more of her. To-day is the first time I’ve ever been out of the harbor in her, and I don’t feel as if I could part with her.”

“I’ll give you nine shillings a foot for her.”

[205] “Sell her, Charlie,” said Ben. “Let him have her.”

“I would, Charlie,” said Sally. “He needs her, and you can build another, as he says. He has offered you such a great price, too!”

But Charlie remained firm. Henry was about to give up the matter, when he said, “Henry, I don’t want you to think I am holding off to make you bid up. You offered me all the boat was worth when you offered a dollar a foot. I’ll do this with you: I’ll sell her to you, the bare hull, to deliver the first day of October, at a dollar a foot. I shan’t take any more, and I won’t part with her till then.”

“I’ll do it, Charlie; and when Joe comes in, I’ll go another trip with him.”

“I don’t see,” said Ben, after the boys had gone to bed, “what makes Charlie so loath to sell that boat. I should think he would be proud to have an offer for her so quick. He likes Henry, too, and I have always thought he was rather too willing to put himself out for other folks. Besides, he has spent some money for tools and paint, and that would make him all whole again.”

“I’m sure I don’t think it at all strange he is loath to sell her. Any [206] one thinks a great deal of the first things they make. I’ve got a pair of clouded stockings in the chest of drawers. I spun the yarn and knit them when I was eight and a half years old, and had to stand on a plank to reach the wheel, and I don’t think Henry Griffin or anybody else could buy them.”

“I don’t believe but there’s some other reason.”

“Perhaps so.”

“It may be that he wants to go off, and have a sail and a grand

time with Fred somewhere, as they did before."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Perhaps he's got some word from John, by Joe Griffin, that he's coming home, and he's keeping her for that."

"If he'd heard anything of that kind, he would have told us the first thing."

"Well, whatever the reason is, he'll tell you when he gets ready."

But he didn't tell Sally, nor did he tell the boys after they had gone to bed that night, but chose a very different confidant.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SURPRISER SURPRISED.

The next morning, as they were chatting after breakfast, the door opened, and in walked Captain Rhines.

“Why, father,” cried Ben, overjoyed, “you took an early start.”

“I had pressing business.”

“It is an age since you have been here. I’m real glad to see you,” said Sally; “I thought you had forgotten us. I’ll have some breakfast on the table in a few moments.”

“Charlie, I want to buy that boat. I hailed you after you pulled away yesterday; but you didn’t hear me. We had a hard pull yesterday, against the wind and tide; I told Isaac and Sam, we had pulled canoes about long enough, and it was time we had some easier way of getting back and forth.”

“You’re too late, Captain Rhines,” said Henry. “I’ve bought her.”

“You have? Then, Charlie, you must build another for me, right off, just like her.” [208]

“I will do that, sir, for I have got stuff enough to make the keel, stern, and transom, all sawed out, and crooks for timbers. I’ll begin to-morrow; that is, if father can spare me.”

“I’ll paint her, and make the spars and sails. Uncle Isaac wants you to build him one: he would build one himself, but he can’t get the time. He expects to go over to Wiscasset, to work on spars, and is driving on to get his work at home done.”

“Does he want her the same dimensions as this one?”

“Yes; but he is in no hurry for her; you’ll have boats enough to build, Charlie; so you had better lay out for it.”

“I shouldn’t dare to build a boat for Uncle Isaac.”

“Why not?”

“Because, he’s such a neat workman himself, I’m afraid I shouldn’t suit him.”

“I’ll risk you; you’ll suit him to a hair, and ’twill be a feather in your cap to work for him.”

Such a thing as a wood-shed did not exist at Elm Island; indeed, there was not the necessity then for many things that are now really necessary. There were always plenty of dry limbs and trunks of [209] trees in the woods to start the fire with, and the tremendous heat generated in one of those old fireplaces (with a log four feet long and three feet thick, a back-stick on that half the size, and a fore-stick eight feet long), would burn green red oak, and even black ash, when once fairly under way. When dry wood was wanted, Ben or Charlie would go into the woods and soon find a tall pine which had been dead for years, the bark all fallen off, and nearly all the limbs, and streaked with pitch, which had exuded and hardened in the sun on the outside. Laid low by the axe, the top would be broken into many pieces, thus rendering the cutting up a light labor. To be sure, when hauled to the door, it lay in summer exposed to all the rains, and in winter half buried in snow. But what did that matter. When night came, Charlie filled the great oven—which, being in the back, was always nearly hot enough to bake—with this pine, and great clefts of green beech, which in the course of the night would get warm, and a little dry on the outside. In the morning there would be a bushel of live coals on the hearth, the remains of the old log. Raking them forward, on go the green log and back-stick, the green fore-stick, dry pine, half pitch, on top of the glowing coals, top of [210] that the clefts of beech, and perhaps a dry bush crowns the summit.

A few waves of a hemlock broom—whew! up goes a column of spiral flame roaring up the chimney.

Away goes Charlie to feed the cattle. Thus you see a wood-shed was very far from being felt a necessity on Elm Island, where many other things, more needed, had hitherto been lacking. But *now*, among other added comforts, Ben thought it would be well to have one: it would save digging the wood out of the snow, and thus bringing water and snow into the house, and also be convenient for many purposes. Another consideration was, they would soon need a workshop, as the space in the barn now devoted to that purpose would be needed for hay; neither did he like to have shavings around the barn, and there was leisure before the fall harvest to

build it. He did not wish to interfere with Charlie’s boat-building, as he saw he was very much pleased with the idea of building a boat for Captain Rhines. It was an excellent opportunity for this good boy, who was always ready to assist everybody else, to do something for himself.

[211] Charlie, as our readers well know, was never better pleased than when he could plan some pleasant surprise for his adopted parents. Ben, therefore, determined to surprise Charlie; he resolved to build the shed a story and a half in height, to admit of having a corn-house in a portion of the upper story. Corn-houses were set up on logs, or stone posts, three feet from the ground, and detached from all other buildings, on account of rats; but there was no objection to making it in the shed, there, as neither rats nor mice had found their way to Elm Island.

While Charlie was busily at work in the daytime upon his boat, and in evenings studying surveying, Ben had got his timber from the woods for the frame, and hauled it to the door. He then hired a man by the name of Danforth Eaton, who was a shingle weaver, and a good broadaxe man, to help him.

Together they sawed up the shingle bolts, and then Ben set Eaton at work shaving shingles, while he hewed the timber. To Ben, who, since he had lived on the island, had become an excellent axe man, it was mere sport to hew pine timber: with his heavy axe and enormous strength, striking right down through, every clip he sliced off the chips almost as fast as he could walk, and soon began to frame it.

[212] It was pretty lively times on Elm Island now: in the barn Charlie was building a boat; under a rude shelter, made by setting four poles in the ground, and placing some boards on them, Eaton, who was a splendid shingle weaver, was shaving shingles;—I can’t tell you why shingle makers are called weavers, unless it is on account of the motion of their bodies back and forth when shaving;—and Ben mortising and boring the timber.

Charlie’s boat grew with great rapidity; for besides knowing just how to go to work, he had the command of his whole time, and moreover, the boat being just like the other, had all his moulds ready. On rainy days, Ben and Eaton sawed out his planks, helped him get out his timbers, and put on his plank.

Charlie had been so completely absorbed in his boat, that he paid but very little attention to what his father and Danforth were doing: to be sure he glanced at their work as he passed back and forth from the barn to the house; noticed that Danforth had done making shingles, and was making clapboards, and that the timber was of great length; but supposed his father had hewn his sticks of double length, intending to cut them up. But a few days after, looking at a [213] sill that was finished, he perceived by the mortises that it was intended to be used the whole length: he put on his rule and found it was fifty feet, and the cross-sill was twenty-five.

“Why, father, are you going to have a shed as big as all this? You won’t need a quarter part of this space.”

“You know I’m a big fellow: I want considerable room to turn round in; almost as much as a ship wants to go about.”

“But you’ll not want half of this.”

“You know I want a corn-house overhead, and if we finish the rooms in the chamber of the house, your mother would like to have some rough place for her spinning and weaving in the summer, and to keep her flax and wool in; and then what a handy place it would be to keep ploughs and harrows, the Twilight, my canoe, and their sails, when we want to haul them up in the fall! O, there’s always enough to put in such a place; besides, you know I shall want a cider-house.”

Charlie burst into a roar of laughter.

“A cider-house! and the orchard ain’t planted yet.”

“Well, the ground is cleared for it, and the chamber will be a nice place for Sally to dry apples.”

[214] “Yes, when we get them.”

“We shall get them; I like to look ahead.”

The frame was raised and covered, and Ben parted off twenty-five feet from the end farthest from the house, and laid a plank floor in it; the other half had no floor. After laying the floor overhead, in that part next to the house, he parted off the space for the corn-chamber, and made stairs to go up to it.

The Perseverance had come in, and was landing fish at Isaac's wharf. Ben told Charlie he was going to Wiscasset in her, to get some nails to put on the clapboards and shingles; but when he came back, he not only brought nails, but bricks, lime, glass, putty, and Uncle Sam Elwell, whom he set to building a chimney and fireplace in the farther end of the shed, where he had laid a plank floor.

Charlie was now thoroughly mystified, and his curiosity greatly excited. When Uncle Sam had laid the foundation, he proceeded to make a fireplace, and by the side of it built an arch, and set in it a kettle, which Ben had brought with him.

"Father," asked Charlie, "what is the fireplace and the kettle for?"

"Well, it is very handy to have a fire; you often want to use such a place late in the fall."

"I should have thought you would have made the wood-shed at [215] this end, and put this place nearer the house; it would have been handier for mother."

"Your mother will want to go into the wood-shed ten times where she will want to come in here once."

"But what is the kettle for?"

"I'm sure I shouldn't think you would ask such a question as that: wouldn't it be very handy in the spring, when the sap was running very fast and driving us, to have a place where Sally could boil some on a pinch; and wouldn't it be nice for heating water to scald a hog?"

"Yes, I suppose it would."

But Charlie was far from satisfied; he noticed that his father didn't say directly that the room was for such and such purposes, only asked if it wouldn't be suitable and convenient: he was more puzzled than ever.

"Mother, what is father laying a floor, building a fireplace, and setting a kettle in the wood-shed for? and he's going to put in glass windows, for he's got glass and putty."

"I'm sure I don't know any more than you do: he don't tell me."

"I expect he's fixing it for Sally and Joe to go to housekeeping in." [216]

"I'm sure he ain't," replied Sally. "I don't expect to have half so good a place as that. I expect to go into a log house or a brush camp."

Sally and Joe had been engaged a long time. Joe had been saving up money, and so had Sally. He had bought a piece of wild land, and they were expecting to begin as Ben and his wife had. Sally was not hired. She was a cousin to Ben on his mother's side, and was making it her home there, while getting ready to be married. A right smart Yankee girl was Sally Merrithew. She could wash, iron, bake, brew, card, spin, and weave. A noble helpmeet for a young man who had to make his way in the world.

Sally Merrithew had six sheep, which her father had given her in the spring. Ben put them on Griffin's Island to pasture, and when he sheared his sheep, sheared them for her. She had spun and was weaving the wool into blankets. She had also bought linen yarn, which she was scouring, and meant to make sheets of. She calculated to help Mrs. Rhines enough to pay her board, and was not very particular whether she did more or not. They bleached linen, washed, and sang together, with the bobolinks and robins at [217] the brook, and had the best times imaginable.

Aunt Molly Bradish thought she was running a dreadful risk to marry such a "harum-scarum cretur" as Joe Griffin; but Aunt Molly was mistaken there. Sally knew Joe a great deal better than she did, and knew that he was a smart, prudent, kind-hearted fellow as ever lived, without a single bad habit, except that of playing rough jokes. She was to the full as fond of fun as he, but did not approve of manifesting it in that way, and exerted a constantly restraining influence upon him, probably a great deal more than one would, who, of a less sanguine temperament, was incapable of appreciating a joke, and had no temptations of their own to struggle against.

There are people in this world who assume great merit for resisting temptations they never experienced. Sally manifested that common sense that is generally the accompaniment of true wit, when she replied to Aunt Molly by saying, that if Joe was to undergo all the hardships of clearing a farm in the wilderness, and experience the trials and disappointments that were the lot of most people, he would need all the spirits he possessed to keep him up.

When Joe Griffin came over for the schooner, Fred came with him; he said, “to see Charlie’s boat.” Perhaps he did; but it was very evident that was not all, nor the principal reason, since he had somewhat to say to Charlie of so private a nature, that neither the barn nor Charlie’s bedroom were retired enough for the purpose, but they must needs resort to the old maple, and climb to the platform in the top of it, and it was sufficiently interesting to keep them there till dinner-time,—although Charlie had left a hot plank in the steam box,—after which Fred returned in the schooner. [218]

Charlie sent word to Captain Rhines by Fred that his boat would be done in three days, for he was putting on the last plank, and the thwarts and gunwale were in and kneed off.

Captain Rhines came on at the time specified, and brought his paint, oars, and sails with him. Charlie assisted him in painting her, and when she was dry, went home in her, taking Uncle Sam and Eaton with him, who had completed their work.

“Now, Charlie,” said Ben, when they had all gone,” that end of the shed is yours for a workshop, chimney, fireplace, and boiler. You can finish it, make the doors, windows, and sashes, and arrange it to [219] suit you own notions and convenience. A boy that will do what you have done is worthy of a good place to work in.”

“O, father, I thank you a thousand times! There’s nothing in this world you could have done that would have made me so happy. A fireplace—only think! I can be so happy working here in the winter, and you can be here with me, and mother can come and see us, and Ben, and the baby, when it’s a little bigger.”

“Yes, and you can set up a boat here, twenty-four feet long, and that is as long as ever you will want to build.”

“I can have a bench all around, it is so wide, and set up two boats at once, if I like.”

“Yes, Charlie, and room enough to split up boards with the splitting-saw, and to have a keyblock, and hew anything, and such a nice steam kettle!”

“O, that’s the greatest.”

“Look overhead, Charlie. See, I’ve laid the floor only about two thirds the way over.”

“Yes, father—what is that for?”

“We can put any log up there that is not very large,—cedar, for instance,—and one of us up there, and the other down here, split it with the whip-saw.”

“Then, on the other side, that’s floored, we can pile up the boards and plank, and keep them dry.” [220]

“Just so; and at the end I have left space for a door to run stuff in at.”

“I can keep all my moulds, knees, and everything I need up there and below. Father, don’t you think I shall take a sight of comfort making the benches, and putting up shelves, racks for my tools, my steam box, making the window-sashes and doors, and building Uncle Isaac’s boat in here?”

“I think you will, Charlie.”

“I’ll tell you what I mean to do.”

“What?”

“Cut a lot of cedar for planks, oak and maple for keels and transoms, raft it over to the mill and get it sawed, dig a lot of knees, and fill this chamber full of stuff before winter. But,” he said, pausing, “perhaps I shan’t have any more boats to build after I finish Uncle Isaac’s.”

“No fear of that, Charlie. It will be but a very little while, after father and Henry go down fishing among the canoes, before you will have a call to build boats. I know our people around here well enough to know that they won’t stand it a great while to see others sailing by them, while they are tugging at their oars.”

“Father, Uncle Isaac is at home now. Next trip he is going with Joe. He has often asked me to come and see him. If you are willing, I’ll go before I begin on the shop.” [221]

“Go, Charlie, and make him a good visit.”

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[222]

CHAPTER XVI.

WHY CHARLIE DIDN’T WANT TO SELL THE WINGS OF THE MORNING.

The next morning, Charlie, arrayed in his best, went over to see Uncle Isaac, landing first at the wharf, and having a little conference with Fred, looking over his fish flakes, into the fish-house and store, after which he made sail, and soon ran over to Uncle Isaac’s Point. He found his canoe at the shore, aground forward, but her stern afloat. He did not want to let his boat ground, and had just put his hand on the canoe to shove her into the water, that he might put his boat off at anchor, when he espied the birch, bottom up, under a tree, and carefully covered with spruce boughs to protect her from the sun. An irresistible desire instantly seized upon him to get into the birch. Indeed, he wanted, and had determined to, the first time he ever saw her, which was when Uncle Isaac came on to Elm Island to announce the arrival of the Ark in Havana, but the good news had driven it all out of his head till too late.

This was an opportunity too good to lose. He drew her carefully into the water, and fastening her to his boat, rowed both off, till a sufficient distance from the shore, when, after anchoring the boat and furling the sails, he prepared to get into the birch. He had heard that it was a very difficult matter to go in one; but he was exceedingly lithe of limb, a proficient in wrestling, accustomed to put himself in all manner of shapes, and used to going in ticklish gunning floats, and considered the notion that he couldn’t manage a birch as simply ridiculous.

He got in, and disdaining the dictates of prudence, which prompted to a sitting posture, began to paddle towards the shore. He was more than three times the length of the canoe from the boat, when, he knew not how or wherefore, the birch in a moment slid from under him, and instantly righting, went gayly off before the wind towards Elm Island.

With a wild, astonished look, he swam to the boat, and, pulling up the anchor, caught the canoe, expecting to find her half full of water; but there was not a drop in her. “That is curious enough,” said Charlie. He was now in a fine plight to go visiting! His new beaver (three-cornered), his ruffled-bosomed shirt (the first he had ever owned), and his new waistcoat and breeches, and steel shoe-buckles—for with some of his venture-money he had treated himself to a go-to-meeting suit—were all soaked in salt water.

He debated the matter some time in his mind, whether he should go home or go on, but at length concluded to go on.

“I can’t be any worse off,” said he. “I’ll master that birch.”

He stripped, and got into her, but sat down, when he found he could keep her on her bottom. After paddling a while in this way, he got upon his knees, and could paddle much better. He then stood up once more, and went on very well for a while. At length she began to wiggle, at first slowly, then faster and faster, till out she went from under him, as though she had been made of quicksilver! Charlie swam up to her, and pushed her before him to the shore, got in, and went out again, till he finally succeeded.

Resuming his wet clothes, he set out for Uncle Isaac’s, and found him at work in his shop.

“You are all wet, Charlie!” said he, after the first greetings had passed. “Where have you been?”

“Overboard;” and he told him the story. “Are you busy, Uncle Isaac?”

“Busy? No; you know I can’t keep still. I happened to have some walnut, and was turning out some ox-bows, just to keep myself from idleness.”

“I have finished Captain Rhines’s boat, and came over to see if you wouldn’t like to take a sail with me in my boat.”

“Shouldn’t like anything better. But come, go into the house. It’s past the middle of the forenoon. We’ll have an early dinner, rig you out with some dry clothes, and start right off. We can take a bite with us, and come back when we like. There’s no moon, but it will be bright starlight.”

Charlie was a great favorite with Hannah Murch. No sooner was she made aware of his misfortune than she exerted herself to put matters to rights.

There happened to be in the house a shirt and waistcoat that his nephew, Isaac Murch, had left there. She cut off a part of Uncle Isaac’s breeches, and hunted up a fisherman’s knit frock.

“It’s no matter how you look,” said she; “there’s nobody to look at you in the woods and on the water. Salt water won’t hurt your hat or clothes one mite. I’ll press them with a hot iron while they are [226] damp, and iron the hat. That ain’t wet inside, and there’s no nap on it. I’ll oil the shoes before they are quite dry, and rub the buckles with vinegar and ashes, wash your shirt, and do up the bosom, and nobody will know that anything has happened.”

“I make you a great deal of trouble, Mrs. Murch.”

“Not a bit of it! I love boys, and often wish I had one to make me trouble. I’ve brought up a whole family of them, but they are all gone to shift for themselves, and sometimes Isaac and I are real lonesome.”

They took Uncle Isaac’s stuffed seal with them, and their guns, and set out.

“I’ll haul up the anchor and make sail, Uncle Isaac. You take the tiller. I want you to see how well she steers.”

“She works like a pilot-boat!” said he, after he had put her about; “and carries a little weather helm, which she ought to. A boat with a lee helm isn’t safe. She won’t luff quick enough to shake out a flaw. You have to let the sheet fly, and then she ain’t safe, because she loses her headway.”

[227] They shot some birds, as the people there called sea-fowl, and, as the young flood began to make, towards night went on to a ledge Charlie had never seen before. There was a part of this ledge that was never covered with water. On it was a great quantity of dry eel-grass and logs, that had come out of the river, and been flung up by high tides.

They hauled the boat out, took down her masts, and covered her up in eel-grass. Uncle Isaac then wet the seal, so that it would present that shiny appearance seals have when they come out of the water. Then they piled eel-grass on slabs laid over a log, crawled under it, and ate their supper. Towards sunset, Uncle Isaac began to make a noise like a seal, and Charlie was astonished at the accuracy of the imitation, and actually shrank, as though a real animal was beside him. He would cry first like an old seal, then like a young one. By and by one seal after another showed their heads above water, and some of them replied. After a while, they swam up to the rock, and began to crawl towards the decoy; but before they reached it, Uncle Isaac gave the signal to fire, and three of them lay dead on the rock.

“They will come here no more to-night, nor for many a month,” said Uncle Isaac, rising up, and flinging off the sea-weed. “It was a [228] long shot, but we’ve done well.”

Charlie had been all day on the eve of making a communication to Uncle Isaac, but somehow or other could not muster courage. He thought he should do it while they were coming along, but didn’t. Then he was quite sure he should while they were under the eel-grass; but that excellent opportunity passed away unimproved. It was now or never. Charlie was glad there was no moon. He almost wished there were no stars. He managed to get Uncle Isaac to steer, while he sat on the after thwart, back towards him.

“Uncle Isaac—” A long pause.

“Well, what is it, Charlie?”

“Have you seen Fred lately?”

“Yes.”

“Did he ask you anything?”

“Yes, he asked me if I had any corn to spare, and I told him I would let him have five bushels.”

“Was that all?”

“Yes; I was in a hurry; went down to get some tobacco; didn’t get off the horse; he brought it out.” A longer pause.

“Fred was over to the island. He wanted me to ask you something.”

“Did he? What was it?” [229]

“Whether—He wanted me to ask if you thought Captain Rhines

and his wife would let the girls go to sail in this boat with him—Henry Griffin and Fred’s sister.”

“But ain’t you going?”

“Yes, sir; they wanted me to go with them.”

Charlie’s face, as he got off all this, was much the hue of a blood beet; but Uncle Isaac didn’t notice it, as there was no moon, and Charlie sitting back towards him.

“You know,” continued he, gathering courage now the ice was broken, “that Captain Rhines’s folks have been very kind to me. John and I are just like brothers. When we made the garden, she gave me some beautiful flower roots and bushes, and I want to let them know that I’m sensible of it. Fred feels just so. He says that when he was bitten so terribly, and almost at death’s door, Elizabeth and her mother took care of him in the daytime, and John nights; that Elizabeth kept the flies from him, bathed his head, gave him drink, and fanned him, for it was right in the heat of summer.”

“To be sure they’ll let them go. Why shouldn’t they?”

“We didn’t know.” [230]

“But I know.”

“How shall we ask them?”

“Go right to the house, and ask them.”

“Fred says he don’t like to, because, though Captain Rhines has been real kind to him, yet he was such a bad boy, and went there in such shape after the dog bit him; and you know I came here in bad company, and, though they may like us and wish us well, perhaps they might not like for us to go with the girls in that way.”

“Benjamin Rhines was a poor boy, as myself, and we have got what we have by hard knocks. He is the last person, or his wife, either, to pay the least regard to all these things that you and Fred have conjured up. I’ll fix it for you.”

“O, if you would! That was what I wanted to ask you all the time, but didn’t know how to.”

“There’s nothing Captain Rhines likes so well as a coot stew. It’s their turn to come to our house, for we were there last. Sam Hadlock is coming here to-morrow morning, little after sunrise, to get Fred’s corn. I’ll send over by him, and invite all Captain Rhines’s folks, and tell them to be sure and come, Tige and all. The captain and his wife will come on the horse, and the girls will walk. [231] I’ll tell Sam to invite Fred. You can all go out berrying in our pasture, and then ask them. They will ask their mother. You can go home with them in the evening, and make all your plans.”

“But do you think Mrs. Rhines will say yes?”

“I know she will.”

“Where is a good place to get berries, when we go to sail?”

“Smutty Nose—that’s burnt ground. There’s lots of them there.”

“Where’s a good place to get some fish for a chowder? You know we don’t want to go outside, because ’twould take too much time out of the day.”

“And you had rather be ashore picking berries, and sitting under the trees talking?”

“That’s it.”

“I’ll tell you: a haddock is a good fish for a chowder. Do you know where Pettigrew’s house is?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Do you know where Ransom’s Ledge is?”

“Yes, sir. That great dry ledge, with a big, round rock right on the highest part of it.”

“Run off south from Smutty Nose till you bring Pettigrew’s chimbly to bear over that rock. [232] Now for an up-and-down mark. Did you ever notice a very high bluff, two mile or more up the bay, bare of trees, all the clear spot for miles around, with a house right in the middle of it?”

“O, yes, sir! That’s one of the marks for Atherton’s Shoal.”

“Right! Bring that house right over the lone spruce on Kidder’s P’int. You’ll drop your anchor in about twenty fathoms of water, and find plenty of haddock, and once in a while pick up a small cod. If you catch a cusk, tell Fred to corn him for me; and shoot me a coon on Smutty Nose, if you can.”

“We will, Uncle Isaac, if there’s any on the island.”

“Let me tell you where to look: round the banks of Horse Shoe

Cove, where the great basswood trees are.”

“I know, Uncle Isaac. They have holes under their roots.”

Under the direction of Uncle Isaac and Hannah Murch everything went on like clock-work. Captain Rhines and his wife came early in the afternoon, as was the custom of that day, both on one horse; the girls an hour and a half later, protected by Tige, and accompanied by Fred, who, by pure accident, taking a short cut through the [233] woods, had overtaken them. After supper they went blueberrying.

“Why, girls,” said Mrs. Rhines, “the blueberries are not very thick.”

“Yes, they are,” said Hannah Murch; “the ground is blue with them.”

“Then I guess they didn’t find the right place, for they have hardly covered the bottoms of their pails.”

Mrs. Rhines made not the least objection to the girls going, provided the boys would promise to carry but one sail.

“We shan’t want to carry the mainsail, Mrs. Rhines,” said Charlie; “for the boom will be right in the way, and she works well under a foresail.”

They had a splendid time, a pleasant day; found the fishing ground by the marks, and girls and boys caught haddock and cod, but no cusk; found plenty of berries; and while the girls were making the chowder, the boys got a coon for Uncle Isaac, and shot some coots; they didn’t have to row home. Tige contributed his full share to the interest of the occasion, for he dug out and killed the coon, brought ashore the birds that were shot, appeared exceedingly happy, and moreover could tell no tales out of school.

[234] “Have you had a good time, Charlie?” asked his mother, at his return.

“A glorious time, mother; never had such a good time in my life.”

“Is Uncle Isaac well?”

“Yes, mother; they are all first rate.”

“How did the girls enjoy their sail?”

“Enjoy their sail!”

“Yes, their sail; and Fred, and Henry, and Nancy Williams; you didn’t know we had a spyglass on Elm Island. I have found out what I never knew before.”

“What is that, mother?”

“That you can be as sly as other folks. I suppose you are all right now, and can finish the shop, and Uncle Isaac’s boat.”

“Yes, mother, all right now; some time I’ll tell you all about it.”

“No matter; I know why you wouldn’t sell the boat.”

Charlie now went to work with his father clearing more land, and working upon the shop in the intervals of other work, and on rainy days. They also rafted boat timber to the mill, and had it sawed to proper dimensions; dug out roots, procured crooked timber, and stuck up the boards in the shop chamber to season. Charlie also set [235] up Uncle Isaac’s boat, in order that he might work on it in moments of broken time.

Boat-building was fast becoming something more than an amusement for Charlie: he had already received thirty-six dollars, and was disposed to devote to the business all the time he could spare from necessary farm work.

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CHAPTER XVII.

CHARLIE EXPLORING THE COAST.

Charlie rose early one morning, intending, as Ben had gone away and given him the day, to work on his boat; but the beauty of the morning was such, the wind and tide just right for a sail both ways along shore, that he felt a strong desire to go and enjoy the day on the water.

"Go, Charlie," said his mother; "you work hard enough; you'll get the boat done long enough before Uncle Isaac wants her."

He took his gun and luncheon, and started: he kept flint, steel, matches, and a horn of tinder in the locker of the boat, that he might kindle a fire whenever he wished.

Hauling his sheets aft, he determined to run up the bay, in the middle, and then follow the shore along on his return, look into the coves and nooks, and when he saw a place that pleased him, land, as he had a very limited knowledge of the coast.

[237] "I won't fish any," said he; "for if I try to do everything in one day I shan't do anything. I'll have a look round, and if anything comes in my way, I'll shoot it."

The wind was so that he could fetch both ways: he was closer hauled going than returning; but to offset this, it was now dead low water, and he would have the whole strength of the flood tide. The sky was clear, and there was just breeze enough to carry three sails without cramping the boat or throwing any spray.

Charlie stretched himself on his back, and taking the tiller over his shoulder, lazily watched the sails, occasionally casting a glance over the bow to direct his course, till, as the bay grew narrower, bringing the shores together, the beauty of the jutting points and coves, with their overhanging forests,—for as yet the axe had made but partial inroads upon the wilderness,—induced him to sit upright, and contemplate them.

He was now many miles from Elm Island, in a part of the country entirely unknown, and with land on both sides.

"How like a witch she sails!" said he; "what a ways I have come! and I know by the tide I've not been long."

[238] He now observed, on the port side, a wide reach making into the land, at the mouth of which were two little islands—a wild, picturesque spot.

"That's a handsome place. I don't believe but what a fresh-water river comes in there. I mean to see."

Hauling his sheets as flat as he could get them, he shot in between the little islands; they where covered with a thick growth of spruce, that intercepted every breath of wind; but the flood tide was running like a mill-race, and bore him along between perpendicular precipices on each side, that looked as though they had been one, but sundered by some convulsion of nature, and fringed to the very edge with forest; the spruce, tenacious of life, clung to the fissures in the faces of the cliffs, not more than two hundred yards asunder.

"What a beautiful place! I mean to come here some time with John and Fred."

Gracefully the boat glided through the glassy water, till at length the reach terminated, not in a river, as he had imagined, but in a marsh, through which ran a creek, into which poured a large brook.

The shores were most beautiful, now that the tide was nearly up, concealing the unsightly marsh, being undulating with many little points and coves thickly timbered with oak, birch, and basswood; [239] the long branches of the oaks, with their broad green leaves, stretching far over the water.

Though boys are not much given to sentiment, Charlie acknowledged a transient impression of the beauty of the scene, by silently gazing upon every object within the range of vision. Impressions thus made are permanent, and years afterwards are recalled, and become the warp and woof of thought.

Rousing himself from his momentary reverie, he put his hand into the water: it was as warm as milk; slowly flowing in a thin wave over the large extent of marsh heated by the sun, it had become thus warm.

"How different the water is here from what it is at the island,

where it comes right in from sea, cold enough to make your teeth chatter to go into it. It's too good a chance to lose."

Over went the anchor, and off went Charlie's clothes. After swimming till he was tired, he reluctantly turned the bow of his boat homeward: the wind might die; and he was afraid to lose the aid of the tide.

He was so embayed with lands and forests, that his progress was at first slow, the ebb tide not having begun to run; but as the bay widened, the tide strengthened, the wind increased, and was, withal, more favorable than in running up; the Wings of the Morning began to justify her high-sounding appellation, and with a wake scarce larger than the mackerel, after which she was modelled, left point after point rapidly astern. [240]

"What a racer you are, old boat!" said Charlie, slapping his hand affectionately on the gunwale.

The misery and hardships of Charlie's early life had produced a precocity beyond his years: constantly thrown upon his own resources, a boy in age, he was yet a man in thought and action. As his eye wandered over the vast area of dense forest, broken only here and there by a clearing, where there were so few occupants for so much land, he contrasted it with the crowded acres of his native country.

"What a country this is!" said he; "land and work for all. I'll have my little spot, and perhaps some one to make it a home for me."

Charlie had now arrived at a point where, if he sought the most direct route for home, he must keep "away" and stretch off seaward; he was some three miles above Uncle Isaac's point.

Clearings now became more frequent; framed and log houses alternated with each other, as the means of the settlers were more or less limited. The shore line, however, was far less picturesque and wild: it was regular and flat, with few indentations, except some little nooks where those settlers whose clearings abutted on the shore hauled up their log canoes. He debated with himself whether he should keep "away," and run for home, or run the shore down till he came to where he was acquainted. [241]

He did not like to leave this large portion of the shore unexplored. He hove the boat to, and standing on the head-board, looked around: he perceived that the formation of the land changed very much,—farther along being broken into hills and valleys,—and that the shore was rugged and bold. The vision here was limited by a long, heavily-wooded point, of singular shape; and no farther view of the coast could be obtained without running off, so as to look by it.

"There's a shore worth looking at. I'll know what is beyond that point, if I don't get home to-night. I'll sleep in the woods: it's a long time since I have done so. I wish I had brought more luncheon."

The growth of hemlock, spruce, and fir was now succeeded by white oak, sock maple, and beech: as he neared the point, he perceived that it was very long, with rocky shores of a moderate height; but instead of terminating in a sharp angle, or in many little jagged portions, it bent around somewhat in the form of a sickle, though more curved at the end. At the distance of a quarter of a mile was an island of six acres, very long in proportion to its width; level, and covered with a growth consisting almost entirely of canoe birch, many of them three feet in diameter, and sixty or seventy feet in height. [242]

"There must be a cove round this point," said he. He picked the flint of his gun, and freshened the priming. As he rounded the hook, some coots, that were feeding under the lee of it, took wing. Though taken by surprise, he fired and brought down one: he now sailed into a spacious cove formed by the long point on one side, and a shorter one on the other, facing south-west; by its position, the sweep of the northern part of the point and an outlying island completely protected from all winds.

The long point, which was more than a quarter of a mile in breadth, with the adjacent land, sloped from a high ridge gradually to the south-west, terminating in a spacious interval of deep, moist soil, extending to the south-west point, which rose abruptly from the beach,—a high, rocky bluff, covered with spruce and white oak,—while at the very extremity a leaning pine, clinging by its massive roots to the edge of the cliff, supported the nest of a fish-hawk. Although the growth was very heavy, few evergreens were to be seen. [243]

From the south-western edge of this sunny and sheltered valley the ground rose abruptly into rounded hills, with valleys intervening, the high ground covered with a noble growth of white oak.

Exclaiming, “I’ll not go from here this blessed night till I have seen all there is to be seen,” after taking a hearty luncheon, he began to explore. The level, at the water’s edge, was timbered with a mixed growth of canoe and yellow birches, shooting up to a great height, many of the trunks of the yellow birches having a flattened shape, which appeared very singular to Charlie: along with these were ash, and occasionally an enormous hemlock; there were a few round stones scattered over the surface, covered with moss of various colors, and clasped by the tree roots.

“What a splendid field this would make! Wouldn’t grass grow here, I tell you!”—kicking up the black, rich soil with his foot. “What a nice place to set a vessel! what splendid timber to build her of! and it would come right down hill. What a place for a saw-pit, under the side of that steep ledge! Anybody could build a stage there, and roll the timber right on to it. What a place for a garden!—falls right off to the sun. O! O!” [244]

As he ascended the slope, great long beeches, and once in a while a Norway pine, shot up skyward, with scarcely a limb except at the top, where every fork boasted the nest of a great blue heron.

“How are you, old acquaintance?” said Charlie, as they flew over his head; “reckon we’ve met before, or some of your relations.”

He now came to a place where the ledge occasionally cropped out, and the beech and pine gave place to a growth of sugar maple.

“What a chance to make sugar!—build the camp at the bottom of the hill, and haul the sap down. Wouldn’t apple trees grow here! you better believe it!”

His attention was now arrested by the sound of running water. Turning around, he came upon a broad, deep brook, with water of a reddish tinge, running very swiftly, leaping over logs half imbedded in the soil, till, with a broad mouth, bordered by enormous basswood trees, composed, as is often the habit of that tree, of many trunks springing from a common root, it met the sea at the base of the cliffs of the south-western point. [245]

“How handsome these trees must look in blossom! and the water is deep enough at high tide to sail right into the mouth of this brook, and under the trees: won’t I do it some time?”

He now perceived, at a distance, something glancing white through the mass of foliage.

“I’ll see what that is when I come back. I want to see what is on the height of land.”

Proceeding up the ascent, he beheld a level surface of apparently a light loam.

“Here,” said he, “is some black wood, at least.” There were clumps of large white pines and spruce, with red oak, but no continuous growth of pine, as on Elm Island. “Here is corn, grain, and potato land. What a splendid farm this would make! so many kinds of land, and no waste land.”

Going farther, he again came upon the brook.

“I shall get lost. I’ll follow the brook, and see what that white thing was.”

Looking through the trees into a broad opening, he saw a bear with two cubs, picking blueberries.

“I’ve nothing but small shot in my gun: if you’ll let me alone, I’ll let you alone;” and he passed on. [246]

The brook led him to a rocky ridge, through a chasm, in which the brook flung itself over bowlders large and small, old logs, and over and under great tree roots, that ran and twisted in among them from bank to bank.

It was the white foam of this waterfall Charlie had caught glimpses of through the foliage.

“There’s a brook for you,” said he; “it’s another kind from our brook: that’s a quiet, cosy little brook; but this is a tearing fellow. What a chance for a dam in that gap! ’twould cost next to nothing to build it, and there’s water enough to carry a saw mill, spring and fall.”

Following the course of the brook, which from the point of the fall to the mouth was very devious, he at length came to a place

where it almost returned upon itself, forming a little tongue, with a beautifully rounded extremity, entirely bare of underbrush, and covered with a thick mat of grass. Near the end stood a magnificent elm, the only one Charlie had as yet noticed. Its trunk was begirt with that network of foliage formed by the interlacing of many small twigs and green leaves, which often, in its natural state, impart such [247] singular beauty to that noble tree. Among these meshes the wild ivy crept and twined, half imbedded in the cork-like bark. Far above the roots, two enormous branches diverged from the trunk, and nearly at right angles with it; after running some distance in that direction, curved upward, separating at a great height, the one into three, the other into five branches, and there again subdividing, together with those of the main trunk and others springing from the surface of the side branches, terminated in a vast tracery of pendent foliage, covering the whole of the little promontory with their shadow, and almost touching the brook that washed its shores. As Charlie burst from the gloom of the thick forest upon this sweet spot and this lordly tree, among whose broad masses of foliage the rays of the declining sun seemed to love to linger, he paused in mute admiration. At length he approached the great tree, and standing on tiptoe, managed to barely reach the extremity of a twig, and drew down the limb: he then stepped back and looked upon the tree, and noted every feature of the landscape.

"Was there ever so beautiful a spot as this!" he said at length. "I must have a piece of this land. I never can like any other place, except Elm Island, after this. I wonder who it belongs to. Here's [248] everything—timber, water, good land, I know by the growth, and O, how beautiful! Fish in the brook too: there's no fish in our brook, only the smelts and frost-fish that come from the salt water."

Heated and weary, he sat down between the spur roots of the great tree, and looked up between the boughs, watching the play of the sunlight quivering among the leaves, and espied two hangbirds' (orioles) nests pendent from the branches.

"You've been stealing the tow from my grafts, I guess, you rogues," noticing the material of which the nests were made.

Returning to the shore, he found the tide was out, and had left a considerable extent of smooth, gravelly beach. He walked down to the water's edge; the clams were spouting all around him.

"A bold shore and plenty of clams: it's a great thing to have clams; we've often found it so on the island. If I had an axe to cut logs and build a big fire, I'd sleep here to-night; but I haven't,and that she bear, or some wolf; might pay his respects to me in the night. I'll tell Uncle Isaac about that bear, and we'll have her, cubs and all."

[249] He now picked up some dead wood, and making a fire, cooked his coot, took a drink of water from the brook, anchored the boat in the middle of the cove, and wrapping himself in the sails, was soon fast asleep.

With the break of day he weighed anchor, and made sail for Uncle Isaac's. He arrived there just as they were eating breakfast.

"You've come in a good time, Charlie; sit down with us."

No sooner was appetite appeased than he described the place he had been so much delighted with, to Uncle Isaac, and told him all about it, and also about the island; what large birches there were on it; that he saw a cove in one end of it, as he passed, that wound around as it went in.

"That cove," said Uncle Isaac, "is the safest little harbor that can be: no sea can get in there, the mouth is so narrow, and it is so crooked. The bark on my birch came from that island, and better land never lay out doors."

"Who owns it?"

"Nobody."

"Nobody?"

"No. I suppose it belongs to the state; but it don't belong to any individual. We don't think anything here of a little thing like that."

[250] "Could I buy it?"

"Yes, you could buy it of the state, and then you would get a deed of it; but if you should go on there, clear a spot, plant it, and keep hold of it, nobody would ever consarn with you, and after a while you would hold it by possession."

"Is there any name to it?"

"Not as ever I knew."

“How do you distinguish it?”

“Some call it Birch Island, and some Indian Island, because the Indians used to make canoes there.”

Charlie told him about the bear.

“Shall I get Fred, and you go with us, and kill her?”

“No, Charlie; she’s nursing her cubs, and is poor now; let her alone till my corn is in the milk; she’ll be getting into that; be fat then, and the cubs worth something, and we will get the whole of them. I’ll keep track of her. How do your partridges come on?”

“First rate; before they hatched I cut away the bushes, and built a tight fence around the hen, and when I go there, they run right under her.”

“You may keep them this summer, and next winter; but you’ll lose them in the spring, unless you put them in a cage.”

[251] “How can that be? I let them out the other day, and they followed the hen, and acted just like any other chickens.”

“Because that wild nature is born in ’em; you may take an Indian boy and send him to school; but when he’s grown, he’ll take to the wigwam again. I tell you, when the partridges begin to drum next spring, look out.”

“What is the name of this place where I slept last night?”

“It has no name; it’s wild land, wilderness: didn’t you see a bear there?”

“Yes, sir; and I heard wolves howl in the night; but is there not some name to tell it by?”

“There’s a number to the range,—I forget what it is,—and we call the cove Pleasant Cove.”

“That’s a first-rate name: what made them call it that?”

“Because it is such a nice harbor, and a sheltered, sunny spot; people in the winter time, bitter cold weather, pulling up the bay in a canoe, get under the lee of that long p’int, and then go into the cove, and are safe.”

“Does anybody own that?”

“Yes, there’s a man in Salem owns twelve hundred and eighty acres, and that is part of it.”

[252] “Would he sell it?”

“I suppose so. He has sold a good deal.”

“What would he ask an acre for that part of it?”

“There are no masts or spars on it of any great amount. It’s settling land—hard wood growth. It ought not to bring more than fifteen cents an acre; but he don’t care whether he sells or not, and might ask fifty.”

“Do you know him?”

“Yes, indeed; known him this twenty years. He stopped at my house when he bought that land, and three times as much more. I carried the chain for Squire Eveleth when he run it out.”

“Uncle Isaac, I want a piece of land. You don’t know how much I’ve thought about it! None of my folks ever owned an inch of land. Night and day I have thought and dreamed about it, and I want *that,* and no other in this world. The moment I came round the point into the cove, and saw the sun shining on the trees, something said to me, That’s your home.”

“I know what that feeling is, and all about it; and if you feel that way, you’ll never be worth a cent, or be contented in any other spot. [253] There’s something comes out of the soil you love that puts the strength into your arm, and the courage into your heart.”

“But how shall I get it?”

“Buy it. You’ve got money enough, when Fred pays you, to buy enough for a farm, and more too.”

“But before that, some one that has got money to pay down might see it, like it just as well as I have, and buy it right off; perhaps it’s sold now.”

“No, it ain’t. People are not so fond of going on to wild land. They had rather buy land that has been partly cleared. I’ll write to Mr. Pickering, and get the price, and the refusal of it, and I’ll buy it for you. When you get your money from Fred, you can pay me. You’ll have enough from your boats, probably, to buy two hundred acres; and when we hear from him, I’ll go over it with you. There’s a heavy growth of pine back from the shore: I should want that; and there’s a pond, that the brook is an outlet of: I should want command of

that water. The brook is a mill privilege. Boards will be worth something by and by; not in my day, perhaps, but you are young, and can afford to wait.”

“Then there’s bears on it, Uncle Isaac. It is worth a good deal more for that.”

“Most people wouldn’t consider that any privilege.”

“O, I should!” [254]

“But the thing that toles the bears there, and makes them like it, is a privilege.”

“What is that?”

“Acorns. There’s a master sight of acorns and beech-nuts on the whole of that range along the shore, and hog-brakes in the swales. Hogs can get their living in the woods, and, by clamming on the beach, all the summer and fall.”

“Won’t the bears kill ’em?”

“Once in a while one; but then you can kill the bear, and he’ll be worth as much as the hog. I would rather have ten bears round than one wolf.”

“You know, Charlie,” said Hannah Murch, “bear’s grease is good to make boys limber to wrestle. If you had served my bed-clothes as you did Sally’s, I don’t know what I should have done to you.”

“I would have spoilt all the beds in the house for the sake of throwing Henry Griffin.”

“It appears to me you are beginning in good season to get a farm. You are not going to housekeeping?”

“The sooner the better,” said Uncle Isaac. “When a rat gets a hole, he carries everything to it.”

“No, Mrs. Murch, nothing of that kind; but I do want a piece of the soil that I can walk over and call my own, and have crops of my own, that nobody can take from me. I love to work with tools; but I love the earth that God made, and the woods. I love that spot, and am afraid I shall lose it if I don’t get it now. If I can only know it’s mine, that’s enough. Mrs. Murch, I think there’s something substantial about the earth.” [255]

“So there is, Charlie; and when you’ve got the land, you’ve something under your feet, and it can lay there till you want it. There will be no taxes of any amount till there’s a road made through it.”

“Hannah,” said Uncle Isaac, “the Bounty is loading with bark and wood for Salem, in Wilson’s Cove. I’ll send my letter by her.”

“And I,” said Charlie, “must go home.”

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CHAPTER XVIII.

CHARLIE BECOMES A FREEHOLDER.

Charlie was in high spirits when he weighed anchor; but on the way "a change came over the spirit of his dream."

He began to reproach himself that, carried away by the attractions of Pleasant Cove, and the impulse of the moment, he had gone so far without consulting his adopted parents. "Father will think that I ought to have asked him. He would have bought the land for me if he had thought best I should have it."

When he reached the island, he told them all about it. Ben and Sally seemed to understand his feelings perfectly.

"It would not have looked well," said Sally, "after Uncle Isaac offered to buy the land for you not to have accepted the offer."

"You could not have found a better piece of land, or a more pleasant spot," said Ben. "That flat next to the beach is splendid wheat land, and there's an excellent boiling spring on the eastern [257] side of the cove."

"I didn't see that, but I saw the brook."

The evenings were now quite long, and Charlie made rapid progress in surveying. Uncle Isaac's boat also grew apace under the new impulse he had received. Every stroke of the hammer was so much towards buying land.

Ben's prediction in respect to increase of business was abundantly verified. After Uncle Isaac's boat was finished and gone, Charlie set up another, without any model or guide except his eye, and the knowledge of proportions which he had gained from the other boats. He endeavored to unite the sailing qualities of the West Wind with a greater capacity of burden, and ability to carry sail with a less quantity of ballast.

Charlie did not intend to sell this boat, but to make her large and able for rough weather and heavy seas, and keep her for a family boat to go to the main land in. He had of late been smitten with a very great desire to go to meeting on the main land, and to dine at Captain Rhines's, and he knew that his mother would like to go with him, as she never was afraid of anything. But although he did not intend to sell this boat, he designed her for a permanent model of [258] others to be sold. He perceived that the other boats, though infinitely better than the dug-outs to get about in, were not what was required for fishing; that, though great sailers, they were not capacious enough to hold fish and ballast both, and required too much ballast to keep them on their legs. It is by no means an easy attainment to unite in one boat all the elements of a good fishing-boat, that will sail well, row easy, and save life in bad weather. A fisherman wants a boat that will row easy, for he often starts away at two o'clock in the morning, when it is generally calm, and rows seven or eight miles, perhaps more, to reach his ground. He cannot go without ballast, and he can get none after he is outside, except he gets fish, which is by no means certain. On the other hand, if he gets a large quantity of fish, he can throw some of his ballast overboard, and he doesn't want to row half a ton of ballast eight or ten miles. But if his boat is stiff, and will carry reefed sails, or a whole foresail, with a moderate quantity of ballast that he can keep in all the time, not sufficient to overload her when fish are plenty, and yet sufficient to make her safe, he is suited.

[259] It is not a great deal, to be sure, to row four or five hundred weight of ballast more, for once or twice, but when you have got to do it year in and year out, when tired and hungry, it is a good deal. A fisherman wants a boat, too, that is smart, stiff to bear a hard blow, buoyant, will mind her helm, and work quick to clear an ugly sea, and sail well on a wind. They often go twenty miles from land, tempted by weather that appears "hard and good," to particular shoals, where they get large fish, when the weather suddenly changes, and in an open boat they must beat in, and they do beat in. There are boats now built at Hampton or Seabrook that would beat into Boston Bay, with a man in them that knew how to handle them in a gale of wind, when a ship couldn't do it; for, when a big ship gets down to close-reefs, she won't do much on a wind. The people then knew where the fish were as well as we do now; but they couldn't go off to those places except in pinkies, and, when they

ventured to the inner shoals, reefs, and hake ground in their canoes, it was real slavery. They had to row in if the wind came ahead, or it was calm, and were liable to be blown to sea and lost.

Charlie meant to build a boat that would answer these requirements as far as he was able. Then he meant to take moulds of every timber and every streak of plank as he went along, so that [260] he might work from them, and build another of the same size, with one half the labor.

This he did, and built a boat twenty-two feet long on top, sharp under water, and deeper in proportion to her length than the others, with a pink-stern and lap-streak. It was less work to put on the planks with a lap than with a calking-seam; there was less need of accuracy; for, if the plank lapped too much in any place, you had only to take it off with a plane or chisel.

When his boat was finished, he painted her by the streaks, and she looked as neat as a pin. He thought she was a great deal handsomer than a square stern; so did everybody.

When anchored beside the Perseverance, she looked so much like her that he christened her Perseverance, Jr. As soon as the spars and sails were made, Charlie and the whole family, except Sally Merrithew and the baby, went over to meeting. People then came great distances to meeting, taking a luncheon of “turnovers,” or doughnuts and cheese, and going out to walk in the burying-ground to eat it, the intermission between services being short.

[261] The boat was anchored in the cove, right in front of the church, and many were the curious eyes that scanned her proportions during the intermission.

Henry Griffin had enjoyed his boat but three weeks, when he came on to the island, and wanted to buy the Perseverance, Jr.

“What do you want of two boats?”

“There’s a man in Wiscasset wants mine for a pleasure-boat. I think yours would be a great deal better boat for fishing in the winter, in rough weather. I will sell mine, and buy yours.”

“I won’t sell this boat, for we want just such a boat to go over to meeting in. We can go in her dry, by carrying short sail, any time, almost; but I’ll build you one just like her.”

“When?”

“I’ll begin to-morrow.”

“Then build her, and I’ll sell this.”

In the course of a fortnight he had three orders more; all wanted them as soon as possible, they said. The boats were rather large, but just the thing for two men.

He then hired Robert Yelf to work with him, and sent some moulds over to Uncle Isaac, who dug out roots for him, and procured crooks for knees and breast-hooks. When he had filled these orders, there was a lull, and Charlie went to farming and [262] making preparations for boat-building in future.

Having now mastered the principles of surveying by means of a Gunter’s scale and chain, which Ben possessed, and a cross staff which he had made under his father’s directions, he began to practise by measuring the cleared land on the island and the points, and making and platting the different pieces. He was anxious to learn the use of the compass, and to run lines by it; but he had no land compass, and here, with most boys, the matter would have rested; but unaccustomed to yield to difficulties, Charlie resolved to make a boat compass serve his turn—the very one that had been the instrument of saving his life in the snow squall.

His first attempt was to make a tripod. Upon a piece of oak board he drew a circle two inches larger than the compass, with projections at each side six inches long, and sawed it out by the marks: he then drew another circle, two inches inside of this, and sawed down to it, cutting out the wood so as to leave two projections on each side, two inches wide and two long: in each of these he cut a slot on the underside, also in one of the end ones, to [263] receive a tenon cut on the end of each of the legs. By heating a wrought nail he made rivets, upon which his legs traversed easily, and fastened the compass to a wooden peg in the centre. A land compass has brass perpendiculars at each end of the base upon which it sits, with slits in them, by which to sight. In order to represent these, he made two holes in the ends of his base, in line with the needle of the compass, and put in two knitting needles, making them perpendicular with a plumb-line: thus, by setting up a

stake, he had three objects in range, and could sight accurately. A land compass has a spirit level on its frame, by which to level it, screws to keep it in place, and a ball and socket joint upon which it moves; but by spreading or contracting the legs of his tripod, and by means of a plumb-line (the great resource of all mechanics in emergencies), he contrived to depress, elevate, and adjust the compass, measure land, and run a line accurately, and in a manner which Ben, after looking over his work, pronounced correct.

“Survey the island, Charlie,” said Ben; “I should like to know how much there is in it. I will carry the chain for you, and help you about measuring the points.”

“Don’t you know how much land you bought?”

[264] “No; I bought it for so much; had it for more or less—what Mr. Welch’s father had it for when he bought it; I expect it overruns.”

“I should like to know, too,” said Uncle Isaac, who had come to the island that morning. “I’ve heard the most talk back and forth about this island: some say Ben hasn’t got the land he paid for, some say he’s got more. You need three to work in the woods. I’ll carry the chain.”

“I had it for seventeen hundred acres,” said Ben.

“Well, there’s all that, if not more.”

They ran lines north-east and south-west the length of the island, and parallel to each other at eighty rods apart; then ran cross lines, also parallel, eighty rods apart; blazed a tree at every intersection, and numbered the ranges included in these spaces, and put them down in a field-book. As the shore line was irregular, they measured the shore sections by offsets from the range lines.

Charlie then made a plat of it. The island contained nineteen hundred and thirty-five acres, one rood, twenty-seven rods, five links.

“That’s not much more than there ought to be,” said Uncle Isaac; “you have measured the whole; but they didn’t call these points anything, and they of course made allowance for the squawk swamp.”

[265] They were five days in doing it, and it afforded Charlie excellent practice. A short time after that, Ben was sent for to run a large lot of timber land. He hired Squire Eveleth’s compass, and took Charlie with him, when he had an opportunity to perfect his knowledge of that instrument.

In due time Uncle Isaac received a letter from Salem. The price of the land was seventy-five cents an acre. Uncle Isaac, Ben, and Charlie went to look over it.

“It is too much,” said Uncle Isaac; “seventy-five cents an acre! farther back, you can buy it for twelve or fifteen cents.”

“What of that?” replied Ben: “no chance to get a thing to eat, except what you get from the land, and while you are clearing, almost starve to death; have to hunt and live on beech leaves and acorns; while here are clams at the shore, and fish and lobsters in the sea, to fall back upon; besides a brook with a fine mill privilege.”

“Better than that, Ben; there are plenty of pickerel in this pond, and the alewives, smelts, and frost-fish come up here into the brook, and any amount of eels.”

“There is still another great advantage you have overlooked: [266] there is a swale made by the flowing back of the water, where the beavers once had a dam, that will cut six or seven tons of hay; that would be everything to a man going to settle on it. With the hay in that swale for winter, browse in this hard wood growth in summer, he could keep cattle right off.”

The pond contained over two hundred acres, and they found that in order to obtain that, and a portion of the heaviest pine growth back of it, it would be necessary for Charlie to buy about four hundred acres, or more.

“Buy it, Charlie,” said Ben; “you will then have the mill privilege and the timber both, and can do well with it.”

Charlie concluded to take it; and Uncle Isaac wrote to Salem to close the bargain. Ben and Charlie now went to Boston and procured their trees, taking up a load of fish to Mr. Welch, for Fred. Mr. Welch gave Charlie a Gunter’s scale, a land compass and chain, with all the appurtenances.

They received a letter from Isaac Murch, to the great delight of all, especially of Captain Rhines—the readers of the Ark will

remember him. Mr. Welch told the captain that he had received a letter at the same time from Captain Radford, in which he said Isaac was now second mate of the Congress, an excellent seaman, and good navigator; and he should give him a mate's birth at the first opportunity. [267]

"He's my boy," said the captain, highly gratified; "for I brought him to life when he was good as dead, and Flour and I educated him. I'll risk *him* anywhere; that will be good news for his parents and Uncle Isaac."

Fred had orders from Mr. Welch for more fish; Joe Griffin likewise.

Charlie was now abundantly supplied with material for building boats, and had more orders. The harvest being over, he was assisted by his father. In a tight shop, with a rousing fire, they had nice times together.

Nobody would fish in a canoe now; and as demand always creates supply, an ingenious man at Wiscasset (a ship carpenter, who had been injured by a fall, and could not endure the heavy work of the ship-yard) saw one of Charlie's boats, took the dimensions of her, and set up boat-building. Uncle Sam Elwell also built a boat for himself, and other ingenious people did the same; but Charlie's boats outsailed all the others, and were preferred; there was something about them the others could not imitate. Uncle Isaac said there was a soul in them; they were alive.

The Perseverance made several trips, and Fred obtained his goods in that way easily, and at small expense for freight, and paid Charlie his money, with a handsome profit, much more than the money would have earned at interest. [268]

The last time the Perseverance went to Boston, Sally went in her, baby and all. Mr. Welch and his wife were delighted to see her. Mrs. Welch went shopping with her, and she purchased furniture for the house, and dishes to take the place of the old pewter, a large looking-glass, and a globe to hang on the wall in the front room, dresses for herself, and some presents for Ben and Charlie.

Mr. Welch declared the child should be named for him, and so it was.

Charlie, having received his money, was naturally anxious to close the bargain for the land, of which Uncle Isaac had obtained the refusal.

In going over it the first time, they had merely guessed at the number of acres it would be necessary to buy in order to take in the pond, the pine timber, and the whole of the brook.

Men like Ben and Uncle Isaac will, by pacing, come quite near to the contents of a piece of land; but it was now necessary to measure and describe it sufficiently to make a deed.

Charlie wanted the cove, the long point, a growth of white oak which extended several rods beyond the short point, and the pond and brook. These he meant to have, even if he had to buy more land than he actually wanted. Mr. Pickering wrote to Uncle Isaac, who was an old acquaintance of his, that he was willing to take Rhines's survey, if he would go with them and carry the chain. [269]

When they arrived at the spot with the new instruments Mr. Welch had given him, Charlie wanted to begin at the shore line, above Long Point; but Ben told him if he did he would lose the point, as he could only hold what was within his lines. They therefore began on the shore, below the short point, ran the lines, and made a description by which to write the deed, as follows: Beginning at a blazed yellow birch tree, standing in a split rock on the shore, twenty rods south-west from Bluff Point, so called; thence running south-east four hundred and fifty rods to a blazed pine, marked C. B. (Charlie's initials), south-east corner; thence north-east one hundred and fifty rods to a blazed pine tree, marked C. B., north-east corner; thence north-west four hundred and six rods to a blazed red oak tree on the shore, marked C. B.; thence along the shore of Pleasant Point, so called, at low-water mark, to the point of the high ledge at the westerly end of the same; thence west by south forty rods to the south-westerly end of said Pleasant Point at low-water mark; the line thence to the point begun at, being below low-water mark, across the mouth of Pleasant Cove, containing three hundred and sixty-three acres, more or less, thirty-seven being deducted for the contents of Pleasant Cove. [270]

"I must go to the brook and get a drink of water," said Charlie,

when they had finished.

“We’ll go to Cross-root Spring,” said Uncle Isaac. “That’s something you’ve not seen yet, and it’s one of the best pieces of property you’ve got.”

Uncle Isaac led the way along the shore to the head of the cove. There the land rose gradually into a very gentle swell. A few rods from the water’s edge, on the breast of this slight elevation, were two large birches, whose branches interlocked; two of their main roots, crossing each other, grew together, and between them quivered, in transient gleams of sunlight, the clear waters of a noble spring.

Charlie looked down into it. The white sand was rolling over and over, as the bubbling water flung it up from the bottom. All around were the footprints of sea and land birds and animals. Uncle Isaac pointed out the track of a wolf, coons, and the print of a bear’s foot. [271]

“There,” said he, “is a well that God Almighty dug for the good of his creatures. You see they know where it is. More red than white men have drank at this spring. It is a priceless gift! Let us drink, and remember the Giver.”

These details may not be very interesting to us, but they were intensely so to Charlie, who felt his hand was almost upon the prize he had so long desired. It had already been productive of one good result. It had given him an excellent practical knowledge of surveying and mathematics, most useful in his mechanical pursuits.

When Ben had written out the description, after returning to the island, he gave it to Charlie, and said, “When you pay your money, and get a deed of the land thus described, you’ve got all the land that belongs to you, and as good a farm as there is in town.”

In due time Charlie received his deed, which, he being a minor, ran to Uncle Isaac in trust for him.

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CHAPTER XIX.

CHARLIE IN THE SHIP-YARD.

Perhaps the readers of the previous volumes will recollect that Isaac Murch became so much interested in the account given him, in Havana, by Captain Rhines, of the noble conduct of Flour in respect to his old master, aiding him in his poverty, and also of his kindness and fidelity to himself when sick, that he determined to teach him to read and write, and he made some progress during the passage home. When Isaac went to sea again, John Rhines became his teacher, and when John went to learn a trade, Captain Rhines undertook the task himself. It was quite pleasing to note the respect with which Flour was treated by the whole community since he had begun to respect himself, had become a temperate man, and was acquiring knowledge; for, not satisfied with teaching him to read, Captain Rhines was instructing him in arithmetic. He spent the rainy days, and other leisure moments he could spare from his labor, in studying. Nobody now called him Flour, except [273] occasionally from long habit.

It was now James, or Peterson, or even Mr. Peterson. He was an excellent calker and rigger. Captain Rhines introduced him at Wiscasset, where they built many large vessels to carry ton-timber and spars, as a reliable workman, and he had all the work he wanted. The captain also gave him a piece of land, put him up a houseframe, and boarded it. He was able to finish it, little by little, himself, and leave the money, which was in Captain Rhines's hands, on interest. He had a boy, Benjamin, named after Captain Rhines, nineteen years old, a stout, smart fellow, with very handsome form and features, all the boy, now John Rhines was gone, that Charlie couldn't throw; but he was so black he shone.

Before this, Flour lived near Captain Rhines's pasture, in a half-faced log cabin, where he had squat. It stood among a bed of thistles, with heaps of clam shells all around. Destitute of a chimney, the smoke went through a hole in the roof of his cabin, and he was called Old Flour.

No one but they who had lived on Elm Island could imagine what a convenience the Perseverance, Jr. had become. Indeed, not a member of the family would have parted with her for any [274] consideration.

Sunday morning, no matter if it was quite rough, they would all but Sally Merrithew or Mrs. Rhines, get in and go to meeting. On pleasant days they would take the baby, and then all could go. If it was calm it did not matter in the least. Ben would take two oars, and, sitting on the forward thwart, row cross-handed, while Charlie would pull one oar aft, and Sally, assisted, or rather bothered, by Ben, Jr., would steer.

The boat had not been in the water a week before Mrs. Rhines and Mary discovered that they had never seen the baby, and must see it; and Charlie had to bring them on.

It was so convenient, too, for Sally's mother, who was no more afraid of the water than a coot, to come and see her daughter! and even Mrs. Rhines, naturally timorous on the water, was not afraid to come in *that* boat.

Tige came on with the Rhines girls. *He* wanted to see the baby; and such a frolic as he had with Ben, Jr., and the little one you never saw! Tige played rather rough. Every once in a while he would get the whole top of Bennie's head into his mouth, and scrape the scalp with the points of his teeth, till the child would sing out at the top of [275] his voice, and quit playing till it had done smarting, and then begin with new zeal. Bennie had a great chunk of meat that Tige wanted; but Ben wouldn't give it to him. Tige followed him round, and when his attention was occupied, licked it out of his hand; but before he could swallow it, Ben got bold of one half, and it was which and t'other, till, Ben's fingers slipping on the greasy meat, he went over backwards on the floor, and the meat disappeared down Tige's throat in a moment.

The child, provoked, began to strike him; but all the notice Tige took of it was to wag his tail in complacent triumph, and lick the child's greasy fingers.

"It wouldn't be a very safe operation for a man to pull meat out of

Tige’s mouth, and strike him in that way,” said Ben, patting fondly the noble brute; “his life wouldn’t be worth much.”

While Charlie was thus pleasantly and profitably occupied in boat-building, a cousin of Captain Rhines, Mr. Foss, who was employed in ship-building at Stroudwater, came to visit him. Captain Rhines brought him on to the island to see Ben. He conceived a great liking for Charlie, who then had two boats set up in the shop, and partly done. Charlie, in the course of conversation, told him of his desire and intention one day to become a ship-builder. [276]

“If that is your intention,” was the reply of Mr. Foss, “you have worked long enough on boats.”

“Why so, sir; is it not much the same thing?”

“Not by any means; the proportions are very different. A full boat would be a very sharp ship—too sharp: the scale is larger, and the distances longer. What would be a proper dead rise in a boat would be quite another thing, come to let it run the length of a vessel’s floor, three times as wide as the whole boat. I’m going to set up a vessel when I go back; if you will go with me and work till spring, I’ll give you good wages, and learn you all I know; with the practice you have had on boats, you will learn very fast.”

Ben expressed his willingness.

“But I have these boats to finish.”

“Mr. Foss will not go for a week; what is not done by that time, I will do.”

“What will you do, if I take the tools?”

“You need take no more than a broadaxe, adze, square, rule, and compasses,” said Mr. Foss; “I’ve got tools enough.”

It was so late in the year, Ben thought he should not be able to cross to the main land much more, and told them to take the boat. [277]

They accordingly furnished themselves with provision, water, and a compass, and set out, Charlie consoling himself for leaving Elm Island by the prospect of being only three or four miles from John.

He was now to leave Elm Island for the first time since he came on to it, and he went all around to take a last look at his pets, and bid them “good by,” and even to the top of the old maple and big pine, where he had spent so many happy hours.

They had a pleasant time up, either a fair wind or calm, did not have to row but little till they ran her right into Stroudwater River, and into the ship-yard.

The next Saturday evening about eight o’clock, John Rhines was told that some one wished to see him at the door; and going without a light, he landed in the embrace of Charlie.

The moment they were alone, Charlie said,—

“Guess what I have done since you came away.”

“Built a boat.”

“Yes; I’ve sold her, and built five more; sold all but one of them, and I came up in *her*.”

“What a boy you are, Charlie! We’ll have some sails in her; there’s a glorious chance to sail in this harbor in the summer, and a splendid fishing ground. There are lots of acorns on Hog Island, and walnuts on Mackie’s Island.” [278]

“Yes; but guess what else I’ve done.”

“It’s no use to guess, you do so many things.”

“Bought a farm.”

“Bought a farm!”

“Yes, and paid for it! almost four hundred acres; all kinds of land. O, the prettiest harbor! and a pond, a brook, and the handsomest elm tree you ever saw. All kinds of land, and bears on it, John; only think, bears on it, and wolves. O, I forgot a little duck of an island, where the Indians made canoes.”

“Is there a great long point that crooks round like a horseshoe? and does the elm stand on a little tongue that the water runs almost round?”

“Just so.”

“O, I know; that’s a splendid place! I’ve been there many a time, frost-fishing. Cross-root Spring is there, a regular boiling spring; but I never was far from the beach. I didn’t know there was a pond.”

“Now, John, some time when we get through here, you, and I, and Fred will go and have a chowder there; go all over it, and have a [279]

good time.”

After this they spent Sundays together, and sat side by side at meeting.

When Charlie began to work at Stroudwater the timber was not cut; thus he had an opportunity to help cut the timber, and begin at the foundation. Modern improvements were unknown then, and he found Mr. Foss built his vessels very much as he built his boats—by setting up stem and stern posts, a few frames, and working by ribbands.

It was late in the fall when Charlie went away, and Ben was obliged to work on the boats when he ought to have been putting his winter wood under cover. The moment the boats were done, he hauled up an enormous pile of wood, both green and dry, and had cut up a good part of the dry, when there came a great fall of snow and covered it all up; and not only so, but the dry chips that had come from hewing the frame of the shed, which were scattered over the ground, and that he meant to have put under cover. Thus the wood was all covered up in snow, and the new wood-shed stood empty.

Sally Merrithew had returned home; the snow was deep; the weather, though fair, extremely cold; and communication between Elm Island and the main pretty much suspended. Joe Griffin was building a log-house on his own land; but the snow being so deep that it was quite difficult to work in the woods, Peter Brock had persuaded him to assist in making axes.

Uncle Jonathan Smullen lived about half way between Joe’s father’s and the blacksmith’s shop, on a little rise, just where the road makes a short turn and goes down to Peterson’s spring. Thus Joe passed the house several times a day, going to and returning from labor.

Sally Merrithew did not approve of his practical jokes: he knew it, and endeavored with all his might to restrain himself. It was now a long time since Joe had been uncorked, and Sally was beginning to hope he never would be again.

Uncle Smullen had a cross ram: he would often run at the old man, who, being old and clumsy, was afraid of him. The barn-yard was very large, being used for both sheep and cattle. In the middle was a large patch of ice. The old man had stocking feet drawn over his shoes, to prevent slipping, and whenever the ram made demonstrations, would run on the ice; the ram, unable to follow, would stand at the edge and keep him there till some one came, or the ram got tired.

Half the cause of the trouble was, that the ram wanted the hens’ corn, and, because the old man wouldn’t let him have any, meant to proceed to blows. Joe, finding the old gentleman beleaguered one day, relieved him.

“The pesky creetur, Mr. Griffin, has kept me here most all the forenoon.”

“I’d cut his head off.”

“I would, Joseph; but he’s an excellent breed; I bought him of Seth Dingley.”

This incident suggested an idea to Joe’s but too fertile brain in an instant. The spirit of mischief invigorated by a long repose, and with difficulty suppressed, rose in arms. That night he made shoes for the ram’s feet, with sharp calks, and nails to put them on with. Mr. Smullen was very methodical in his habits, and Joe was well acquainted with them.

It was his custom, before turning the cattle out in the forenoon, to put a little salt hay in the yard for the sheep, then carry out the corn for the hens, and bring in the eggs in the same measure; and he never varied a hair’s breadth.

After Bobby had gone to school, Joe went into the sheep-house, nailed the shoes on the ram, and after plaguing and irritating him till he was thoroughly mad, hid himself behind the log fence, in the sun, to see what would come of it.

The ram did not offer to molest the old gentleman while he was bringing out the hay. Soon afterwards he came out with a wooden bowl full of corn, going to the barn, when the ram started for him.

“You won’t catch me this time, you pesky sarpint you,” said the old gentleman, quickening his pace for the ice, and soon reached what he supposed his harbor of safety. The brute had found out he was shod, and running backward half the length of the yard to

obtain momentum, rushed forward and struck the old gentleman in the rear with the force of a battering-ram. Away went the corn in all directions over the yard, to the manifest delight of the hungry sheep. Uncle Smullen lay prostrate on the ice: one half the wooden bowl flew over the fence, the other into the water trough, while the ram, who had exerted his utmost strength in a dead rush, not meeting with the resistance upon which he had calculated, turning a summerset upon the body of his antagonist, went end over end. Before he could pick himself up, he was seized by Joseph, and flung into the barn.

Uncle Jonathan and the Ram. Page 282.

[283] The moment Joe saw Uncle Smullen fall, his better nature awoke: hastening to his aid, he inquired,—

"Are you much hurt, Uncle Jonathan?"

"I don't know! I'm in hopes there ain't no bones broke; it's a marcy there ain't. If I'd gone backwards, it would sartainly have killed me."

"Your face is bleeding," said Joe, wiping it with his handkerchief.

"Yes; I'm terribly shook all over, and I feel kind o' faint."

The old man was bruised on his forehead, and his lip was cut by the edge of the bowl; but though much frightened, he was not seriously injured.

Joe took him in his arms, and carried him into the house, secretly resolving that this should be the last thing of the kind he would ever be guilty of.

Depositing the old man on the bed, he went to the barn and tore the shoes off the ram's feet, but, in his haste to get back, dropped one on the floor of the tie-up.

[284] "I thought I was safe on that spot of ice, Joseph. He never followed me there before. I didn't think he could stand on the ice."

"You see he couldn't very well," replied Joe, who was in agony lest his agency in the matter should get wind; "for you see he went end over end."

"We ought to be thankful," said Mrs. Smullen, "it's no worse. There was old Mrs. Aspinwall broke her hip only by treading on a pea, and falling down on her own floor. What we're going to do about wood and the cattle I'm sure I don't know! I'm so lame, I couldn't milk to save my life."

"Don't worry the least mite about the cattle, Mrs. Smullen. I'll take care of them, and cut you up a lot of wood."

"I'm sure I don't know how we shall ever repay you, Joseph. It's of the Lord's marcies you happened to be here."

This was perfect torture to Joe. His cheeks burned, and his conscience stung.

"I'm sure," said the old man, "I don't know what I shall do with that ram, now he's got to be master."

"I'll take care of him," said Joe.

[285] He persuaded Sally Merrithew to go there, and stay till the old gentleman got better, then went and tied the ram's legs, and, flinging him on his shoulders, carried him over to his father's.

Sally was a girl of keen wit and excellent judgment. She had not the least doubt but that, in some way or other, Joe Griffin was at the bottom of the whole matter.

"How came he there at that time of day, when he ought to have

been in Peter Brock's shop?" was the query she raised in her own mind. His assiduous attentions to the old people had to her a suspicious look, and appeared very much like an effort to atone for an injury. The ram had never ventured on the ice before—how came he to then? Still these surmises afforded not a shadow of proof. She was greatly perplexed.

One morning she was milking, and, perceiving that her pail didn't set even on the floor, moved it, and underneath was one of the ram's shoes that Joe had dropped. In an instant she had a clew to the mystery. Perceiving that no one was in sight, she went to the spot of ice, found the prints of the ram's corks, and compared them with the shoe.

"What a creature he is!" said Sally. "I was in hopes he had left off such things, after having been most smothered in a honey-pot, and scorched in the brush. He's broke out again, worse than ever." [286]

Sunday night he came to see her, as usual.

"Joe," said she, "do they shoe at Peter's shop?"

"Yes, Peter shoes lots of horses; but they go round to the houses to shoe oxen, carry the shoes and nails, and cast the cattle in the barn floor" (slings were not in use then) "to nail them on."

"Do they ever shoe rams?"

Joe's features instantly assumed a terrified expression. He colored to the very tips of his ears, but uttered no word.

"If," said Sally, "it had been Ben Rhines, Seth Warren, Charlie, or anybody that could have taken their own part; but to set to work on that poor old man, one of the kindest men that ever lived, who took in that miserable Pete Clash, and clothed him, when he had no place to put his head, and whom everybody loves, to run the risk of killing or crippling him for life, I say it's real mean!"

Joe made no reply, and Sally saw something very much like a tear in his eye. She pitied him from the bottom of her heart, but felt that for the reformation of such an incorrigible sinner it was her duty to go on.

"Did you ever see that before?" she inquired, holding before the terrified culprit the identical shoe, with the nails still sticking in it. [287]

Joe uttered a groan.

"If it should get out, the neighbors would never speak to you again, and you'd have to leave town. I know you feel bad," she continued, bursting into tears; "but what did put it into your head?"

"The devil."

"Well, I'd keep better company."

"You see, Sally, I was going home to dinner one day, and the ram had the old man penned on the ice, and there they stood looking at each other. That's what put it into my head. I didn't think anything about the consequences till I saw the ram start for him. Then it all came to me, and I was over the fence in a minute; but it was too late. I don't think I'm made like other folks. Such things come over me just like lightning, and it seems as if I was hurried. This is the last shine I shall ever cut up."

"You've said so before, Joe."

"But I *mean* it now; I'm *purposed*. Won't you give me that shoe, Sally?"

"No, Joe, I'm going to keep it; and as sure as you cut up another shine, I'll show it."

Joe's reformation was *radical* this time, and Sally ventured to marry him. Years after—when Mrs. Griffin—Sally Rhines was visiting her. In hunting over her drawers to find a pattern of a baby's dress, she came across the shoe, and then it came out. She gave it to the baby to play with. [288]

"I should be afraid to give it to him," said Mrs. Rhines, "for fear he'd catch something, and go to cutting up shines when he grows up."

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[289]

CHAPTER XX.

THE FIRST TROUBLE, AND THE FIRST PRAYER.

Being somewhat lonely in the absence of Charlie, Ben employed himself in getting timber to build a scow, that he meant to construct with a mast, sails, and a sliding-keel, or, as they are now termed, centre-boards, to take cattle and hay to and from Griffin's Island.

Uncle Isaac and Captain Rhines came on New Year's Day. They told Ben and Sally it was so cold, and the weather uncertain, that they needn't expect to see them again till April.

The next day, Danforth Eaton and two more came and hired the Perseverance. Ben told them, when they were done with her, to leave her in Captain Rhines's Cove.

They were now left entirely alone. During the latter part of the same week, Ben, who had been out gunning all day, crawling round on the rocks, and getting wet, complained at night of pain in his head and back, and of chilliness. He made use of the usual remedies [290] for a cold, but without avail. He continued to grow worse rapidly, and it was evident that he was to have a run of fever. Sally was in great extremity, her husband dangerously sick, neither physician nor medicine at hand,—save those simple remedies that necessity had taught our mothers,—with two children, one a baby, a stock of cattle to take care of, and utterly alone as respected any human aid. It was a bitter thought to her, as she sat listening to the wanderings of her husband she tenderly loved, and for whom she had sacrificed so much, that, while so rich in friends, all were ignorant of their necessity.

"If they only knew it at home," said she to herself, "how soon should I see the Perseverance's sails going up, and help coming!"

Sally had not what is sometimes termed a religious temperament. There was no sentiment about her. She was extremely conscientious in respect to keeping the Sabbath, or making light of serious things, was very decided in all her convictions, and never temporized. If it was wrong to do anything, it was wrong, and that was the end of it with her. She never read religious books from choice,—like many who never arrive at any satisfactory results in religious matters,—but only as a duty, as she did the Bible. She never cared to hear [291] religious conversation, and, though she listened with the greatest respect to her mother in relation to these subjects, it went in at one ear and out at the other. Uncle Isaac's description of her was perfect. She was lively as a humming-bird, and had too good a time of it in this world to think much about the other. But under the terrible pressure that now came upon her, the resolute nature and iron frame of the true-hearted, loving woman began to give way.

With the exception of some large logs for back logs, the wood which was cut was exhausted, and she was obliged to dig it from the snow and cut it.

The great fireplace was so deep, it was impossible to keep the room warm without a large log to bring the fire forward, and throw the heat into the room. These logs, which were three feet through, Sally hauled into the house on a hand-sled, and rolled into the fireplace, then cut up the rest of the wood to complete the fire.

The weather was intensely cold, the snow deep and drifted, and she was obliged to drive the cattle to the brook, and cut holes in the ice for them to drink. In addition to all this was the care of Bennie and the baby, the constant watching, and sense of loneliness. What [292] a commentary was this upon the declaration of Uncle Isaac to Ben, in reply to the expression of his fears lest the untried hardships of Elm Island should prove too much for Sally,—

"O, she's got the old iron nature of that breed of folks. She's had nothing to call out that grit yet; but you'll find out what she's made of when she comes to be put to't."

Her husband was now so much reduced that it was with the greatest difficulty she could hear his requests, and the apprehension that he would die, which had tortured her for weeks, now seemed ripening into certainty.

It was just before midnight. Ben had lain since morning in a stupor, from which it seemed impossible to rouse him, and, being nearly high water, she feared he would die when the tide turned.

It was a fearful night. The roar of the sea on the rocks, with that hoarse, pitiless sound which pertains to the surf, and the hollow moan of the wind in the forest was heard all through the house. Sally had been taught to say her prayers from childhood, but never in all her life had she prayed in her own words. But now, as she sat with the Bible upon her knees, and her eye caught the promise, “Ask and ye shall receive,” something seemed to whisper, “Pray, poor woman, pray.” “Had I shown any gratitude for His mercies,” thought she, “I might with more confidence resort to Him in trouble.” At length, driven to despair, she fell on her knees beside the bed, and begged for mercy and help from heaven. “I am glad I did it,” said Sally, as she rose from her knees; “I think I now know something of what I have heard mother say—that the best place to carry a sore heart is to the cross. I don’t know what God will do with me, but I feel more willing to be in His hands. What a strange thing praying is! If you don’t get what you ask, you get comfort. It kind of takes the sting out. It’s like as when I was burnt so awfully, and the fire was out; the anguish is abated, though the wound is not healed. I will pray more, and trust more.” She spent the remainder of the night in prayer and reading the Scriptures. [293]

The wind, shortly after midnight, had changed to north-west, and, though bitterly cold, it became clear. As the light of morning struggled through the windows, Sally scraped the thick coating of frost from the panes, that she might see her husband’s face, and eagerly scanned the pallid features. “He certainly does not look so death-like,” thought she, “is not feverish at all, and he certainly breathes better.” In the course of an hour, he made a sign for drink. She put it to his lips, and found that he swallowed. A short time after, she gave him some nourishment, which he also took. When a couple of hours had passed, he opened his eyes. She bent her ear to his lips, and asked him how he felt. “Better,” was the reply, in a voice scarcely audible. It was the first word he had spoken for two days. “The fever has turned, I know it has!” she cried; and falling on her knees, she poured out her heart in gratitude to God. Just then the child waked. “O, you blessed little soul,” cried the delighted mother, almost smothering it with kisses, “did you know your father was better?” And tying the young child in a chair, and giving it some playthings, she caught the milk-pail. As she opened the door, a ray of sunshine flashed in her face, and streamed across the threshold. “Bless God!” cried she, tears of gladness streaming down her cheeks; “it’s sunshine in my heart this morning.” [294]

“How are you all?” said Sally, as she entered the barn, and, mounting with rapid steps the mow, pitched down a bountiful foddering to the cattle. “Put that into you; it’s Thanksgiving on this island to-day.” While Sailor, catching the altered looks and tone of his mistress, barked, and ran into the snow till nothing but the end of his tail was to be seen. [295]

“How strong I feel this morning!” she exclaimed, rolling an enormous log on to the hand-sled; “I’ll make this old fireplace roar. I’ll have some light in this room, so that I can see Ben’s face. I have not dared to look at him for a month past,” catching a cloth, wet with hot water, and washing the frost from the windows. “I’ll wash up this floor, too; it is dirty enough to plant potatoes on; and then I’ll have a nap.”

In the afternoon, Ben awoke in the full possession of his faculties, though extremely weak, and in a whisper asked for the baby; he then asked for Sailor. Sally had kept the dog in the outer room, that he might not disturb her husband; but the moment she opened the door, he leaped on the bed, and licked his master’s hands and face, and then, rolling himself into a ball at his feet, went to sleep, occasionally opening one eye to see if his master was there.

It was now the first of March. The brigantine General Knox, Edward Hiller, master, was working her way to the eastward. She was homeward bound from Matanzas, having lain in Portland during a severe gale, where she had discharged her cargo. A heavy sea was still running, and the vessel, close hauled on the wind, and under short sail, being light, was knocking about at a great rate. Captain Hiller had been from boyhood a deep-water sailor, but, having married the year before, took a smaller vessel, traded to the West Indies in winter, and coasted in the summer. He was now bound home for a summer’s coasting, having his brother Sam for mate, and a crew composed of his neighbors’ boys, two of whom, John Reed and Frank Wood, were his cousins. Captain Hiller was amusing himself with humming the old capstan ditty,— [296]

“Storm along, my hearty crew,
Storm along, stormy,”—

in tones which sounded like a nor’wester, whistling through a grommet-hole, at times varying his occupation by sweeping the horizon with his glass. At length he said to the man at the helm,—

“John, what island is that on the lee bow?”

“Don’t know, sir.”

“I’ll ask our Sam: he is pilot all along shore, and knows every rock, and everybody. Sam, come aft here.”

“Ay, ay, sir.” [297]

“What island is that to leeward?”

“Elm Island, captain.”

“Does anybody live there?”

“Yes, sir; Ben Rhines.”

“What Ben Rhines?”

“Him they call Lion.”

“That can’t be, Sam: he took his father’s ship when the old man gave up; there ain’t his equal along shore. I’ve been “shipmates” with him: he wouldn’t be living on such a place as that.”

“It is so, captain; he was offered the ship; but like another man I know of, that is a relation to me, he fell in love with a pretty girl, who vowed she wouldn’t marry him if he went to sea. And so he bought that island, married the girl, and has turned farmer. There’s some trouble there; I can see a woman on the beach, and she has got a petticoat—that’s the flag of all nations—on an oar, and is making signals.”

“If my old shipmate is in trouble, I’m there. Keep her off for the island, John. Flow the main sheet, and set the colors in the main rigging, and then she’ll know we see her signals.”

The vessel, with the wind free, increased her speed, but not sufficiently to suit the impatience of the noble-hearted seaman, who exclaimed,—

“Shake the reefs out of the mainsail! loose the fore-topsail! Why, how slow you move to help a neighbor! Sam, do you know the way in there? It seems to be all breakers.” [298]

“I know the way, captain; there’s water enough.”

“Then shove her in: we’ll soon know what’s the matter.”

Ben, propped up with pillows, and now able to converse, received with heartfelt joy his old shipmate, who sat down beside him, while the young men gazed with awe upon the great bones and muscles, made prominent by the wasting of the flesh, and called to mind the wonderful stories they had heard of his strength.

“What do you think of that, boys, for a lion’s paw?” said the captain, taking up Ben’s right arm, and showing it to the astonished group. “Now, Mrs. Rhines,” said he, “do you get a couple of axes, and John and Frank will cut some wood, while Sam and myself get your husband up, and put some clean clothes on him, and I will shave him; then you can make the bed, and we will put him back; for I suppose he has not been moved since he was taken sick.”

“No,” said Sally; “it was impossible for me to move him.”

These strong and willing hands soon put a new face on matters. With a roaring fire in the old fireplace, clean linen on the bed, the house put to rights, Ben shaved, and his spirits excited by hope, everything seemed cheerful. [299]

“Frank,” said the captain, “go aboard, and in my berth you’ll find a pot of tamarinds and a box of guava jelly; they’ll be just the stuff for him: I got them fresh in Matanzas.”

“Frank,” said Sam, “get a couple dozen oranges out of my chest.”

“Don’t you do it, Frank,” said John Reed; “get them out of mine: he is courting a girl; but I ain’t so happy. I haven’t anybody to give mine to.”

“Captain,” said Ben, “you will dine with us.”

“By no means.”

“Yes; I insist upon it,” said Sally; “such friends as you don’t grow on every bush.”

“But, Mrs. Rhines, you are worn out with labor and anxiety.”

“I *was*; but that is all gone now.”

“Well,” said the captain, who perceived that a refusal would do more harm than good, “we will go on board, and get our dinners;

your husband, who has had quite enough fatigue for once, will sleep; then we will come to supper, take care of the cattle, and some of us will sit up with Mr. Rhines; you will get a good night's rest, and then will be all right. To-morrow we will go over and get your folks. I should not feel right to leave you alone." [300]

The next morning the brig's boat went over, and brought back Sam Hadlock, his mother, and Sally Merrithew. Captain Rhines followed, in his own boat, with Uncle Isaac, and they brought cooked victuals enough for a small army. The news spread, and by night the house was full.

"Who will take the Perseverance, and go to Portland for the boys, if they are well paid for it?" asked Captain Rhines.

"I," replied Joe Griffin; "but not for pay."

"And I," said Henry.

"And I, too," said Joe Merrithew.

In less than an hour the swift little craft was cleaving the waves, her sheets well aft, the smoke pouring from the wooden chimney into the clew of the foresail, and the spray freezing as fast as it came on board.

When Charlie came, he was so shocked by the emaciated appearance of Ben, and the alteration in Sally, who had grown pale and thin, that he burst into tears.

[301] "Charlie," said Sally, as they sat together, after the rest had retired, and Ben was asleep, "do you remember that the first night you came here, you said your mother's dying counsel to you was, when trouble came, to pray to God, and he would take care of you?"

"Yes, mother."

"Do you ever pray now?"

"I say the Lord's prayer; and the first time I went on to my land after it was mine, I thanked the Lord, or tried to; but I've been so happy here, that I have not prayed as I did before. Don't you think," said he, fairly getting into her lap, "that we are more for praying when we are in a tight place?"

"Yes, Charles; and so the better God uses us, the worse we use Him. The night you came here, a poor outcast boy, like drift-wood flung on the shore, you said you thought God had forgotten you; and now that he has given you a mother in me, and a father in Ben, and a brother in John, you have forgotten Him."

"O, mother, I know I am a wicked, ungrateful boy."

"No more so than the rest of us. Since you left home, I have suffered all but death; but I have also experienced a great joy. When [302] Ben was first taken sick, he had a high fever; then he was out of his head; after that he went into a sog. At last there came a night, O, what a night! I could scarce get wood to keep from freezing; the sea roared as though it would come into the house; I thought Ben would die before morning. As I sat here, just where I do now, something seemed to say, 'There's no help for you on this earth; look to God!' I did look to God; and I made a promise that I mean to keep! I looked for Ben to die when the tide turned; and such horrible thoughts as passed through my mind, that I could not move him from the bed, nor bury him; and to be here alone with a corpse! but when the day broke, I saw he was better. What sweet joy and love sprang up in my heart! You must pray to God this night, this moment, Charlie."

"I will do anything you want me to, mother."

"You must do it because it is right, not because I want you to."

"I feel ashamed to, when I think how good He has been to me, and how meanly I have used Him; but if you will pray for me right here, I will pray for myself when I go to bed."

When Ben had regained in some measure his strength, Sally told him all her heart.

[303] "These things," replied he, "are not new to me. In boyhood, yes, even in childhood, they were familiar to and grew up with me. There are trees growing on our point that were bushes when I prayed under them. After I went to sea, these impressions faded out; but the death of John brought them back; and since I have left off drinking spirit, they have increased in power. The day before I was taken sick, as I lay on the rocks watching for birds, and thinking of John, and how quick he went, the thought, *Are you ready to follow him?* came in my mind with such distinctness, that I turned round to see who spoke to me. On the rocks, right there, I cried to God, which I had not done since I was fifteen. I think I see men as trees

walking; and I mean to follow after the little glimmering of light that I have.”

Ben now improved, the great bones were again clothed with flesh, and the sinews regained their tremendous power.

In a fortnight the boys returned to their work, Charlie having filled the shed with dry wood, and the door-yard with green, cut for the fire. He also left a boy of fifteen to take care of the cattle till Ben recovered his strength.

The good impression produced by sickness upon both Ben and Sally was not confined to them, but extended to Captain Rhines, Seth Warren, Joe Griffin, John, and Fred, and was the means of bringing Uncle Isaac to make a public profession of faith, for which he had never before felt himself qualified. Captain Rhines, after a severe struggle, gave up the use of spirit. Before the boys separated, Fred told them he had done so well that summer, he meant to get timber in the winter, build a store in the spring, and make a T to the wharf, that vessels might lie safely there in any weather.

Reluctantly these youthful friends, whose aspirations and sympathies mingled like the interlacing of green summer foliage, parted each of them to their different places of labor. The next and concluding volume of the series, The Hard-Scrabble of Elm Island, will inform our readers how they bore themselves in life’s battle, when its responsibilities began to press upon their young shoulders, cares and trials to thicken around them, and when called to discharge sterner tasks, and face greater perils than they had yet encountered.

FOOTNOTE:

[1] Boy Farmers, p. 176.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE YOUNG SHIP-BUILDERS OF ELM ISLAND ***

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