



TWO STOWAWAYS
ABOARD THE
ELLEN MARIA

JAMES OTIS



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"WHAT RIGHT HAD YOU TO STOW AWAY ON AN HONEST VESSEL, EH?"

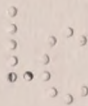
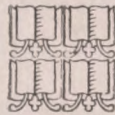
Two Stowaways

Aboard the Ellen Maria.

BY

JAMES OTIS

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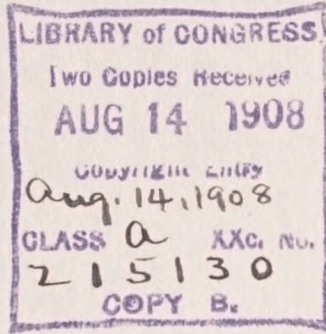


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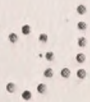
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Two Stowaways Aboard the Ellen Maria

CHAPTER I

THE CAUSE OF IT

ANY fellow not fully acquainted with all the facts in the case would have believed that Tommy Harriman and Sam Chesley had every reason to consider themselves very fortunate boys, more particularly on a certain day last summer when they stood in the shade just outside the Lafayette Hotel in the city of Portland, State of Maine.

Oh, my! but the weather had been hot! When Tommy and Sam left their homes on North Broad Street, a few days previous, on the way to the station of the Pennsylvania Railroad, it surely seemed as if they would melt and spill themselves all over the sidewalk, so great was the heat; but they did not complain, owing to the fact that they were just beginning a journey to Bar Harbor, where it was only reasonable to suppose they would be as cool and comfortable as if having apartments in a refrigerator.

Tommy was ten years old on that very day, while Sam was less than a year younger, and it

seemed to them that having lived so long in the world, they were fully competent to travel alone on any ordinary journey, yet their parents appeared to think it necessary to have a certain care over them, all of which was, to put it mildly, very discouraging, because it caused the lads to look like children.

Sam had proposed that he and Tommy set off a day in advance in order to secure comfortable quarters at Portland, where the journey was to be broken by a halt of one week, and again at Bar Harbor, where a much longer time was to be spent, but, singular as it may seem, their parents positively refused to consider the kindly proposition. However, because there were so many in each family that the carriages were rather too well filled for comfort, it had been agreed that Tommy and Sam might walk to the station unattended; but there was an unpleasant suspicion in the minds of both that such poor privilege would not have been accorded unless it had worked to the pleasure of the older members of the two families.

Of course all this has nothing to do with the story, nor is it necessary to say that the lads were cousins, because it is our business to find out as quickly as maybe, how it happened that two fellows from Philadelphia "stowed away" in the hold of the fishing schooner, *Ellen Maria*.

Owing to the fact that the journey to Portland was made by rail, and without any lengthy stop on the way, Tommy and Sam saw very little to interest them either in New York or Boston, and Portland was by no means up to their standard of a city. Why, they could walk from one end of the business portion to the other in less than half an hour, without hurrying, and the park, which was called the "Oaks," could have been dropped in the very smallest corner of Fairmount Park without running over the edges a little bit. Of course there was the ocean to be seen, and yet it wasn't really the ocean after all, for they soon came to learn that Portland is situated on Casco Bay, a good ten miles from what you might truly call the sea.

Now with all these disappointments, after having made up their minds that they were to visit a very strange country, it is not to be wondered at that Tommy and Sam felt as if they had been in some way defrauded, although they could not for the lives of them have explained in what way it had been done. All this might have been borne without much murmuring, however, but for the fact that even in such a very small, toy city they were not allowed to do exactly as they pleased.

At a time when they had absolutely nothing else to do, and it seemed really necessary that they

pay a visit to the seaside resort of Old Orchard, only a dozen miles away, Mr. Harriman positively refused to permit it. He quite sternly told them that unless they could find something within the limits of the city to amuse them, he should recommend to their mothers that they be forced to remain in their sleeping rooms until the following morning.

What could two fellows do after having come away from home in search of a good time, and failed to find it? Neither Tommy nor Sam knew exactly what would be the proper course under such disagreeable and disappointing conditions, and, while trying to decide upon some plan which would serve to teach Mr. Harriman that he was playing the part of a tyrant toward his own and his sister's son, they walked aimlessly down the street, hardly conscious of the fact that they had turned in a different direction than on any other tour of exploration.

The result was that they were very agreeably surprised at suddenly finding themselves on a pier, at either side of which were vessels discharging or taking in cargo, while the odor of fish was so strong as to be quite unpleasant.

Involuntarily the lads had come to a halt near a small schooner whose deck was littered with casks, boxes, nets, and, what seemed most strange, six

dories piled one on top of the other in a regular nest. Now the idea of carrying boats on deck instead of hanging them from davits, or towing them in the water, so puzzled Tommy and Sam that for a moment they forgot entirely that they had been unkindly, almost brutally, treated by Tommy's father.

On the deck of the schooner and leaning against the mainmast, as if too feeble to stand upright, was a small boy, who gazed at Tommy and Sam as if they were the oddest kind of animals in a zoological collection, and winked in a comically friendly way when their attention was attracted toward him.

"Do you belong to that vessel?" Tommy asked curiously as he ventured on the stringpiece of the pier.

"Wa'al, the *Ellen Maria* belongs to father, an' I reckon I go in with the rest of the dunnage somehow," the lad replied with a drawl that gave one the impression his tongue must be very weary.

"Is this the *Ellen Maria*?" Sam asked, rather for the purpose of beginning a conversation than in order to gain information, for he could see the name painted on each of the nested dories.

"Seems though you might guess it was some-thin' of the kind, when it's flashed up everywhere. Father has an idee that them letters must show on

everythin' aboard, else he'll have bad luck. The queer part of it is that he don't paint me in the same way, so's folks would know I belonged to the schooner in case I went adrift."

"Do you live here?" Tommy asked, as he seated himself on the edge of the pier, allowing his feet to hang over in what he believed was a sailorly fashion.

"Not much, I don't. I wouldn't be found dead in this city, for all it's so big. We come from Bluehill way; down where you get a chance to breathe without bein' called on to ask a perliceman whether he's got any objection. Say, do you fellers hang out here?"

"We come from Philadelphia," Sam replied in a tone of pride, and the boy on the deck of the *Ellen Maria* gazed at them in astonishment, only able to speak after a severe effort, when he exclaimed:—

"Philadelphly! Wa'al I'll be blowed! How'd you get so far from home?"

"We're going to Bar Harbor to spend the summer," and Sam seated himself by the side of his cousin.

"Oh, you are, eh? Wa'al, all I can say is that I don't have any great 'pinion of yer judgment if you're willin' to stay all summer in a place like that!"

“Ain’t it nice there?” Tommy asked anxiously, wishing that his father were near to hear an expert opinion before making the mistake of visiting the place.

“Nice nothin’! It used to be a good harbor for fishermen, so father says, where you could run in to dress-down after gettin’ a deck-load of fish, an’ in the old days you’d find anywhere from ten to fifty vessels at anchor. Things used to hum then, you bet; but now it’s nothin’ ’cept a lot of dudes skippin’ ’round with women that, as mother says, go way ahead of Solomon in all his glory, whatever kind of a rig that may be.

Tommy was on the point of explaining that Philadelphia was a good deal of a city as compared with Portland; but, not thinking it wise to provoke a controversy with a lad who had evidently seen so little of the world, he checked himself, asking instead:

“Why do you have those boats piled up on deck, when they belong in the water?”

“Say, a nice time we’d have of it comin’ inter a harbor sich as this with a lot of dories trailin’ on behind like the tail to a kite! They belong right where they are, till the fish strike in, an’ then they’ll go over the rail mighty quick, I can tell you. Seems like you ain’t very well posted on Bankers.”

“We ought to be,” Sam cried quickly. “That’s what my father is.”

“Your father a Banker! I never saw any craft from Philadelphia on the Banks!”

“What do you mean by seeing vessels on the banks?” Tommy asked in perplexity.

“Where else would you see ’em if they were after fish? Father thinks the only place where he can get any decent kind of a fare is on George’s Banks; but when I have a schooner of my own I’ll work off Sable Island, or Quero, that’s what I’ll do.”

It was not a simple task to explain to the boy on the *Ellen Maria* what kind of a “banker” Sam’s father was; but Tommy finally succeeded after a certain fashion, and in order to put an end to other awkward questions, he asked:

“What is your name?”

“Who, me? Oh, I’m Joe Babbidge, an’ my father’s Cap’n Ben—you must have heard of him, ’cause it’s allowed he’s the smartest banker sailin’ from the Maine coast. Why don’t you come aboard, instead of settin’ up there like turkies on a shed? If so be you’re any ways hungry, I’ll fry some fish, though it ain’t too fresh, seein’s how we caught the last two days ago, an’ if there’s anythin’ I’m dead set against, it is stale fish.”

Tommy and Sam were not hungry, but they very readily accepted the invitation to go on board, and, except for the unpleasant odor, were pleased with all they saw. The cabin of the *Ellen Maria* was not what might be called a cleanly place, but to the lads from Philadelphia it looked particularly snug, and they had an idea that it would be delightfully cosy on a stormy night.

“I wish we could go to Bar Harbor in a vessel like this!” Sam said enviously. “It would be great fun to see what the fishing banks look like!”

“Oh, it would, eh?” and suddenly Master Babbidge was convulsed with mirth. “Be you sich a softy as to think you can see the banks? Why, they’re nothin’ but shoal places in the sea, where the fishin’ is good. You couldn’t see anythin’ but water if you was to sail ’round all the banks on the coast.”

“I’d like to try it for a little while, but if father wouldn’t let us go to Old Orchard, it isn’t reasonable to suppose he’d be willing for us to go fishing,” Tommy replied with a sigh, and Joe Babbidge said with a laugh:

“I reckon my father wouldn’t be very keen at takin’ you, ’cause I had to coax him a long time before he’d agree to my shippin’ with him, an’ if I hadn’t stowed away jest when I did, I’d be

workin' on a farm for Enoch Grant this very minute."

"Did you really stow away on board a vessel and go to sea?" Sam asked as if believing such a method of becoming a fisherman was something very enticing.

"That's what I did," Joe replied emphatically, "an' if you want to try the same game, I'll do all I can for yer. The *Ellen Maria* is due to leave port in the mornin'; father'll be ashore for quite a spell before we start, an' if you was here jest after breakfast, I could show you the snuggest kind of a chance."

"We couldn't run away, because our parents would be frightened almost to death when they missed us," Tommy said hesitatingly, and Joe added in a tone of indifference:

"I ain't coaxin' yer to do it; but if so be you had the idee of goin' I'd lend a hand. You could write to your folks sayin' you'd started for the Banks in the *Ellen Maria*, an' would turn up at Bar Harbor before they got ready to go home. Bluehill ain't so far from the Harbor but that I could set you across in a dory after we'd made port. I reckon if you should put a letter in the post office when you was comin' down from wherever you're stoppin', your folks would get it

before they'd had a chance to be very much scared, an' if they knew you'd gone off with Cap'n Ben Babbidge, everythin' would be all right, for he's the smartest Banker on the coast, as anybody can tell yer."

CHAPTER II

THE DECISION

BUT for the last portion of Master Babbidge's remarks neither Tommy nor Sam would have ventured to entertain the proposition of stowing away on the *Ellen Maria* for a single moment.

They were not the kind of lads who would plan on running away, even under such severe provocation as that given by Mr. Harriman when he refused his permission for them to make the excursion to Old Orchard alone; but really, the scheme as presented by Joe was not at all according to their ideas of "running away."

Any fellow would be eager to seize an opportunity of seeing the "bankers" at work, for it was such an odd name as applied to this particular calling that it really seemed as if Joe's father must be some rarity in the way of a fisherman. Then again, or so it seemed according to the suggestions of Master Babbidge, putting to sea in the *Ellen Maria* would be no more than a very pleasant and very brief excursion. When the vessel returned to this port—and Tommy felt certain that Captain Ben would not remain away from home many

days—Bluehill was near Bar Harbor, so near, in fact, that, as Joe had stated, they could go across in a dory.

In addition to all these inducements for playing the part of stowaways was the fact that their parents would know exactly where they were and without loss of time. Consequently, if Captain Ben was the renowned fisherman such as his son described him, no anxiety would be felt concerning them.

It was the simplest kind of a simple matter, and as the two lads weighed in their minds the arguments advanced by Master Babbidge, it really seemed as if they would be culpable in not taking advantage of this extremely favorably opportunity.

“I would like to go first rate,” Tommy said reflectively, as his eyes rested upon the nest of dories and he realized what a jolly time a fellow might have pulling here and there in one of the light craft. “And it don’t seem as if our parents could worry very much about us if, as you say, they would get our letter at dinner-time.”

“Worry? Of course they wouldn’t!” Master Babbidge replied emphatically. “What would there be to fuss about, if they knew you had gone with father? I don’t reckon there’s a man in this city but what knows all ’bout the *Ellen Maria*, an’ what kind of trips she’s made. Why, your folks

could walk right out onto the sidewalk, an' ask the first feller they saw, if they wanted to know anythin' more'n you told 'em in the letter."

"But what about your father?" Sam asked as if he had already decided upon his course of action, and only needed to arrange the minor details. "You talk as if he might not like to have us aboard."

"Wa'al, I ain't allowin' as he would be overly keen to take a couple of greenhorns like you; but s'posen you stowed away, an' didn't come out till we got well to sea? How could he help hisself?"

"He might make a heap of trouble for us."

"Now look here, fellers, you don't want to get it into your minds that my father is any sich man as that. What did he do when he found me on board? Why, he stormed 'round a minute or two an' said he'd flog me till I couldn't stand; but I knew that was all wind. I'm allowin' he's so mild he wouldn't kill a flea, less he was jest naturally provoked to do it—an' it would take a good deal of provokin' too."

"Where would we hide 'till the vessel went away?" Tommy asked.

"I could show you more'n a dozen places where you'd have things jest as fat as you're gettin' now, an' I don't care what hotel you're stoppin' to. It seems as though the hold would be the snuggest

place, an' I'll fix up a chance for you this afternoon, if you'll say that you'll be here in the mornin'. Why, see! S'posen I pulled 'round three or four barrels of bait, so's to make a reg'lar room next to the cabin bulkhead? Exceptin' that it would be kind of dark, you'd live there snug as bugs, if you never came out till we got back to port, though of course you ain't figgerin' on stayin' any sich time as that under cover."

"How long would we have to stay?" Tommy asked with a certain show of anxiety.

"Wa'al, I allow it won't be more'n over one night. You see we'll leave here before noon, an' if there's any kind of a wind we ought'er be well down towards Matinicus by then. It won't be a flat calm, that's sure, 'less the weather changes from what it is now, an' I'm reckonin' that by the mornin' after we'd left you'd come on deck. I'd take off the hatches an' whistle when it was time to show yourselves; it ain't certain but I might kind'er get father pretty well worked up to the idea of seein' you, so's he wouldn't let on very strong. But bless you, that part of it ain't worth talkin' 'bout. The important thing is for you to get away from your folks."

"There wouldn't be any trouble about that," Sam replied reflectively. "We're allowed to go out for a walk any time, and no one would think it

strange if we left the hotel as soon as we had breakfast."

"Then I don't see but what the thing is settled," and Master Babbidge began overhauling the dunnage on deck as if he counted on making ready the hiding place without loss of time.

Tommy and Sam looked at each other inquiringly for a moment, and then Master Harriman said, as if speaking to himself:

"If we're going to write a letter telling just where we've gone, and when we'll be at Bar Harbor, it isn't what you would really call running away."

"No," Sam replied, with just the faintest tremor in his voice. "It ain't that exactly; but yet we know our parents wouldn't let us go in case we asked them."

"You ain't so certain of that," Master Babbidge interrupted. "I'll bet if you was to tell 'em that my father had agreed to let you go one trip fishin', your folks would jest about jump at the chance."

"Why don't we tell them then?" Sam asked, and his newly made friend replied promptly:

"Why don't you? Why 'cause father didn't say you could go, an' I ain't allowin' he would if you put it right up to him bald-headed like, 'cause he don't believe in havin' youngsters 'round when

there's business goin' on. You might coax till you was black in the face, an' he'd say you shouldn't step your foot aboard the *Ellen Maria*; but once he'd found you was stowed away, he'd be jest as mild as milk, except for rubbin' it in pretty rough with his tongue. But there, talk don't hurt a feller. The best way for you to do is to make up your minds that you're goin' to the Banks, an' then stop chinnin' over it. I shall fix a place for you to hide in, an' I'll cut up mighty rough if you ain't here 'cordin' to agreement."

Having said this in the tone of one who makes a threat, Master Babbidge suddenly disappeared in the hold, which, as it seemed to his visitors, was an intimation that the interview must be brought to an end.

Tommy and Sam, believing it was the only proper thing to do, clambered from the deck of the *Ellen Maria* to the pier, and from thence walked slowly and in silence up toward the Lafayette Hotel.

Not until they were within a square of their destination did either speak, and then Sam asked in a half whisper, as if afraid that the strangers on the sidewalk might overhear and make public that which should be kept secret:

"What are we going to do about it?"

"It seems to me as if that Babbidge boy had

settled it, and we'd be forced to go. We'd have the jolliest kind of a time, there's no mistake about that."

"But what would happen when we got home?"

"If we should stay away quite a spell, say as much as a week, I don't believe our fathers would make such a terrible row, because they would be so glad to see us."

"A week is a pretty long time."

"If we have to stay seven whole days, it is; but it must take one of these fishin' vessels quite a while to catch a full load. Just think of all the things we'd see, and what a jolly cruise it would be to tell about after we got home!"

With this the conversation came to an end, each lad feeling convinced, since he was eager it should be so, that it was no longer possible for them honorably to avoid stowing away on board the *Ellen Maria*, because of the fact that Master Babbidge was making, or would make, all the arrangements for their reception.

More than once before the day had come to an end did Mrs. Chesley or Mrs. Harriman give words to the surprise occasioned by the unusual attentions which their sons bestowed upon them.

With the knowledge in their minds, although not willing to admit it even to each other, that they were about to do a very mean thing, and one

which would occasion sorrow, even after it was known that they were under the care of so experienced a shipmaster as Captain Babbidge, the lads felt a greater and more tender love for their mothers than ever before, striving earnestly to show their affection, as if by so doing forgiveness might be gained in advance.

During the remainder of the evening Tommy and Sam found a mournful pleasure in the company of those whom they were planning to sin against, and not until they had retired, for both occupied the same apartment, was the subject again broached. Then, as if the question of stowing away had already been settled, leaving only the details to be considered, Sam suggested:

“I suppose we will have to take something to eat with us, if we’re to stay hidden aboard the schooner all night.”

“We ought to have asked Joe about that. Perhaps he counts on providing us with food.”

“It won’t do any harm if we buy some fruit on our way down to the pier. Say, do you s’pose our mothers will feel very badly?”

“What’s the sense of asking such questions as that?” Tommy cried petulantly. “I wouldn’t go if I thought mother would be terribly worried. But how can she fuss very much when we’ll be with such a man as Captain Ben Babbidge?”

Slumber overtook them before the grief at parting with their parents became so heavy as to cause repentance, and when they awakened it was time to carry out their portion of the plan.

Had either Mrs. Chesley or Mrs. Harriman been suspicious that the lads were hatching mischief, the secret would have been revealed by the actions of the intended stowaways. They spoke only in subdued tones; were extremely affectionate toward all the other members of their respective families; ate breakfast hurriedly and as if the food choked them; and, the meal over, hastened out of the hotel as if not daring to loiter lest their hearts should fail them.

"I'm beginning to be mighty sorry that we ever started this thing," Sam said as they walked hurriedly down Congress Street, looking behind them furtively now and then, as if fearing pursuit. "It's a mean trick to run away, even if we don't count on staying more than a week."

"Well, it's too late now, because we've got started, and Joe Babbidge is waiting for us," Tommy said with a sigh, and, as he afterwards confessed, he wished most earnestly just then that Sam would suggest their returning, even at the risk of displeasing the son of the redoubtable fisherman, Captain Ben.

CHAPTER III

STOWING AWAY

NOT until they had walked a considerable distance did either Tommy or Sam remember that they had promised themselves to write a letter of explanation regarding the proposed cruise, and then it was Master Chesley who exclaimed in a tone of dismay:

“Crickey! What about telling our parents that we count on stowing away on board the *Ellen Maria*?”

Tommy looked at his cousin reproachfully, as if believing Sam was the only one who could rightfully be blamed in the matter, and then cried in a tone of conviction:

“Well, that does settle it! Of course we can’t go without telling them what’s up!”

“Of course not,” Sam replied promptly as he came to a sudden halt. “What chumps we were not to think of it last night when we had plenty of chances. I got to imagining how badly mother would feel if we stayed away too long, and the letter never came into my head: Well, she won’t know how near we came to making a voyage to

the Banks, and I sha'n't be in any hurry to tell her."

Then Master Chesley wheeled about quickly, as if feeling a decided sense of relief in turning his face toward the hotel once more, and would have hurried off to make certain his mother was in the same good health as when he left her, if Tommy had not asked hesitatingly:

"How much of a row do you suppose Captain Ben's boy will kick up when he finds we're not coming?"

"He couldn't expect we'd go without letting our people understand all about it."

"But he won't know that we forgot to write the letter, and will think we really intended to tell him a lie about it," Tommy said solemnly.

Just for an instant Sam was in deep mental distress, and then his face cleared suddenly as he replied:

"We'll go down and explain how it happened, and after that has been done we can get back to the hotel before our people begin to wonder where we are."

This surely seemed a very simple way out of what had at first appeared like a difficult matter, and the two walked at their best gait in the direction of the *Ellen Maria* and Master Joseph Babidge.

Not until they were come within sight of the trim-looking little schooner did either feel any regret because the cruise was not to be made, and then it would indeed have been strange if they had not realized how great an opportunity they were about to miss. Very few fellows from Philadelphia ever had a chance for such an adventure as Joe Babbidge had thrown in their way, and it began to seem really as if they were not only careless, but culpable in having neglected such a simple preparation in the matter of stowing away as that of writing one little letter.

“Got here, have yer?” Master Babbidge said by way of greeting when Tommy and Sam came to a halt by the side of the *Ellen Maria*. “Wa’al, all I can say is that you fellers must be mighty lucky, ’cause it ain’t more’n five minutes since father went uptown, an’ you couldn’t ask for a better show to make yourselves snug below without bein’ seen. Get a move on, for there’s no telling how soon he may come back, an’ with sich a breeze as has sprung up he’ll be red-headed ’bout gettin’ under way in a hurry.”

Master Babbidge motioned with one soiled hand toward the open hatch, and gave unmistakable signs of impatience when, instead of making all haste to take advantage of the fortunate opportunity, Tommy began to explain why it was he

and his cousin could not visit the Banks in the *Ellen Maria*.

Joe Babbidge held his peace until Tommy had ceased stammering and stuttering over the explanations, and then he asked in a tone, and with a look, of scorn:

“So that’s the way you count on workin’ it after I’ve jest the same as toiled like a slave gettin’ things ready so’s you’d have the time of yer life, eh? I’ve pretty nigh wore my fingers down to the bone fixin’ a place where you could hide, an’ you didn’t so much as write one measley little letter!”

“But we really counted on stowing away just as had been agreed upon, Joe,” Sam said in an apologetic tone. “We even started from the hotel allowing we were coming aboard, and it wasn’t until we’d walked a good part of the way that we remembered the letter.”

“An’ then I reckon it was too late to do anythin’, eh? You fellers are puffed up so bad that you can’t write anywhere except in a hotel, eh? Couldn’t took a piece of paper an’ a lead pencil an’ done the job right in the post office, eh? I never saw any fellers from Philadelpy before, an’ if they’re all like you I hope I sha’n’t run across any more!”

Master Babbidge was truly terrible in his

wrath; it almost seemed as if his eyes flashed, as do the eyes of people in stories, and Tommy did his humble best to soothe the angry boy.

“I never thought till just this minute that we might have written a letter in the post office,” he began contritely, and Joe interrupted him by crying passionately:

“An’ I s’pose you ain’t had time to think that you might go down in’ter the cabin of this ’ere schooner an’ write letters till you was bald-headed, eh? I guess you could find a way out of it, if you hadn’t counted on turnin’ me down so’s to show what sneaks fellers from Philadelphy can make of theirselves.”

“We’re not sneaks, and we hadn’t any idea of turning you down!” Sam cried indignantly, and before he could say anything more Master Babidge asked sharply:

“Then why don’t you go below an’ write the letter you’ve been makin’ so much talk ’bout? If you want’er play fair by me, after all I’ve done for you, what’s to hinder your fixin’ the thing before father comes back?”

“I suppose we might do that,” Tommy replied hesitatingly. “I never realized that we could write a letter in any other place as well as at the hotel.”

“Then get right on to your job,” and Master

Babbidge literally pulled his newly-made friends aboard the schooner, after which he pushed them toward the companion-way almost roughly.

Tommy and Sam were not lads who could, ordinarily, be bullied into doing anything against their will, and it was not exactly their will to make a cruise on the *Ellen Maria* after having had time to realize how much sorrow they might cause their parents; but the fact remained that they had agreed to stow away, and it seemed as if Joe Babbidge was well within his rights when he insisted on their writing the letter at once, since they had decided it must be done before they could carry out their portion of the program.

Therefore it was that the two lads suffered themselves to be much the same as forced into the cabin of the *Ellen Maria*, and once there, with a greasy half-sheet of paper in front of them, it really seemed as if they were in duty bound to do as he bade them.

“You can do it better than I,” Sam said to Tommy, as Joe Babbidge placed on the swinging table the stub of a lead pencil. “Be sure to let them know that we’re going with Captain Ben Babbidge, so they won’t worry.”

“An’ you don’t want to do much foolin’, else father’ll catch us here, an’ then the fat *will* be in the fire!” Joe added nervously.

With a tremulous sigh Tommy began the task, which evidently was not a simple one for him, as might be guessed from the fact that he hesitated often as if at a loss for the proper word, and now and then rubbed his nose in what might equally well have been perplexity or a disinclination to continue. The letter was finished after a time, however, much to the relief of Master Babbidge, and Sam read aloud the following when his cousin handed to him the result of his labors:

“DEAR MOTHER:—

“Sam and I have got the finest kind of a chance to go on a fishing voyage with Captain Ben Babbidge. He lives at Bluehill, which Joe says is very near Bar Harbor, and by sailing on the *Ellen Maria* we can save father and Uncle Charles all the money they would have to pay for our railroad tickets. We will, perhaps, get down there ahead of you, and if we do we'll inquire at the hotels until we find out where father counted on stopping.

“I know you would be perfectly willing for me to go if you'd take the trouble to find out what kind of a fisherman Captain Ben is; but I'm afraid you wouldn't be willing to spend the time, so Sam and I are going to hide ourselves on board the vessel this morning. The captain's son will help

us, and explain matters to his father when the schooner gets out to sea, so you can understand that this is a chance such as we'd never have again, and both of us are eager to see what the Banks are like.

"I'm not certain that we'd go even after getting on board the vessel, because of fearing it might make you feel badly, if it wasn't that we've promised Joe Babbidge and couldn't back down now without telling a lie."

"I love you dearly, mother, and hope you'll tell Uncle Charles where Sam is.

"Your affectionate son,

"THOMAS F. HARRIMAN."

"Well, I suppose that will fix matters for your father and mother; but how about mine?" Sam said thoughtfully when he had ceased reading.

"It seems as if I ought to write, too, else it will seem as if I didn't care whether mother worried or not."

"Look here!" Joe Babbidge cried angrily. "Do you count on writin' letters to everybody an' the cook, as if you was a couple of babies that didn't dare to wink 'less all hands said you could! I'm allowin' you've spent time enough over this business, 'cause one letter is as good as a dozen,

an' I ain't hankerin' to have father find us here figgerin' on puttin' up a job on him. What you fellers want'er do is to get in'ter the hold an' snug down——”

“We must get an envelope for the letter, and then it is to be posted,” Tommy cried impatiently. “I'd rather ten times over have to go back to the hotel, than start away without letting father and mother know where we've gone.”

“Here's yer 'velope, an' I'll chuck it in'ter the post office box at the head of the dock jest as soon as you fellers are stowed away. Come along—get a move on, an' be lively 'bout it!”

Tommy sealed and addressed the envelope, after placing tenderly inside the somewhat unsatisfactory epistle he had written, and then proposed that he had better attend to the mailing of it himself, more particularly since it would be necessary to purchase a postage stamp; but Master Babidge took peremptory charge of affairs from this point.

“You'll go below, that's what you'll do,” he said angrily. “I've stood 'bout all the foolin' I can, an' now you'll get in the hold, 'less you count on havin' trouble with me. Do you think that only fellers from Philadelpy know how to chuck letters in'ter a post office box? You'll wish your cake was dough if father gets back before

you're stowed away, an' we've done tongue-waggin' enough for three or four sich jobs as this."

By this time Tommy and Sam were so heavy-hearted because of doing voluntarily that which would cause their parents sorrow, that they no longer had sufficient spirit to hold their own against the impetuous Master Babbidge, and without remonstrance they allowed themselves to be led from the cabin to the hatchway up on deck.

Then, almost before realizing what had been done, they were actually pushed into the darkness of the hold, where were many unpleasant odors, Joe Babbidge saying hoarsely as he forced them on over what seemed to be a litter of boxes and barrels:

"You fellers don't know half how lucky you are! I've fixed up the neatest kind of a place for yer, an' you'll be livin' like pigs in clover while I'm on deck slavin' my life away to keep father from knowin' you're aboard. Here you are; down over this tier of casks, an' what 'bout that? Ain't it great?"

The lads from Philadelphia had suddenly plunged headlong into what was very like a chasm, where they lay bruised as to body, and sore at heart, unable to answer the question which Joe Babbidge had asked in a triumphant tone.

“ Now I’ll shinney up to the head of the dock so’s to mail yer letter, an’ when I come back you can stand by for the grub I’m goin’ to stack up so’s you’ll have somethin’ to chew on while the *Ellen Maria’s* puttin’ to sea. You fellers are beginnin’ to have the greatest time you ever dreamed about, an’ I’m the one what’s givin’ it to yer! ”

Because of the silence which ensued shortly after this statement had been made, Tommy and Sam believed they had been left alone in the hold of the schooner, and the latter said in a tearful tone:

“ I don’t know what that fellow calls a great time; but by the beginning of this stowing away, I’m getting the idea that the less he gives us of it the better we’ll be pleased.”

“ We’re showing ourselves precious soft eakes by staying here just because of having promised to go on the cruise. Why don’t we walk ashore this very minute, without paying any attention to what he says? ”

“ We might have done so before you gave him that letter to post; but now we’d get to the hotel about the same time it did, and I’m believing we’d have a warm time with our parents. There’s no use kicking now, for we’ve got to make the best of it—I’m not even certain that we could get out

of this place unless some one should show us the way."

Then the lads fell silent, and if two more repentant, despondent boys than they could have been found within the limits of Maine, then the fellows in the Pine Tree State must have been heavy-hearted indeed.

CHAPTER IV

UNDER WAY

DURING what seemed to them like a very long time, the boys who were eager to sail at least one cruise with Captain Ben Babbidge remained silent, each occupied with his own very disagreeable thoughts, and then Tommy whispered, for there was something so ghostly about this uncomfortable hiding place in the dark hold which seemed filled only with odors, that it did not sound respectful to speak in a loud tone.

“Of course we’re getting the rough part of it now, Sam. Everything will be different when we go on deck and help sail the vessel.”

“We’ll hope so, else fishing on the Banks is a good bit different from what Joe Babbidge made out,” Sam replied, in such a mournful tone that Tommy, suspecting the tears were very near his cousin’s eyelids, said, striving bravely to give a note of encouragement to the words:

“I’ll agree that it isn’t jolly down here, but we shan’t have to stay very long, for Joe said he’d call us just as soon as the schooner was at sea, and perhaps she’ll get there more quickly than he allowed.”

Despite Tommy's efforts to the contrary, there was a certain quaver in his voice which told that he was no more comfortable in mind than was his cousin, and, realizing this, he fell silent once more lest he betray the fact that his heart was very heavy.

When it seemed to the stowaways as if a full half hour had passed, although in reality no more than two minutes had gone by, Sam said, as if having come to a determination which could not be shaken:

"I'm through making a fool of myself! There ain't any fun in this stowing away when we know our mothers will just about cry their eyes out after your letter gets to the hotel, and I'm going ashore, no matter what Joe Babbidge has to say about it!"

"How will we get out of this place?" Tommy asked, and it was not difficult to understand by his tone that the idea of abandoning the schooner was decidedly pleasing.

"It's queer if two fellows like us can't get back the way we came! That light over there comes from the hatchway, and we're only to keep on across these barrels till we come to it."

"But suppose Joe's father has got back, and should see us?"

"I don't care if he does," Sam replied passion-

ately. "No matter how roughly he acts, I shan't feel as badly over it as I do with thinking of how mother will cry when she knows we've run away."

Master Chesley rose reluctantly to his feet as he spoke, and when Tommy stood erect, with his head above the barricade of casks which Joe Babbidge had erected that they might remain concealed from view of any one who entered the hold, the light which came through the open hatch shone brightly, as if full of promise to lads who had suddenly resolved to mend their ways.

"We're dummies if we can't do it!" Tommy cried in a tone of relief as the way stood thus revealed to them. "I'd been out of here before this if I'd known how easy it looks—it seemed to me as if Joe had carried us a very long distance from the hatch."

Without regard to the fact that they were soiling their clothes, the two lads scrambled eagerly across the dirty casks, forced to crawl on hands and knees because the cargo came so near the deck-timbers that it was impossible to walk erect, and I dare venture to say that neither of them had been so happy since the stowing away was first decided upon, as then, when it seemed certain they would soon be with their mothers.

They were yet some considerable distance from

the shaft of light which indicated the road to freedom, when a sudden crash, not unlike the booming of a heavy gun was heard, and on the instant they were plunged in darkness so profound that it really seemed stifling.

“What’s the matter?” Sam asked in a quavering voice as he clutched at the arm of his cousin, and the latter, hesitating an instant, replied with a choking sob:

“Oh, Sam! Sam! They’ve shut us up in here, and now we can’t get out, no matter how hard we try!”

“You mean that they’ve put the hatch on? I will get out, no matter how many hatches they pile over that hole! I won’t stow away any longer! Come on quick, Tommy, and we’ll soon let them know that we’re not going to be lugged off like this.”

Sam was scrambling hurriedly toward the place from which the light had been shut off so suddenly, dragging his cousin with him, and Tommy, whose one desire was to be with his mother again, did his best to keep the awkward pace.

It was not possible for the lads to make any very rapid headway over the wet, grimy casks; but both struggled to their utmost, for they understood, even in their ignorance of fishermen’s

ways, that this closing of the hatch was the first step toward putting to sea.

Until the light failed them so suddenly, no noise had been heard from the deck; but now it was as if the schooner had been taken possession of by an army of men. The trampling of many feet sounded on the planks above; heavy blows told of yet more cargo being put on board, and, what was terrifying now that the boys from Philadelphia had decided to go ashore, there came a rocking motion of the vessel as if she had already left the pier.

“Hurry, oh, do hurry!” Sam cried, no longer trying to restrain his tears. “We’ve got to get out of here mighty quick, or the schooner will be going to sea!”

There was little need to thus urge Tommy. He knew as well as did his cousin that there was no time to waste if they would repair the evil which had been so heedlessly committed, and his sole desire was to part company with the *Ellen Maria* and Joe Babbidge as soon as might be. With no ray of light to guide them, however, and unfamiliar as they were with such places, the stowaways were not making rapid progress, nor were they aware that instead of going in the proper direction, they had turned aside ever so slightly from a straight course. The hatchway was now behind

them, and of this fact they were ignorant until suddenly Sam bumped his head against what appeared to be a wall of planks.

They had come to the forward bulkhead, which shut off the fore-peak from the hold, and on this, because of being at a loss to know what else could be done, they pounded with all their strength while shouting for Joe Babbidge to take off the "cover" that they might get out.

Even though the *Ellen Maria* had remained made fast to the pier and there was no movement on deck, their outcries could not have been heard. Had Joe been with them he would have guessed that Captain Ben had come on board with his crew, and, the wind being favorable, was making all haste to put to sea that the work of fishing might be begun at the earliest opportunity. Joe would also have understood by the rocking of the schooner that she had already left the pier, and, what was more to the purpose, might have told the stowaways that they could pound on the bulkhead and scream until they were black in the face, without being heard by those on deck.

However, of all this the lads from Philadelphia were ignorant, and they continued their exertions until the rolling of the *Ellen Maria* was so severe that, landsmen though they were, it was impossible to longer mistake the reason.

“She’s out on the ocean, and we can’t get back to the hotel!” Sam cried in a tone of despair as he realized the situation. “We’ve run away from our parents just when they were trying to give us a good time, and it’s the wickedest thing we could have done.”

There was no longer any attempt on his part to keep back the tears which had been hovering near his eyelids, and, throwing himself down upon the grimy casks, he gave full sway to grief and despair.

While one might have counted twenty Tommy strove to hold his sorrow and remorse in check, and then the audible repentance of his cousin was too much for him, therefore he also yielded to grief.

How long the two stowaways lay in the dark hold mourning sorely because that which, a few hours previous, they so earnestly desired had come to pass, neither could have even guessed; but it was as if a very, very long time had elapsed when they were disagreeably reminded that the *Ellen Maria* was behaving in a manner most uncomfortable to them.

The rocking motion had deepened into a long and by no means lazy roll, while to this was added a rising and falling motion which caused it to appear as if she was striving to move in every direction at the same time. It was no longer possible for

the stowaways to remain in one position, save when they clutched the head of a cask and exerted all their strength, while the creaking of timbers, the pounding of the waves against the hull, and the groaning and squeaking of the cargo as it settled here and there, caused such a din as put an end to any conversation carried on in an ordinary tone.

“What will we do?” Sam cried with his mouth very near Tommy’s ear, and so great was the fear which had come upon him that he forgot, for the time being, all sorrow because of thus having run away from his parents.

“There’s nothing for it but to stay here till Joe comes to let us out,” Tommy replied, screaming at the full strength of his lungs. “He said he’d come as soon as the vessel was out at sea, and that’s where she must be by this time.” Then, as a sudden thought occurred to him, he added, “We ought to get back into the hole he made, else he won’t find us, and I can’t stand this a great while longer.”

The possibility that they might be actually lost amid the cargo, not to be found by the boy who claimed to be their friend, was so terrifying that although he did not believe they could make their way from one end of this cavern of darkness to the other, Sam immediately began to scramble

across the casks in the hope of finding once more that alleged "snug" hiding place.

Even in the light of day this would have been a difficult task for such inexperienced sailors while the schooner was plunging so wildly; but in the blackness of the hold it was well-nigh impossible. In the first place, they were by no means certain as to the proper direction, and then, no sooner had they managed to scramble over a cask than the *Ellen Maria*, in one of her upward flights or downward plunges, flung them to this side or that, until they were in much the same condition as lads who had been beaten with cudgels.

"It's no use to try any more," Sam cried after ten minutes of such discouraging labor, and the two were lying between some casks and the side of the schooner, where they had been flung by the *Ellen Maria's* erratic plunging. "We've got to stay here till we die, for that boy must have forgotten all about us, and we're served well right for being so mean as to run away."

"Of course he hasn't forgotten us," Tommy replied, trying to speak reassuringly even while he feared that his cousin might have spoken truly. "Perhaps he hasn't had a chance to tell his father about our being here. You know he said he'd try to fix it for us before we came out."

"There's no need of his fixing anything for me,

because I'm going to die right here; that's what's the matter, and I don't care if I do—I mean, I wouldn't care so very much if I could tell mother that I'm sorry for having run away."

"Are you sick, Sam?" and now Tommy's fears had increased to positive terror.

"Indeed I am; there's something wrong in my stomach, and I can't stand it a great while longer. Say, it must be to-morrow, ain't it?"

"Perhaps it is in the night, and we haven't been here more than one day. I—I—I'm beginning to feel pretty bad myself! Do you suppose we're seasick?"

"It's a heap worse than that, Tommy! We wouldn't be seasick, else why wasn't we when we went out blue fishing from Atlantic City with father? It's the terrible smells in this place that are killing us, and I know we've been here longer than only one day."

At that very moment Joe Babbidge was standing near the wheel watching the lighthouses on Cape Elizabeth, saying to himself that when they were astern, and the lightship had been left well to starboard, he would tell his father that there were two stowaways from Philadelphia in the hold.

"I'll have 'em on deck before we've been out of port three hours," he muttered, "an' then they'll

see that stowin' away don't amount to so very much after all. It's too bad I forgot to carry anything down for them to eat, for I'm reckonin' they must be kind'er hungry by this time."

It was light and fresh air that the stowaways were needing just at that moment, and the mere sight of food would have been most disagreeable to the frightened, grief-stricken lads, who could not have been persuaded, however eloquently Joe might have spoken, that two hours had not elapsed since the *Ellen Maria* began to dance about on the gentle swell of the ocean.

"Are you feeling any better, Sam?" Tommy asked, struggling desperately against the sickening sensation which well-nigh overpowered him, as he laid his hand on the shoulder of his cousin, who had given no signs of life during the past three or four minutes.

"I couldn't be any better while we're in this place!" Sam moaned. "I'm dying, Tommy, and it's all because I was so mean as to run away from the only ones who care for me. If you live longer than I do, you'll tell mother how badly I felt because I've stowed away in this dreadful vessel, won't you?"

"Don't talk about dying, Sam, please don't!" Tommy cried piteously, as he buried his face in his cousin's coat. "We mustn't do anything like that

till after we've had a chance to tell our mothers how sorry we are! Joe Babbidge must come soon, for he can't have forgotten that we're here!"

"I never want to see that fellow again!" and now Sam's anger got the better of his heaving stomach. "If it hadn't been for him and his yarns about the fun which fishermen have, we wouldn't be in this dreadful place!"

"But we are here, and we're bound to see him again sometime—that is, if we're alive when he makes up his mind to hunt for us."

"We'll be dead before he gets around to thinking about us, and perhaps that was what he counted on when he coaxed us into making such fools of ourselves. Just as likely as not he never mailed the letter you wrote."

This was a possibility Tommy had not even dreamed of, and now that it was suggested his grief was at its height, for if their parents were wholly ignorant of the stowing away, how great must be the sorrow they had caused.

The thought was too terrible to be entertained, but yet the lad could not banish it, try as he might, and the tears which came like a flood seemed to increase rather than soothe his bitter grief and unavailing repentance.

CHAPTER V

CAPTAIN BEN

IT is an open question whether the grief of the stowaways caused by the thought that death might come to them before they could beg forgiveness of their parents, served to allay the sickness of the sea; or if the nausea in their stomachs soothed the sorrow. However it may be, after a certain time their eyelids were closed in slumber, although there had been no idea in their minds that sleep was near at hand.

And while they were thus blissfully unconscious of the wrong done those who loved them, or of bodily distress, the *Ellen Maria* was, as Captain Ben expressed it, "eatin' the miles up like a glutton," which was the same as if he had said that she was making good headway.

The wind sang merrily among the rigging, with now and then a sharp twang which told that soon it would come with greater strength, and Captain Ben was in as good spirits as a fisherman well could be, with knowing that there would be no time wasted because of calms or adverse breezes. He stood at the helm, holding her to a course as

true as if laid down by rule, and the milky wake which could be seen astern after the schooner had been brought around with her bow-sprit pointed directly for George's Banks, was as straight as a carefully made chalk line.

"There, son," the master of the *Ellen Maria* said to Joe, as he looked over his shoulder to mark the result of his own skill, "when you can hold the old hooker as nigh on a bee-line as that, I'm allowin' you'll be fit to stand your trick at the wheel."

"I don't reckon anybody but you could hold her steady like that," Master Babbidge replied, knowing full well that his father prided himself on his skill with the helm, and believing a little flattery just at that moment would pave the way for the confession he must presently make. "If this wind holds, we'll soon have the dories out, eh?"

"An' it'll do more'n hold, son," the captain replied in a tone of satisfaction. "There's a good bit of weight behind this breeze, an' except the luck takes a mighty big turn, we'll be back to port with a full fare while prices are good."

"It looks like a case of beatin' all the rest of the fleet, for we're the first to get under way."

"That's what, son. The *General Grant* is the only other craft that's anywhere nigh bein' ready

'for sea, an' she won't leave within the next eight an' forty hours. We've got 'em beat to a finish this time, Joey, boy!" and Captain Ben looked over his shoulder once more at the ribbon of foam which gave evidence of his skill at the helm.

"It was jest sich a day as this when I came on deck from stowin' away so's I could make my first trip in the *Ellen Maria*," Master Babbidge said abruptly after a short pause. "Oh, my! but didn't you carry on, an' threaten what you'd do with a rope's end!"

"But I wasn't meanin' any great part of what I said, son, 'cause I couldn't help feelin' proud of you. It showed that you was cut out for a fisherman, an' from the minute you was born I'd hoped you'd be able to take the *Ellen Maria* when I was through with her. It ain't a callin' in which a man can get rich, Joey, boy; but if a fisherman owns his craft, with a bit of a nest egg to outfit her at the beginnin' of the season, he's about as well off as I allow any man ought'er be."

"Then you don't blame me so awful much for stowin' away?"

"How could I, son, when it pleased me way down to the ground for you to show so much pluck?"

"I reckon there are lots other boys who'd like to do the same thing," and now Master Babbidge

gazed forward, as if unwilling his face should be seen.

“ I allow you’re right, son, an’ we’ll hope they come out’er the scrape, if so be any try it, as well as you did.”

“ Two fellers came hangin’ ’round the schooner this mornin’, an’ they was mighty keen to go fishin’,” Joe said, speaking hurriedly, and still holding his face turned so that his father might not see it. “ They lived way off in Philadelphy, an’ didn’t even know what the Banks were—thought they must be somethin’ like a island. I couldn’t help feelin’ sorry ’cause they’d never had a chance like mine, an——”

“ Look at me, son!” and now Captain Ben spoke sternly, adding when Joe turned toward him reluctantly, “ Did you do any more’n feel sorry?”

“ Why, what else could I do?” and Master Babbidge’s face took on a crimson hue which might be seen despite its bronzing by the sun and wind.

“ What put inter yer mind jest now the facts of your own stowin’ away?”

“ Pr’haps it was the wind, father,” Joe stammered.

“ See here, son, you’ve been fishin’ with me two years’ an’ a leetle more. In all that time I’m allowin’ that the wind has freshened up like this at

least once every week, an' it's kind'er odd you was never before so far reminded of what you'd done as to speak to me 'bout it."

Joe shifted about uneasily, standing first on one foot and then on the other, until his father asked abruptly:

"Son, how many boys have you got stowed in the hold?"

"How many?" Master Babbidge repeated, now showing plainly that he was frightened. "I wasn't allowin' that there'd be any."

"I ain't so terrible dull, son, even if I be your father. I'm willin' to admit that you hadn't quite got ready to allow it; but you was pavin' the way, so to speak. Out with it, an' let's get to an end of the yarn before we're too far from port."

"But with sich a wind as this you wouldn't put back, no matter how many boys we'd got below!" and now Master Babbidge looked thoroughly frightened.

"I ain't sayin' what I might do," and Captain Ben spoke severely. "You've the same as told me, without sayin' very much, that we've got more aboard than I'd allowed, an' if you're so nigh tongue-tied that you can't tell the yarn to the end, I'll have the hold overhauled."

"But, father, other fellers want to try their hands at fishin' as bad as I did!"

“How many are there in the hold?”

“Two; an’ they’re jest about crazy to go fishin’. They’ve never seen a vessel like the *Ellen Maria*, an’ when I told ’em who was cap’in of her they wanted to go the worst way. Say, you won’t——”

“Who are they, an’ what do you know about ’em?”

Captain Ben asked the question so sternly, and with such an expression of concern on his face, that Joe did not dare to withhold longer the information at his command, but hurriedly told his father all the story, concluding by saying pleadingly:

“It won’t take long to break ’em in, an’ then they’ll be able to pay their way. I’ll do the very best I know how from this out if you’ll only let ’em try it one trip!”

“But what about their folks?” and now the captain spoke in a more kindly tone. “’Cordin’ to your own story they’ve run away, which is a good bit more’n you did, ’cause your mother knew what was a-foot. Do you think it’s all plain sailin’ when a boy runs away from his people, leavin’ them to break their hearts over wonderin’ where he is?”

“But they wrote to their folks! I know they did, ’cause I put the letter inter the post office for ’em.”

“An’ I ’spose they think that squares every-

thin', in case they'd made up their minds to run away? They write down all about bein' the meanest kind of mean skunks, as they've proved themselves to be, an' allow that their duty has been done. After all the care an' worry their folks have had for 'em since they came into this world, it's wiped out by a letter, eh? I allow I'd cry downright tears if a boy of mine could have it in his heart to do sich a trick!"

Knowing what share he had had in the stowing away, Master Babbidge felt as if his father's condemnation of the lads from Philadelphia applied directly to himself, and he had sufficient of manliness in his nature to confess then and there what part he took in the scheme.

"I kind'er had an idee that you might 'er put your oar in pretty heavy, son," Captain Babbidge said grimly when the story was come to an end, "an' seein's how you're a bit deeper in the mud than they are in the mire, I'll have to help you out of what I allow is a nasty scrape. You'd better get 'em on deck, for I reckon they've had considerable of a dose, even though they haven't got what was deserved, an' I'll try to figger how we can straighten matters quickest."

"What are you thinkin' of doin', father?" Joe asked anxiously.

"You wasn't overly eager to know that when

you helped the lads stow away, an' by the same token I reckon you can wait a spell to find out. Get yer gang on deck, an' we'll talk it over."

Feeling very much ashamed of what he had done, Master Babbidge went forward to where Moses Salter, the oldest member of the crew, was lying on the deck sunning himself, and asked him if he would aid in raising the hatch.

Not until old Moses had been made acquainted with all the details would he so much as lift a hand to the work, and then, rising slowly from the deck as if undecided as to which direction his duty lay, he said in the tone of one who has been given the right to read a lecture:

"The wonder to me is how boys can have hearts hard enough to play sich a beastly trick as runnin' away, knowin' that it's the mother an' father that's called on to suffer most! You may think, Joe Babbidge, that it's smart to cut a trick like that; but if them as are in the hold live as long as I have, they'll know how bitter a punishment is sure to follow."

"Did you ever run away, Moses?" Joe asked in surprise.

"Indeed I did, lad, more to my sorrow. I left as good a mother as ever lived, that I might ship on a whaler, thinkin' I was playin' the man, an' when I came back after four of the roughest

years I've ever known, she was in her grave, sent there through worryin' 'bout me. I'd give one of my hands, an' the Lord knows I need both of 'em as badly as does any man, to hear her say that she'd forgiven me for bein' sich a hard-hearted sneak!"

Master Babbidge had no reply to make to this outburst; there had suddenly come into his throat something very like a solid sob, which choked him, and in silence he followed Moses to the hatch.

Immediately the way was opened, Joe lowered himself into the hold, and great was his surprise because the stowaways did not show themselves at once; he had expected they would be eager to go on deck, and yet nothing could be seen of them.

Hurriedly the lad made his way to the hiding place which had seemed so snug when he tiered up the casks, and a great fear came over him at finding it empty. It could not be possible they had come to any harm during the short time which had elapsed since the *Ellen Maria* left port, but yet, if they were alive and well, why did he not find them?

Trembling with fear and excitement, he scrambled from one end of the hold to the other, and then, at the very moment when he was saying to himself that some terrible misfortune had be-

fallen them, he came upon the stowaways, both sleeping soundly.

“How did you fellers get over here?” he cried, shaking each in turn, and as the sick, remorseful, grief-stricken lads rose to a sitting posture with a full knowledge of what they had done, Master Babbidge was reproved even more strongly than he had been by the words of his father and old Moses.

“Why didn’t you come before?” Tommy asked with a sob. “We’ve both of us been very near dying, and if we hadn’t been so sick that we couldn’t have eaten, we’d starved to death!”

“I don’t allow you’d do much starvin’ in a couple of hours,” Joe replied with a laugh, forgetting for the moment the cause he had for self-reproach. “I didn’t reckon, when you made up your minds to stowaway, that I’d have a chance to come till the day after we’d left port; but here I am while the lightship is close aboard astern.”

“How long have we been here?” Sam asked severely, and, strange as it may seem, with no sensation of that nausea which had beset him so sorely at the time he fell asleep.

“It can’t be much more’n two hours—pr’haps three. Anyway, we’re still off the Cape shore, an’ it ain’t certain but father’ll put back so’s to send you to the hotel.”

“ Oh, I do so hope he will! ” Tommy cried fervently, and Sam said sharply:

“ What good is it for you to try to fool us? We'd been down here as much as two days before we went to sleep! ”

“ Come on deck, an' you'll see that I've only been tellin' the truth,” Master Babbidge replied with a laugh, and a cloud came over his face as he added, “ Father wants to see you, an' it won't pay to keep him waitin' very long.”

“ Is he angry because we stowed away on his vessel? ” Tommy asked in a tone of fear.

“ Wa'al, he ain't feelin' any too fine 'bout it, an' that's the fact. He chafed under the collar a good bit when he first found out you were here, but things are easin' up considerable. Get a move on, 'cause it allers riles him to wait.”

“ I'm too sick to stand up while the vessel is movin' around so queerly,” Sam said, making no effort to change his position, and Master Babbidge cried in a tone of genuine fear:

“ If you don't stir your stumps there will be a row sure! You can't have grown so awful bad in the little while you've been here, an' you're bound to come on deck lively, no matter how you feel! ”

CHAPTER VI

THE CULPRITS

WHEN Master Babbidge predicted that, under certain circumstances, the stowaways might have a disagreeable interview with the captain of the *Ellen Maria*, Sam came very near losing his temper, as could be understood when he said sharply:

“ I thought you agreed to fix it up with your father before he knew we were on board. According to the way you stated it, he would be pleased to have us with him, and now you say there will be a row if we don't hurry on deck! ”

“ Wa'al, that's jest the size of it, no matter what I said when we was in port. Things ain't the way I'd figgered, on account of my wantin' to get you out of this place quick. You see father hasn't had time to take the whole thing in yet, seein's how I sprung the business before we'd got very far from the lightship,” Master Babbidge replied in an injured tone, much as if he felt keenly the reproach in Sam's words. “ What you want to do now is to step up to the dough-dish lively before he gets real mad, an' I'll answer for

it that he'll treat you white. Why don't you get a move on before all hands come snoopin' 'round to see what's goin' on?"

"How can we be expected to move very much while the vessel is jumping so badly?" Tommy asked plaintively. "We're too sick to stand, and even though we were feeling all right, how would it be possible for us to get up there?"

During the last portion of this conversation Master Babbidge had clambered out of the hold to where Moses Salter was leaning over the combing of the hatchway watching the proceedings, and, seeing that the lads from Philadelphia made no effort to aid themselves, the old man said curtly:

"Boys who run away from home mustn't expect to be fed with silver spoons. It don't make overly much difference what kind of a song Joe sang when he was ashore, you're old enough to know that no decent man is goin' to coddle up a couple of sneaks—for that's what you've shown yourselves to be. It's a case of swallowin' the medicine that Cap'in Ben has a mind to deal out, unless you're willin' this 'ere crew should take you for babies as well as fools!"

"Who are you?" Tommy asked in surprise, but in a respectful tone. After what Master Bab-

bidge had told him about the delights of stowing away, it astonished him to hear any one speak harshly to invalids such as himself and his cousin.

“I’m nothin’ but a every-day fisherman, who wouldn’t have taken it on himself to talk sharp unless you’d showed that it was deserved. If I’d met you two ashore, I’d have taken you for a couple of young gentlemen on account of your clothes; but when you flash up as stowaways who’ve run away from father an’ mother, I allow you’ve given all hands the right to say pretty much what they please.”

Then the old man would have turned his back on the sick and repentant lads from Philadelphia, but that Master Babbidge said imploringly:

“Lend me a hand in gettin’ ’em on deck, will yer Moses? Father’ll have a terrible edge to his temper if they don’t get aft mighty quick!”

For reply the old man passed down the end of a heaving-line, saying to Tommy as he did so:

“Lay hold of that, an’ I’ll show yer how to get out, if so be you haven’t life enough to swarm up the stanchion.”

It is doubtful if Tommy really understood the words; but he could see the rope, and clutching it frantically, as a drowning man is supposed to clutch a straw, he suffered himself to be pulled up on deck, being greeted by a chorus of shouts

and jeers from the idle members of the crew who had gathered near at hand to witness the appearance of the stowaways.

Old Moses literally shook him off the rope as if he had been nothing more than a very large, sick lobster, and lowered it once more for Sam's benefit, saying gruffly as he did so:

"Catch it, you lubber, for the cap'in is achin' to see what you look like."

Sam was by this time too thoroughly frightened to disobey, and in a very few seconds he was dragged on deck by the side of his cousin, the two lads sitting on the wet planks as if unable to aid themselves in the slightest degree, until the voice of Captain Ben was heard, the angry note in it warning the stowaways that it would not be wise for them to give themselves over any longer to the poor luxury of being sick.

"Come aft here, an' let me see what you look like, or I'll find a way to make you move!" the master of the *Ellen Maria* roared, and on the instant Sam and Tommy scrambled to their wobbly legs, looking much more frightened than ill.

However eager they were to obey the harsh command, it seemed a matter of impossibility to make their way aft while the schooner was heeled over to what seemed such an alarming degree, and

Joe Babbidge, who appeared to be quite as much frightened as were his guests, whispered hoarsely:

“Lay hold of the rail, if you can’t stand straight, an’ whatever else you do, move lively, cause father’s getting all haired up worse’n I’ve ever seen him before.”

How they contrived to traverse the short distance from the hatchway to within a few feet of the wheel, neither Tommy nor Sam ever knew. It was accomplished, however, and, half sprawling on the top of the deck house in order to save themselves from being flung overboard by the erratic movements of the *Ellen Maria*, the culprits were forced to submit to a searching examination by Captain Ben.

He first insisted on being told all they knew about themselves and their parents; how it chanced that they were in Portland, and where they had counted on spending the summer, after which he asked in what seemed to the stowaways to be a threatening tone:

“What right had you to stow away on an honest vessel, eh? Do you count that we’re runnin’ this ’ere schooner jest for the sake of takin’ care of a couple of no-goods who ain’t wanted at home, as is shown by their runnin’ away?”

“We are wanted at home!” Sam cried indignantly, and added with a wail of grief, “I’d give

everything I've got in this world or ever expect to have, if I could be there this very minute!"

"Why didn't you think of that before hidin' yourselves below?"

"It didn't seem to be so very bad a trick when your son told us how he stowed away once, and because he said we wouldn't be many days on the voyage," Tommy sobbed. "We never thought about being sick, and we surely didn't think you'd care so very much, providing we did our share of the work."

"So you was willin' to work yer passage, eh? Wa'al now, that's generous for a fact; it strikes me I might let the crew go ashore, if you're ready to bear a hand!" And Captain Ben chuckled over what appeared to him like a rare joke, until the expression of ferocity had left his face. "How would it do if I was to ask you to overhaul the flyin' jib? It's a job that's got to be done 'twixt now an' we make port agin, an' the sooner it's out'er the way the better."

Sam looked forward to where the *Ellen Maria* was throwing the spray in showers over her short bowsprit, and then buried his face in his hands, while Tommy, trying in vain to suppress a sob, replied:

"We'd be willing to do it, sir, if we could; but

neither Sam nor I know anything about being sailors."

"Then how do you expect to work your passage?"

"We can't, sir, unless you have something on deck for us to do, and even then I'm afraid we wouldn't be of much assistance while the vessel is tumbling about so badly."

"An' do you expect that I can afford to give you a passage? We don't allow to keep on board a fisherman cats what can't catch mice."

To this remark neither of the lads made reply, and Captain Ben, after apparently turning the matter over in his mind, said abruptly:

"It strikes me that the only thing left is for me to put you aboard the first Portland-bound craft that we come across; if so be your fathers would be likely to pay for havin' you brought back?"

"I'm sure father or Uncle Charles would pay whatever the people who should take us would ask for," Tommy cried quickly, and for the first time since having been brought to light an expression of hope came over his tear-stained face.

"Then it would suit you to go back an' take whatever dose your father might deal out to square up for your runnin' away, eh?" Captain Ben asked thoughtfully.

“Indeed it would, sir; and besides, I’ll give you the two dollars I’ve got in my pocket!” Sam cried, eagerly.

“That wouldn’t pay for the time I’d lose in overhaulin’ some other craft,” Captain Ben replied, as if he had decided upon a sudden change of plan. “If it wasn’t that my boy Joe seems to have had a pretty big finger in this ’ere pie, I’d start in by givin’ you the best floggin’ you ever had, an’ as it is I ain’t countin’ on lettin’ you off any too easy. There’s no room for you to bunk aft, so you’ll have to take what you can get in the forepeak. Run ’em for’ard, Joe, an’ see what kind of a sleepin’ place you can rig up there. After that you three will turn to an’ swab down the decks—that is, if the Philadelphy stowaways can keep on their feet long enough.”

Master Babbidge turned promptly to obey, pulling his friends with him, but Sam hung back sufficiently long to ask:

“Do you think it will be a great while, sir, before you can send us back on some other vessel?”

“I’ve changed my mind about that part of it. You’ll stay aboard the *Ellen Maria* long enough to pay for all the trouble I’m like to have on your account, an’ can reckon on seein’ Bar Harbor somewhere ’bout the last of August, in time to go home with your folks, if so be they stay so long.

Get for'ard there, an' don't make the mistake of tryin' to answer me back!" he added, as Tommy gave evidence of wanting to say something more, and Joe, looking even more frightened than did the lads from Philadelphia, urged them forward rapidly.

"Do you reely count on keepin' 'em aboard, Cap'in Ben?" Moses Salter asked curiously when the lads were so far away that the words could not be overheard by them.

"Aye, that's what come inter my mind, Moses, when I saw how keen they was to get back. I'm goin' to do by 'em as I'd like any one to do by mine, if he was in the same box. We'll wrastle them boys 'round for three or four weeks, same's they'd get it aboard some fishermen I know of, an' by that time I reckon they'll be cured for good an' all of wantin' to run away. If they get back to their people too soon, an' before there's been any roughin', you can't rightly say that they'll behave themselves better in the future. I'm countin' on givin' 'em a lesson that won't be forgot."

"But what 'bout their folks?" Moses asked anxiously.

"I ain't quite a brute, Moses, an' while Joseph continues bein' giddy-headed, I'm not likely to forget that I'm a father. When I saw how keen these 'ere stowaways of ours was to get back home,

it struck me that I'd be doin' a good deed to keep 'em aboard till they'd had enough an' to spare of fishin'. If this wind holds, as is likely, we can run into Boothbay 'long 'bout midnight, when the boys are asleep, an' there I'll squander what's needed in the way of money, by telegraphin' to the fathers of the lads where they are, an' what I count on doin'. It'll take quite a bit of cash, for it's an expensive way of sendin' news; but I'm goin' to do it if I bust the *Ellen Maria*. The worst part of the whole thing is how to put the story down in black and white. I'll be needin' considerable time at the job, so s'posen you take the helum, an' I'll tackle it straight off. If one of the boys shows hissself, yell as though you counted on takin' his head off. We'll give 'em the idee we're the worst lot of bankers that ever sailed out of Portland."

Old Moses spit on his hands to make certain of getting a firm grip upon the spokes of the wheel, and Captain Ben went into the cabin to write a telegram, looking meanwhile as if a most formidable undertaking was before him.

By this time Master Babbidge and his guests had found their way into the forepeak, and a forlorn, desolate-looking place it was when viewed as a bedroom.

This particular portion of the *Ellen Maria* was

used only as a storeroom, and in it were to be found odds and ends of such description as would naturally accumulate on board a fishing vessel. The odor there was even worse than that in the hold, and Tommy's heart sank very low in his bosom as he asked, while surveying the disagreeable quarters:

“Is your father willing you should sleep in a place like this?”

“'Cordin' to what he said, I allow he is, an' if you'd seen as many fishermen as I have, you'd say it might be a good deal worse. I never figgered on where you could sleep, when I was talkin' with yer 'bout stowin' away,” and Master Babbidge began to whistle cheerily, much as if the forepeak pleased him quite as well as did the cabin.

“There are a good many things you didn't figure on,” Sam said meaningly, and Joe, understanding what was in his friend's mind, cried petulantly:

“If you're goin' to throw up this, that, an' the other jest 'cause things ain't 'xactly to yer likin', it's time I give up tryin' to make it easy for yer. Nobody ever said that the *Ellen Maria* was fixed up same's the swell hotels you've been stoppin' to, an' the sooner you get down off your high horses, takin' things the way you find 'em, an' lookin' pleasant 'bout it, the better we'll get erlong.”

Sam and Tommy looked at their companion in astonishment. It hardly seemed possible that this could be the same lad who had painted in such glowing colors the delights of life aboard a fishing vessel, and the fact that there was so great and sudden a change in him, gave them additional cause for fear as to the future.

CHAPTER VII

THE FOREPEAK

IT may seem strange, but it is nevertheless true, that for the time being the disagreeable quarters to which they had been assigned affected the stowaways even more strongly than had any other incident or fact since the moment they the same as ran away from home, by leaving their parents secretly.

The *Ellen Maria*, as viewed from the pier, at a time when the lads from Philadelphia had no idea that they might make a voyage in her, presented such a neat, jaunty appearance that it seemed positive everything about her was as the most fastidious stowaway would have it. Therefore, when Master Babbidge's "guests" entered the forepeak, with its ill-odors, knowing that in this disagreeable-looking, dismal place they were to spend their spare time while on board the schooner, all that had previously occurred was as nothing in comparison with what was evidently to come.

"I'd stifle if I was shut up in a hole like this!" Sam cried after his surprise at the sudden change

in Master Babbidge's manner had in a certain degree subsided, and Joe said grimly:

“After the wind gets up I reckon you'd rather be shet in here than have the hatch open, for the *Ellen Maria* is a master hand at throwin' water when there's any kind of a sea on.”

“Do you mean to say that the wind isn't up about as strong as possible at this very minute?” Tommy asked in astonishment, and Master Babbidge replied, much as if it gave him positive pleasure to picture the future in the darkest possible colors:

“Of course it ain't; this is what father calls a 'slick little sailin' breeze'; but jest you wait till things begin to hum, with the wind howlin' an' screechin' through the riggin' fit to pull the hair right off yer head, an' then you'll find the *Ellen Maria's* nose buried so deep in the big waves that the for'ard part of her is under water pretty nigh all the time.”

Tommy swallowed energetically, as if the big sob which interfered with his breathing had actually filled his mouth to overflowing, and Sam struggled manfully to prevent the tears from running over his eyelids, as he asked with a decided tremor in his tone:

“If we've got to stay here while we're on board this—this—this vessel, what'll we sleep on?”

“ I reckon it’s a case of stowin’ this dunnage till we’ve rigged up what you might call a bed,” Master Babbidge replied in a matter-of-fact tone, as he set about the task, and the lads from Philadelphia watched him without any very great amount of curiosity, as they asked themselves why they had been such simples as to ever have believed that there might be anything approaching sport in making a cruise aboard a fishing schooner.

Meanwhile Captain Ben was wrestling with his task in the after cabin, and very difficult did he find it, for letter writing was to him the most arduous of labors and something to which he was least accustomed.

However, after much expenditure of ink and a series of contortions such as would have put a professional acrobat to shame, he finally succeeded in setting down as many words as he believed would present the case briefly yet explicitly to the parents of the stowaways. This done, he went on deck with the ink-stained paper in his ink-stained fingers to read the proposed message to old Moses, who, as a matter of course, yet remained at the helm.

“ Here’s what I’ve writ, Moses, an’ I’m askin’ your opinion on the same, not ’cause I believe you’re any better judge of sich matters than I am, but owin’ to the fact that two heads are better’n one, even if both of ’em are a good bit soft.”

Having thus apologized, as it were, because of seeming to ask advice from one of his crew, Captain Ben read the following:

“MR. CHESLEY OR MR. HARRIMAN,

“Lafayette Hotel,

“Portland, Maine:

“Your boys stowed away on *Ellen Maria*. It'll do 'em good to rough it till the idee of runnin' off has been knocked out'er their heads. Will deliver 'em to Bar Harbor in about three weeks.

“BENJAMIN BABBIDGE.”

“I reckon that sets the case out plain enough,” the captain said without waiting for an expression of opinion from the helmsman. “It stands to reason I might'er said a good deal more; but what I've got there will cost me more money than I'm warranted in spendin'; but seein's how my Joe has likely had the biggest hand in their stowin' away, I feel kind'er bound to do whatsoever is right an' just towards the fathers of them misguided boys.”

“It seems to fill the bill,” Moses Salter said, hesitatingly, as if doubtful of his own judgment, “an' yet it ain't a great deal, seein's how them men must be a good deal worked up over what's happened.”

“I know it, Moses, I know it, but when you

come to figger in what it'll cost to telegraph that much, I'm allowin' they can afford to put up with it, seein's how I'm payin' the bills an' havin' the biggest end of the trouble."

"How'll you send it off?" the sailor asked, without further attempt to criticise the message.

"We'll run inter Boothbay, as I told you, 'long 'bout midnight, an' you can slip ashore quiet-like, for I'm not minded the stowaways shall know how I've fixed it. What I'm after is to give 'em sich a lesson that home'll seem mighty good to 'em by the time this 'ere cruise is come to an end."

"I'm allowin' they'd give all their old boots to be with their folks this blessed 'minute. They wasn't lookin' any too cheerful when Joe took 'em for'ard."

"That's true enough, an' yet a couple of days aboard won't be as much medicine as they ought'er have. After they've bunked in the forepeak two or three weeks, an' done their share of the rough work, they never'll want to look a fish in the eye agin."

"That wasn't the way it worked on Joe."

"My boy was brought up different from what they've been. You might say he was born for a fisherman, an', besides, he didn't have a silver spoon in his mouth when he came inter this world, which makes a good bit of difference. I'm al-

lowin' that these lads never had to do so much as black their own boots, an' waitin' on a lot of gurry-soaked swabs like you an' me is like to come mighty rough on 'em."

While Captain Ben and Moses Salter were thus making plans for the lesson which they believed was needed, the lads from Philadelphia were making payment in grief and homesickness for the "sport" of stowing away on board the *Ellen Maria*.

Master Babbidge, with an eye to his own comfort, rather than from any very keen desire to cheer his guests, had stowed the odds and ends with which the forepeak was partially filled, until he had made what would, at a pinch, serve as a place in which to lie down. It was anything rather than an inviting bed to lads who were accustomed to homes of luxury, but the young fisherman pretended if, indeed, he did not really believe, that it was all one should desire under the circumstances.

"I'd like to see you fellers rig up anythin' as snug as this!" he said, stretching himself at full length on the hillocks of canvas, cordage and trawl tubs as if he found the collection most rest-inviting. "We'll bunk in here like bugs in a rug, no matter what weather the *Ellen Maria* makes of it, for once the hatch is on she can go clean under without sendin' any water in here."

"It will be black dark when you put the cover on that hole," Sam said with a quick indrawing of the breath as he glanced up at the small hatchway.

"Of course it will; that makes it all the snugger," Master Babbidge replied in a tone of satisfaction.

"But how can we breathe when the place is shut up so tightly?" Tommy asked with what was very like a wail of fear.

"Don't bother your heads 'bout anythin' like that. This goes way ahead of the hold, an' I'm tellin' you we're mighty lucky to get off so easy. There was one spell when I allowed father was goin' to cut up rough 'cause you'd come aboard."

"Yet you believed, when we were in Portland, that he would be glad to see us," Sam suggested reproachfully.

"Now look here, you fellers," and Master Babbidge spoke very sharply. "I'm gettin' tired of hearin' 'bout what I said or did, an' don't allow to stand it any longer. There wasn't any tow-line hitched to yer when we was in port, so you didn't really need to stow away. You're here now, though, an' the sooner you get through tryin' to make out that it's all my fault, the plainer sailin' it'll be. Take my advice, an' make the best of what can't be helped, since father has made up

his mind that he won't put back to send you ashore."

Then Master Babbidge closed his eyes as if sleep had overpowered him, and the stowaways stood in silence and deepest sorrow, gazing at each other as if asking how it could have been possible that they had shown themselves to be such idiots, until a shadow fell across the hatchway, and the voice of Moses Salter was heard:

"Grub is ready for the second half, an' I'm reckonin' you belong in that watch. Better tumble up if you count on fillin' yer innerds, for it don't stand to reason the cook'll wait very long for sich useless lumber as you lads."

"We don't want anything to eat," Tommy said with an inward shudder as he glanced toward his cousin, who looked very much as if the mere mention of food had made him ill. "Can you tell us, sir, how long a voyage this vessel is likely to make?"

"Wa'al, that's as may be, lads," Moses replied thoughtfully, as if trying to decide the question in his own mind. "If luck is with us, so that we fill up as quick as hands can do it, we ought'er be bound for port in about three weeks, pervidin' this 'ere wind holds till we make the banks; but if so be the fish don't take hold lively, then you can count on our bein' out four or five weeks."

“Four or five weeks!” Sam cried in dismay, turning toward Master Babbidge as if to ask whether he reconciled that statement with the one he had made at Portland, and then added angrily, “I won’t stay so long! Tommy and I must be in Bar Harbor before Saturday!”

“P’rhaps you kin tell me how you’re goin’ to make that port, my son, seein’s how we’re headed for the banks, with the old hooker goin’ free?”

“Why couldn’t the captain put us aboard the next vessel we meet? We’ve got nearly five dollars between us, and we’ll willingly give that much to get ashore at some place where he can telegraph to our fathers.”

“If Cap’in Ben is willin’ to heave to for the next craft which he sights, which I misdoubt, you mightn’t be any better off, ’cause there’s no knowin’ where she’d be bound. It strikes me that you’re booked to stay here till we take a full fare, an’ it stands you in hand to get inter gear for what’s before yer, instead of whinin’ over what you brought on yourselves.”

Old Moses was beginning to feel a certain sympathy for the lads whose distress of mind could be read so plainly on their faces; but yet he believed they should manfully bear the burden voluntarily taken upon themselves, yet a while longer, and,

therefore, with assumed harshness, he took leave of them by saying:

“ I reckon it won't make any great difference to the cap'in an' crew of this 'ere schooner whether you get your share of the grub or not; but I'm givin' fair warnin' that you'll come aft now, or go without till mornin'.”

Until this moment Master Babbidge had remained as if wrapped in slumber, but probably listening to the conversation, and now he sprang up quickly, saying as he scrambled through the hatchway:

“ Come on, fellers! There's no use gettin' an edge on jest 'cause things ain't goin' to suit yer. Aboard the *Ellen Maria* it's a case of gettin' grub when there's a chance, an' I don't stand willin' to miss my feed.”

“ Do you want to go with him? ” and Sam turned to face his cousin.

“ Indeed I don't! ” was the emphatic reply. “ I couldn't swallow a mouthful to save my life! Oh, Sam! Sam! What fools we've made of ourselves! Think of coming into such a horrible place as this, when we might have staid where we belonged! ”

It was as if only these words were needed to plunge Master Chesley into the lowest depths of despair, and, flinging himself face downward upon the lumpy “ bed ” Joe had made, he gave full

sway to his grief, Tommy joining him after struggling a few seconds against the overwhelming sorrow.

There in the place of foul odors, flung violently from side to side as the schooner rose or fell on the increasing swell, the two lads who had stowed away in order to enjoy the supposed pleasures of a fishing cruise, wept bitter, scalding tears, while Master Babbidge, who had painted in such alluring colors the delights of a life on board the *Ellen Maria*, gorged himself aft with fried mackerel, giving little or no heed to the words of reproof which his father bestowed upon him from time to time.

The lads from Philadelphia, exhausted by their violent grief, were asleep when finally Joe rejoined them, and, fortunately for their further peace of mind, were all unconscious that the hatch had been set in place lest the spray, which by this time was coming over the bow in showers, should literally drown them out.

And Master Babbidge, like his guests, was ignorant of the fact that shortly before midnight the *Ellen Maria* made her way into the harbor of Boothbay, to encounter the foam-crested waves again as soon as Moses Salter had paid a visit to the little town in order to arouse a sleeping telegraph operator.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TELEGRAM

WHEN the *Ellen Maria* was hove to just off Boothbay harbor, for Captain Ben did not think it worth while to cast anchor during such short time as would be required in which to transact the necessary business, Moses Salter made ready one of the dories in order to go ashore, performing the work with the utmost precaution lest the boys be awakened, and thus made aware of the scheme on foot to save the fathers of the stowaways any further anxiety.

“Who’ll you take with you, Moses?” Captain Ben asked after the schooner had been hauled around, and the helm lashed that she might be held as steady as the wind would permit.

“I reckon I hain’t forgot how to pull a dory, Ben Babbidge,” the old man replied testily, as if fancying the master of the *Ellen Maria* questioned his ability.

“I didn’t allow anythin’ of the kind, you techy old stickleback; but it’s a stiffish pull in there, with the wind headin’ you pretty nigh all the way.”

“What I’ve done before I kin do agin,” was

the dogged reply as the oars were laid gently across the thwart. "What's the sense in callin' all hands jest to send that 'ere little message over the telegraph wires? If so be there's anybody ashore to 'tend to business, I reckon I'll be able to work the traverse before you'd have time to pry open the eyes of them dandy fishermen that you think are so smart jest 'cause they happen to be a bit younger than some folks."

"Have it your own way, Moses, have it your own way, if it's any pleasanter or easier pullin' three or four miles alone," Captain Ben said with a subdued laugh. "Will it go so terribly hard agin the grain if I turn over a leetle cash, so's you can pay for havin' the job done?"

"I generally count on havin' some spare money on hand, seein's how I hain't overly given to squanderin' it ashore whenever we make port, an' we can square accounts after I get back," Moses replied in a tone of irritation, and an instant later he had clambered over the rail, disappearing in the darkness almost as soon as Captain Ben had cast off the boat's painter.

"A good hand, an' a A-1 fisherman, is Moses Salter," the master of the *Ellen Maria* said to himself as he looked about him to make certain the schooner was riding as she should. "It's a pity that he's quite so techy erbout his age. I allow he

can work the legs off of men that haven't seen half his years, an' never turn a hair doin' of it."

Then Captain Ben went below to "mug up," which is a fisherman's term for drinking a cup of coffee, a huge pot of which is ever to be found on the stove of a well-provisioned "banker."

Moses Salter heeded the darkness no more than he did the wind which came and went in gusts, as if bent on blowing itself into a regular gale before morning. There was in his heart a certain sense of injury because Captain Ben had much the same as intimated that he needed some one to aid him at the oars, and in his mind a desire to bring his errand to the speediest possible end, that the skipper of the *Ellen Maria* might see whether or no his strength or wits were failing.

In addition to the desire to make a speedy trip, was the belief that the message penned by Captain Ben must be forwarded at all hazards, although at the moment he had no idea that there might be any delay in transacting his business.

When he had made his boat fast to the pier, however, and stood looking in vain for a light, it occurred to him for the first time that the telegraph operator at Boothbay might not consider it necessary to remain at his post of duty all the hours of darkness, when other people in the town were supposed to be in bed.

“ I sure am gettin’ forgetful as I grow older,” he muttered impatiently. “ The biggest fool that ever lived would have had sense enough to ask for the bearin’s of this ’ere telegraph office, an’ yet I come ashore as if I knew it all, when I never set foot in the town before! ”

Then Moses walked rapidly up the pier, and along the first street at hand, until arriving in front of what was apparently a dwelling. Here he pounded vigorously on the door as if it was his intention to batter it down, until an upper window was raised, and an angry voice cried:

“ What’s wanted down there? ”

“ I’m after the telegraph man, an’ hain’t got a great deal more time to squander on the job,” Moses replied, in a tone which indicated that he had none too much control over his temper.

“ Wa’al, get after him then, an’ don’t be raisin’ a row ’round here! ”

“ Where is he? ”

“ Home, I reckon, where you ought’er be.”

“ Hark ye, mate! I’m a peaceful, law-abidin’ man; but if you try to be funny with me, an’ Captain Ben wonderin’ if I’m never comin’ back, there’ll be trouble in this ’ere town an’ you’ll be in the thick of it sure! ”

“ For two cents I’ll go down there an’ punch your head! ”

“An’ I’ll come up an’ punch yours without waitin’ for even so much as one cent, if you don’t tell me where the telegraph man is!”

“He boards at the hotel, you old fool!”

“An’ where’s that, Mr. Freshfield?” asked Mr. Salter.

“Second corner, an’ go up the hill.”

The window was closed with a bang almost before this information had been given, and Moses started off in the direction indicated, muttering to himself:

“If I’m ever fool enough to come ashore here agin, I’ll look you up, you shore-goin’ swab, an’ show you how to talk to a decent man what’s in a hurry.”

Fortunately for the other citizens, Moses found the hotel after walking rapidly five minutes or more, but it was closed, with never a light in any of the windows. Using a small rock, in order to save his knuckles, the old fisherman announced his presence in such a demonstrative manner that within a very few seconds a sleepy porter opened the front door, as he stood partially screened behind it because of his scanty garments.

“I’m after the telegraph man, an’ I want him quick!” Moses said peremptorily, entering the hallway lest the porter, after gathering his wits, should attempt to bar his passage.

"He's up in Number Ten; but he don't 'tend to business at this time of night."

"Where's Number Ten?"

"Up two flights—right at the top. It won't do any good to go there, I tell yer, 'cause he's off duty at eight o'clock."

"He'll come on agin, or I'll know the reason why," and Mr. Salter ran upstairs as rapidly as the youngest member of the *Ellen Maria's* crew could have done.

Less than a minute later the "telegraph man" was brought very suddenly to a sitting posture in bed, as a heavy hand was dropped upon his face, and a hoarse voice cried in a note of thunder:

"I'm wantin' you to send a message to Portland quick. Get inter yer clothes, an' I'll go with you to see that it's done."

"Office is closed at eight o'clock. I'll see you in the mornin', an' the quicker you get out of this room the better I'll be pleased," the young man said curtly, and he would have composed himself to sleep once more, but for the fact that Mr. Salter literally dragged him out of the bed.

"See here, mister, I've got to send word to Portland mighty quick, 'cause it don't stand to reason we can keep the *Ellen Maria* off this forgotten town while the wind is breezin' up. This

is a case where you open the office after hours, or I'll have to do it for yer."

"It must be mighty important," the telegraph operator grumbled, but so decidedly had Mr. Salter spoken that he began to dress himself without further parley, although the porter of the hotel would have been willing to wager considerably more than an ordinary amount of money, that even the president of the Western Union Company could not have persuaded Reginald Smith to open his office at any time between eight o'clock in the evening, and the same hour next morning.

"Important? Do you think we'd heave the *Ellen Maria* to on a night like this if it wasn't somethin' that had to be done? Seems to me you're mighty slow 'bout gettin' inter them few duds."

Mr. Reginald Smith might possibly have made an angry reply, for it surely seemed to him as if he was doing for the stranger much more than was demanded by the company that employed him, but before he could open his mouth Moses had dragged him into the hallway, saying as he did so:

"You can save a heap of time, young man, by gettin' inter rig as we go along. Where's the place you keep the telegraph things?"

"In the second buildin' from here," was the

mEEK reply, and from the tone one could have guessed that the employee of the telegraph company was dazed, if not actually bewildered.

Moses forced him forward at a rapid pace, and when the door of the "second building" had been unlocked, the young gentleman was thrust inside with such force that he came in violent contact with the desk.

It was Moses who lighted the lamp, and as Reginald Smith sank into a chair in front of the telegraph instrument, the old sailor spread out before him the paper which had cost Captain Ben so much labor to stain with ink.

"You want'er send that jest the quickest you know how, 'cause I'm bound to stay here till it's gone, an' if I hang 'round a great spell longer, Cap'in Ben'll be comin' ashore to find out what's doin'."

"Did you rout me out of bed to send a message that could just as well have been attended to in the mornin', seein's it won't be delivered till then?" Mr. Smith cried after reading what had been written, his anger becoming stronger than his fear and bewilderment.

"Them as are in Portland will have to answer for it if them words ain't shoved through after they get there, an' it's up to you to start 'em off lively!"

Moses looked and spoke like a man whom it would not be pleasant to offend, and without further parley Mr. Smith set about the task, saying a few moments later, when he had finished clicking the key:

“Another time a man tries to turn me out in the night, I’ll know whether his message is important before I get up from my bed.”

“We won’t argify now that the thing is done,” Moses said in a tone of satisfaction. “Erbout how much money do you think that job is worth?”

“The regular tariff makes it ninety cents, an’ seein’s I’m workin’ overtime, we’ll call it two dollars.”

“Two what?” Mr. Salter cried angrily, and then, as if suddenly realizing the situation, he counted carefully a number of small coins, saying as he laid several in front of Reginald Smith:

“Here’s ninety cents, an’ ’cordin’ to your figgerin’ it’s all that’s comin’ to you honestly. If you don’t have nothin’ more to do than jerk that little handle up an’ down, it can’t make any great difference if you do lose a little sleep now an’ then.”

Having said this, Mr. Salter went hurriedly out of the office, and, once in the street, walked very rapidly toward the pier.

Hardly more than half an hour had elapsed

from the time of beginning the return voyage, when he was alongside the *Ellen Maria* once more, and Captain Ben, who had remained alone on the lookout, said in a tone of surprise:

“ I declare for it, Moses, it don't seem as if you'd had time to pull ashore, let alone goin' there an' back! You must have stirred the folks up some considerable, to be through with the job so soon.”

“ I did wrastle 'em jest a bit, 'cause I knowed we couldn't afford to be foolin' 'round Boothbay with a wind like this.”

“ I happened to think, after you had gone, that perhaps the telegraph man wouldn't be doin' business as late as this.”

“ He wasn't; but I kind'er showed him that he had a call to do a job jest at that time, an' he seemed to allow I was in the right. If you've got younger men aboard what could'er done it in better time, I'd like to have you call 'em on deck, for sendin' things by telegraph ain't as plain sailin' as it looks to be from a distance.”

Then Mr. Salter unlashd the helm and otherwise made ready to put the *Ellen Maria* on her course again, while Captain Ben went well forward where he could indulge in noisy mirth without danger of being overheard by the old sailor.

When the occupants of the forepeak awakened

to a knowledge of their surroundings next morning, two of them were convinced that the plunging of the *Ellen Maria* during the first three or four hours after leaving port was positively pleasing in comparison with what it was possible for her to do.

She was leaping about so wildly that to remain in the "snug bed" which Master Babbidge had made, was absolutely impossible, save by holding on to the edges of the trawl tubs, and this required most severe labor.

"What is the matter?" Sam asked fearfully, as he clung for dear life to his cousin's neck. "Is she going to wreck herself?"

"Wreck nothin'!" Master Babbidge cried with a laugh. "The wind has freshened, that's all, an' we're stormin' along towards the banks—eatin' up the miles, as father puts it."

"It must be a terrible storm!" Tommy moaned, and at the same time wondered why he failed to suffer from the nausea which had assailed him when the voyage was first begun.

"This ain't nothin' to what it would be if there was a gale of wind," Master Babbidge said with a laugh which, to his guests, sounded very disagreeably. "Wait till we get one, an' then you'll think this is the same as if the *Ellen Maria* was at the dock."

“ If you’re tellin’ the truth, neither Sam nor I will be alive when this miserable vessel gets to Bar Harbor, for it seems certain I’m dying already! ” and Tommy gave no heed to the fact that the big tears were rolling down his cheeks.

CHAPTER IX

SEA LEGS

As a matter of course, it was impossible for the stowaways to distinguish objects around them; the forepeak was as "dark as a pocket," and this fact served to make it seem as if the schooner was tumbling about even more violently than really was the case.

"I'm just stifling to death," Tommy moaned, speaking indistinctly, as if he had difficulty in drawing a long breath. "If we could see things it wouldn't be quite so bad; but to be shut in here where it is thick darkness, and then knocked around in such a manner, is terrible!"

"Better have it dark than wet," Master Babidge said in a tone of content, and Sam asked petulantly:

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, s'posin' the hatch was off, what do you think would happen? I reckon the *Ellen Maria* is throwin' spray fit to smother a man, an' it wouldn't be many minutes before we'd get drowned out."

"Have we got to stay here till the storm clears away?" and there was a decided tremor of grief and fear in Sam's voice as he asked the question.

“Don’t I tell you it ain’t a storm? The wind is blowin’ fresh, jest as father predicted, that’s all. They won’t leave us here a great while after breakfast is ready, an’ somebody will be ’round to snake us out when the time comes right.”

“We’ll be dead if they don’t come quickly,” Tommy moaned, and Master Babbidge laughed in what, as it appeared to his “guests,” was a most disagreeable and unsympathetic manner.

“I’ll risk that part of it! Wait till the cook sings out that he’s ready for the second half, an’ you’ll be crawlin’ ’round mighty lively, no matter how much the *Ellen Maria* kicks about.”

“I couldn’t eat anything if I was starving to death!” Sam said in a tone of conviction. “If it should happen that we live to get on shore again, you can set it down as a fact that the fellow isn’t living who can persuade me to stow away on the best vessel that ever floated!”

“Seems to me you Philadelpy fellers haven’t got a great deal of sand,” Joe said in a tone of disdain. “There hasn’t been a chance yet to find out what fishin’ on the banks is like, an’ yet you’re cryin’ to get home before we’ve been out twenty-four hours.”

“And that is just twenty-four hours too much,” Tommy cried sharply. “We deserve the soundest flogging boys ever got for running away from

our parents, and I hope my father will give me all that is coming my way, if I'm alive when he sees me again!"

"You may get a taste of a rope's end while you're aboard the *Ellen Maria*, if you don't duff inter the work 'cordin' to father's way of thinkin', for he don't allow any sogerin when fishin' sets in lively," and Master Babbidge spoke as if it would please him to see the stowaways flogged, because of the fact that they were, from his point of view, showing themselves to be chicken-hearted.

"He'd better not try to be funny with us, for we won't stand it!" and now Sam was so angry that for the moment he gave no heed to the wild plunging of the schooner. "We didn't come aboard to be knocked around by your father whenever he took a fancy to flog somebody!"

"You'll find that he won't make much allowance for what you think 'bout it," and Joe's tone was really threatening. "Cap'ins of vessels do pretty nigh what they want'er at sea, as you'll find out if you don't walk a chalk-line."

It surely seemed to the lads from Philadelphia as if nothing more than this was needed to overrun their cup of sorrow. That the boy who had held out such golden promises in order to persuade them to stow away, should presume to threaten

when they were so helpless and ill, was to their minds the acme of cruelty, and but for the overpowering sense of utter helplessness they would have given Master Babbidge a dose similar to that which he threatened should be dealt out by his father.

It is impossible to say just what might have happened, so strained were their relations, if the three boys had been left in the forepeak many moments longer; but, fortunately, just then Moses Salter interfered to effect a change which, after a time, proved to be decidedly for the better.

A cry of relief burst from Tommy's lips when suddenly the hatch was lifted, and he heeded not the flood of water which came below at the same time, as he sprang toward the opening, doing so, unluckily, at the very moment when the *Ellen Maria* upraised herself on a heavy sea, throwing him back against the bulkhead with such force as caused a scream of pain.

"Ain't jest got yer sea-legs on yet, eh?" Mr. Salter said with a laugh, as he lowered himself into the forepeak with the water dripping from his oilskins in tiny streams. "Lots of fun runnin' away from home to try yer hands at bein' fishermen, eh?"

"Is there any chance we can go ashore, or get on board a vessel bound for Portland?" Sam



"AIN'T GOT YER SEA-LEGS ON YET, EH?"



asked eagerly, as he aided his cousin to his feet once more.

“Not the least little bit of a show, seein’s we’re well on to the banks, an’ ’less one of them big ocean steamboats comes stormin’ erlong takin’ the chances of runnin’ down honest fishermen without givin’ any great heed to what’s in the way, you ain’t likely to see a craft bound in till the *Ellen Maria* has got a full fare aboard. The second half’s been called for grub, an’ you two lads must be mighty empty in the stomach by this time.”

Master Babbidge did not wait to be urged, but scrambled out of the forepeak as if there was imminent danger of his starving to death before he could gain the cabin, and Tommy said in a tearful voice:

“We don’t want anything to eat, sir, and it doesn’t seem to me as if I’d ever need food again.”

“That’s where you’re talkin’ nonsense, lad!” and Mr. Salter spoke sternly. “Because you’ve been sich fools as to run away from home, is no reason why you should keep on tryin’ to show that you’re the biggest kind of idjuts. You’re aboard the *Ellen Maria*, havin’ stowed away of your own free will, an’ now it stands you in hand to show that you’re somethin’ more’n babies. When you get inter a tight place, the manly way is to make

the best of it, an' put yer best foot for'ard, which is to be done by gettin' inter gear as quick as you know how. Follow me, an' make up yer minds to take what's comin' your way. Them as grin an' look pleasant get erlong in this world a great deal better than them what sulk."

Then, without further argument, Mr. Salter lifted the stowaways up through the hatchway, and it was as if they were no more than on deck before a green wave, coming over the bow, drenched them thoroughly.

Sam threw himself at full length on the deck, fearing lest he should be washed overboard, but Mr. Salter pulled him upright by the collar of his coat, saying as he balanced him on his feet:

"The first thing is to get yer sea-legs on, an' that can't be done if you go flounderin' 'round like this. It ain't much of a knack to keep yer feet when the old hooker is wallowin' a bit, an' after that's been done you've gone a long ways toward bein' a fisherman."

"We've got through wanting to be fishermen," Tommy said with a sob, but at the same time he followed the old sailor's advice to the best of his ability, finding that it was not such a difficult matter to hold his balance against the motion of the schooner.

"I'm allowin' you have; but seein's how you

took so much trouble to make this 'ere voyage, you can't get out of seein' it through. Never mind the water, for it ain't the first time you'll be soaked before you see Bar Harbor, an' you may as well get used to it. Now you're goin' aft with me, an' stow in a cargo of grub, for that's what's most needed by both. With a good square feed, things will begin to look different, though I ain't allowin' you're in the way of gettin' any great lot of fun aboard a fishin' schooner, no matter what kind of weather we have."

Although the lads from Philadelphia had shown themselves to be very foolish, by stowing away aboard the *Ellen Maria*, they were by no means devoid of sound sense, and the words of the old sailor brought them to their senses more quickly than if they had been better chosen. Without reply they followed him aft, looking shamefacedly at the members of the crew who were on deck, and this slight effort toward aiding themselves did a world of good.

Even though the wind was blowing very strongly, and the green, foam-crested waves curling around the schooner angrily, the sun shone brightly, and there was that in the saltiness which brought a sense of greatest relief after the night spent in the stuffy forepeak, which had seemingly been thick with foul air. It surprised them both,

when they realized that the odor of food which came from the cabin, was most appetizing, and very willingly they followed Mr. Salter down the narrow companion-way.

Master Babbidge was already at table, eating greedily as if having been deprived of food for many days, and did not so much as look toward them when his "guests" stumbled down the stairs, bringing up against the table with a force that nearly unseated one man.

"I didn't mean to hit you, sir, and I am sorry," Tommy said in an apologetic tone, and the young sailor laughed heartily as he replied:

"We don't make any great 'count of sich things before a lad gets his sea-legs on; but you'll have to look sharp after you've been aboard a couple of days."

To boys not accustomed to such things, the table in the cabin of the *Ellen Maria* was most uninviting. The dishes were tin, the knives and forks iron, and the cloth conspicuous only by its absence. Everything looked positively unclean, and yet so great was the hunger which assailed them that they gave but little heed to what, under other circumstances, would have taken away all desire for food.

The hot biscuit were light and white, but would have been more palatable spread with butter in-

then it's a case of settin' the trawls, but seein's how you an' your mate ain't what might be called first-class hands, I reckon Cap'in Ben won't call on you for any dory work this trip. P'rhaps if you make up your minds to stay 'board the rest of the season, you'll get inter shape to bear a hand with the rest of us."

"I'm thinking one voyage will satisfy us," Sam replied in such a cheerful tone that both Tommy and Joe looked at him in astonishment, and Mr. Salter nodded his head approvingly, as if to say that he was beginning to show the proper spirit.

It would really surprise any one if an attempt was made at telling how much these homesick stowaways ate during their first meal aboard the *Ellen Maria*. Their appetites were so keen, despite the sorrow and repentance which filled their hearts, that the cook said when he brought a fresh supply of biscuit:

"If you lads stay aboard any length of time, I'm allowin' we'll have to make port to lay in more grub; but don't think I'm findin' fault, 'cause it does me good to see a boy fill hisself up in good shape."

When the meal was finally at an end Master Babbidge invited his "guests" on deck, and as they made their appearance in the open air Captain Ben cried so cheerily that it seemed to Tommy

as if a great change must have come over him since the day previous:

“Filled up in good shape, eh? Ready for work, I’m allowin’, for them as come aboard a fisherman must pay their footin’, so turn to with Joe an’ get the deck in shape for what’ll soon be before us, if so be I haven’t forgot where the fish are schoolin’.”

“He means that we’ll soon be on the fishin’ grounds, an’ it’s for us to clear up a bit,” Master Babbidge whispered, and the stowaways set about the task by following the example of the lad who had induced them to embark in what was neither more nor less than a dishonest fashion.

“You’ve found your sea-legs all right,” Moses Salter said in a tone of approval, as the two lads ran here and there without being greatly incommoded by the movements of the vessel. “I reckon there’s a bit more dirt to the work than you’ve been used to, but it won’t hurt any, an’ with plenty for your hands to do there won’t be so much chance to think of them as you ran away from.”

Half an hour later the schooner was hove to; the crew got the lines over the rail, and in a twinkling the drumming of the first fish taken told that the work of putting a full fare aboard had begun.

CHAPTER X

DRESSING-DOWN

DURING at least ten minutes Tommy and Sam could do little more than stand in open-mouthed astonishment, watching the fishermen haul big cod or haddock over the rail, throwing them at random on the deck with a business-like air which told that they did not look upon fishing as anything other than hard work. To them there were no elements of sport in it, for to haul in a two-pound weight of lead at the end of a very long, stout line, required no slight amount of labor, more particularly when a twenty-pound fish had the hook in his mouth.

To the lads from Philadelphia it seemed as if the schooner's deck was covered thickly with flapping, squirming fish before the men had fairly got to work. Never before had they believed there could be so many at any one place in the sea, and Tommy said with a gasp of astonishment, as he steadied himself by the foremast against the rolling of the vessel:

“They won't keep at that kind of work very

long before the schooner will be filled to running over."

"You'll find that a mighty big lot can be stowed below," Master Babbidge said with an air of exceeding wisdom. "Wait till they're all dressed-down, an' then you'll see that they pack up considerable small."

"What do you mean by 'dressed-down'?" Tommy asked.

"Say, you didn't think we carried 'em to port jest as they came over the rail, did yer? Every one of them blessed fish have got to be split, cleaned an' salted, else they'd spile mighty quick, an' after they're flattened out you'll find that they make snug stowin'."

"Who dresses them down?"

"All hands, an' that's where part of your work will come in. After a spell the splittin' tables will be set up, when it's a case of us three standin' by to pass fish to them as are splittin', an' if you think that ain't the hardest kind of hard work, then you've got somethin' to learn. I've stood on this very deck, when the trawlin' was good an' every boat comin' in loaded to the gun'nle, passin' to Moses Salter, who's the boss hand at dressin'-down, till it seemed as if I'd never get my back straight again."

"Is there much of that kind of work to be

done?" Sam asked, thinking at the same time that taking fish from the deck and placing them on a table could not be exceedingly laborious.

"If we have good luck—an' father knows where to strike fish better'n any other man that comes on the banks—it'll be a case of humpin' to it the biggest part of every night. Gee! but how sleepy you get, an' it seems sometimes as if the fish hatched out while they're layin' right here on the deck!"

"If the men work in the night and fish in the daytime, when do they sleep?" Sam asked, his eyes opening wide as he began to understand that there were kinds of fishing which were not carried on simply for sport.

"They have to ketch chances whenever they can. We don't stay in one place only while the fish are bitin' sharp, an' when the *Ellen Maria* shifts ground, pretty near all hands turn in for a snooze. Then agin, whenever it storms so hard that you can't run trawls, it's a case of layin' still, an' that's the time when the men bottle up what sleep they can. You mustn't get it inter your head that much of this sort'er work is done," and Master Babbidge waved his hand toward the men who lined the rails. "When father is satisfied that we've struck 'bout the right spot, over'll go the dories, an' the trawls will be set.

“What’s a trawl?” Tommy asked.

“A long line—a mile long, p’raps, with hooks tied to it fifteen or eighteen inches apart. Every hook has to be baited, an’ don’t you think that’s any slouch of a job. Then the whole thing is stretched out in the water, with a lot of small buoys to keep it afloat.”

“I should think the line would get all snarled up when they haul it aboard,” Sam said thoughtfully, and Master Babbidge appeared to think the suggestion very funny, for he laughed loud and long, finally controlling his mirth sufficiently to say:

“They don’t try to take it aboard the schooner till it’s coiled in the tubs. When it’s a case of gettin’ the fish, one of the dories is run under the line, an’ while it passes over her the hooks are baited again as fast as the fish are taken off. There ain’t any need of my spendin’ so much time tryin’ to tell you ’bout it, ’cause it won’t be a great while before you’ll see the whole trick. Now——”

“Get inter gear, Joseph!” Captain Ben shouted, thus breaking in on the fund of information which the stowaways were gaining. “It won’t be a bad idee for your chums to break in on a fisherman’s work, an’ we’ll soon be ready for yer.”

“He means that we’re to put up the splittin’ tables,” Master Babbidge said in a whisper as he

urged his "guests" forward. "They're in the forepeak, an' it'll be quite a job to get 'em out."

The lads from Philadelphia were eager to do what they might, for the activity of the men, and the evident desire of all hands to take the greatest amount of fish in the shortest possible time, served to fire them with a similar spirit. They pulled and tugged at the heavy tables which had been stowed in the forepeak, and as they worked the *Ellen Maria* climbed up one wave and down another, now and then throwing floods of water fore and aft; but the lads gave no more heed to the additional wetting than to the plunging and rolling of the vessel, until the task was well nigh completed, when Sam said in a tone of astonishment, as if but just at that moment aware of the fact:

"Why, see here, Tommy, what's the matter with us? The vessel is tumbling around almost as badly as before we went to breakfast, and yet it doesn't bother me a little bit!"

"That's 'cause you've got yer sea-legs on," Master Babbidge replied sagely. "Folks don't stay seasick only a little while at a time, an' when it's once over they're all right. Father says the more you eat the less you'll feel bad. Take hold an' help me carry these tables aft!"

Then it was that the stowaways understood how

the tables, which had a single leg at one end, were held in place, and that which had puzzled them not a little, became very simple.

The legless end of the table was made fast to the rail of the schooner by a couple of wooden pins, and thus the whole was held firmly in place.

The men gave no heed to the lads as they thus made ready for the dressing-down, but continued to fish all the while, and after waiting a short time without seeing any change, Sam asked:

“Why did they want us to put up those things, if they are not going to use them?”

“Wait till the fish stop bitin’. You couldn’t coax a man of ’em away from the rail now, no matter what you’d give him. How’d one of you like to try a hand at the fun?”

As a matter of fact the stowaways had believed, when they crept aboard the *Ellen Maria* to hide themselves, that their sole duty as amateur fishermen would be to stand line in hand as these men were doing; they had never even dreamed of the disagreeable work which must be performed in addition to that of taking fish, and it seemed no more than honest to Captain Ben that they lend their valuable assistance in taking aboard a cargo.

There was an ample supply of fishing lines, and when the lads from Philadelphia had eagerly ac-

cepted the proposition to be inferred from Joe's question, they were fitted out with the necessary gear for playing the part of fishermen.

Master Babbidge baited the hooks for them, and as they lowered the heavily-weighted lines carefully, as if afraid the lead might strike bottom too quickly, Moses Salter raised a laugh by crying in mock alarm:

“Stand by, all hands, to make a rush to star-board when the new men haul in their catch, else the *Ellen Maria* may turn turtle by takin' so much weight all on one side!”

The mirth had not yet subsided when Tommy whispered nervously to Joe:

“Something is pulling mighty hard on my line. Do you suppose it is a fish?”

“Haul in, you lubber! Of course it's a fish, an' if you don't keep a strain on him he's a goner!”

It seemed to Tommy as if there must be a veritable whale on his hook, so difficult did he find it to pull up the prize. More than once was he tempted to ask Master Babbidge to assist him; but before he could quite make up his mind to confess his weakness, Joe was hauling in his own line with the air of a professional fisherman, while Sam danced around in the highest excitement because of the commotion at the bottom of the sea which appeared to concern him individually.

Of the three lads Tommy was the first to bring a fish in over the rail, and to his great disappointment the prize, instead of being a whale, was not as large as many that had already been taken.

From that moment until an hour later, when the fish suddenly ceased to bite, the stowaways did their fair share of the work, and when Captain Ben announced that it was time to begin dressing-down, Tommy said to Sam, with a long-drawn sigh of satisfaction:

“Early this morning it seemed as if we would have the toughest kind of a time on board this vessel; but now that we’ve got our sea-legs on there’d be a heap of fun in this business if our people could know just where we were.”

“I only wish they did, and I’m not denying the possibility of fun; but my arms ache so badly from pulling in such heavy loads that it really seems as if they would drop off, while the line has cut into my fingers like a knife. Let’s crawl into the fore-peak where we can rest; it won’t seem bad down there now that we are so tired.”

“Ahoy there, you stowaways!” Captain Ben cried at the very moment when the lads had turned to seek their lumpy beds. “One of you will wait on me, an’ Moses’ll try to keep the other busy for a spell. Joe, find a table somewhere, an’ see that you keep it runnin’.”

“What is to be done now?” Sam asked in surprise, and Joe, halting for an instant before obeying the order which had just been given, replied:

“Dressin’-down, of course; an’ it’s a case of workin’ the best you know how if you’re to serve father or Moses.”

“Don’t we stop to rest and get something to eat?” Tommy asked, astonished that the work should be carried on with such a rush.

“Not much you don’t. P’rhaps there’ll be a chance for a bite before we turn in, but you mustn’t count too big on it. We’re at the banks now, an’ it’s a case of jump to it all the time in good weather.”

Then Master Babbidge ran aft to the table where stood the young sailor whom Tommy had stumbled against when he made his first appearance in the cabin, and Sam stationed himself in front of Moses Salter, saying as he did so:

“I’ll do the best I know how, sir; but you’ll have to tell me a little about it, for I never saw anything of the kind before.”

“I don’t reckon you ever did, lad; but you’ll know a heap more ’bout it before these decks are cleared. The idee is for you to keep me stocked up with fish all the time. Lay ’em on the table in a row, with the tails toward me; there ain’t much

of a knack to it, except that you're to pick 'em up as fast as I'm needin' 'em."

"That ought to be easy enough," Sam replied carelessly, relieved to know that his duties were to be no more arduous, and glancing aft sufficiently long to see that Tommy had taken his station at the captain's table.

"It don't seem as if I could split a fish open an' pass it along for Jimmy Brown to strip while you're pickin' one up, an' p'rhaps it can't be did; but I'm goin' to make a try for it," Mr. Salter said with a peculiar twinkle of his salt-encrusted eye as Sam quickly placed four large fish before him and turned to pick up more.

"Come, come; you ain't movin' any ways spry," the old sailor said sharply, and to Sam's surprise he saw, when he straightened himself up with a large fish in each hand, that the end of the table directly in front of Mr. Salter was bare.

"What did you do with those I left there?" Sam asked in astonishment, and even while he spoke the fisherman had split the last of the two just placed before him.

"Do with 'em? Why I'm splittin' fish, an' was countin' on you to pass 'em up fast enough so I shouldn't go to sleep."

By this time Sam began to understand that his task was not as easy as had at first appeared, and

before being aboard the *Ellen Maria* many days, he came to know that whoever supplied with fish the splitting table of Moses Salter's—the smartest hand at dressing-down to be found on the banks—was forced to work to the best of his ability every moment.

He did his honest best to accomplish what had been required of him, working feverishly while the perspiration streamed down his face, with his arms lame and his back aching as if on the point of breaking short off, and yet at no one time did he succeed in keeping the old man really busy.

Lifting a ten or twenty-pound fish in either hand five or six times each minute, and continuing such labor hour after hour, is sufficient to weary even those who are accustomed to it, therefore one can well understand how exhausted Sam was when no more than half an hour had passed, and the number of fish on deck did not appear to have been lessened to any appreciable degree.

“Lots of fun in a fisherman's life, for lads like you who haven't had overly much sport in this 'ere world,” Moses Salter finally said as he ceased work in order to give Sam a breathing spell. “Don't you think this beats idlin' 'round Portland or Bar Harbor?”

“You're meaning to ask if I've begun to realize

what a fool I made of myself by coming aboard this schooner," Sam said grimly as he flung one heavy fish after another on the table. "If I hadn't found out already, I'm thinkin' I'd begin to have a suspicion before this job is finished."

CHAPTER XI

DORY WORK

IT was nearly midnight before the work of dressing down was finished, and during all that time the lads from Philadelphia were forced, rather than admit their inability, to continue the labor which, at the outset, had seemed so easy.

Never one of the *Ellen Maria's* crew ceased to work until the last fish had been cared for, nor did any of them appear to think it necessary that food should be prepared. More than once had the cook replenished the huge pot with coffee, and at intervals the men went into the cabin to mug-up, Sam and Tommy following their example when Moses Salter suggested it by saying:

“You’ll never make what might be called an AI fisherman till you get inter the habit of muggin’-up whenever there’s a breathin’ spell. S’posen you an’ me have a pull at that ’ere pot?”

“What about Tommy?” Sam asked, turning to look at his cousin, who was making frantic efforts to keep Captain Ben’s table supplied with fish.

“How ’bout sendin’ that stowaway of yours be-

low for a mug-up?" the old fisherman called to the master of the *Ellen Maria*, and that officer replied with a laugh:

"All right, Moses, take him with you an' I'll try to worry along without any helper for a spell; it strikes me I'd get more fish cleaned in that way."

There was no need to ask Master Tommy if he wanted a breathing spell. Never in all his life had he been so nearly exhausted as at that moment; his arms and back ached as if the joints were about to separate, and he was so thoroughly covered with fish gurry that it seemed as if there was not water enough in the entire ocean to cleanse him properly.

Immediately Captain Ben told him to "spell himself" he hurried away in obedience to Sam's summons, and once the lads and Mr. Salter were in the cabin, the latter said with a decided twinkle of the left eye:

"What a pity it would have been if the *Ellen Maria* had contrived to leave port before you'd had time to hide aboard? You'd missed all this 'ere fun, the like of which hain't to be found ashore, no matter how keen you hunt."

"It wouldn't hurt me a little bit to miss some of it just now," Sam said grimly, as he took the mug of steaming coffee which old Moses had been making ready for him. "There's such a thing as

getting too much sport at one time, and that's what's happening to me to-night. How about it, Tommy?"

"It seems to me as if I'd tumble over any minute," Master Harriman replied, with a long-drawn sigh. "If I could wash myself once in a while it wouldn't be quite so bad, for I smell so strongly of fish that it almost makes me sick."

"I reckon a bed in one of them Bar Harbor hotels, with your mother to come in an' tuck you up, would go mighty good 'bout this time?" Mr. Salter said as he gave Tommy a mug of coffee. "Wa'al, you won't strike anythin' of that kind till we've loaded the *Ellen Maria* chock ablock with fish, so the more there are to dress-down, the nearer you come to tacklin' a real bed. Drink yer fill of coffee, 'cause it'll go a good ways towards restin' you up, an' then we'll get on deck again, for we don't want our shipmates to think we're sogerin'."

The coffee refreshed them wonderfully, and when the mugs had been emptied they followed Mr. Salter on deck once more, there to continue the labor of handling fish until it seemed really an impossibility for them to raise a finger.

When the last of the catch had been cleaned, and Sam had succeeded in straightening his back, he said with a sigh of relief to his cousin:

“I wouldn't have believed this morning that anything could have happened to make the forepeak a place I would ever really want to enter; but now it'll be like going into the snugest kind of a room. Come on, there's no sense in standing here when we can lie down.”

“Hold on there, you fellers!” Master Babidge cried as the lads started forward. “It's our business to swab down the deck while the crew are sendin' the catch below, an' when it's been done we'll get a bite before turnin' in.”

Tommy actually groaned at this intimation that their labors had not yet come to an end, and Sam whispered in his ear:

“Don't let anybody see how tired we are! No matter how rough things go, we're only getting served well right for running away, and it is better to take the medicine pleasantly than to cry baby.”

Thus stimulated to further exertion when it had seemed to him as if the limit of his endurance had been reached, Master Harriman did his full share in hoisting buckets of water over the rail and throwing them on the deck, while Joe scrubbed the gurry and blood away with the stump of a broom, and once Captain Ben gave the word to “knock off,” he started toward the forepeak, followed by Sam.

“Hold on there, you fellers!” Master Babidge called peremptorily. “We’re going to have a bite before turnin’ in!”

“You can have as many bites as you want; but a chance to lie down is what we’re after, and I wouldn’t swap it for all the food aboard this schooner!”

Then the stowaways stumbled forward, scuffling along the wet decks as if their feet were weighted heavily, and, arrived at the forepeak hatch, the two literally tumbled below, falling asleep on the lumpy bed almost immediately they were stretched out at full length on the dunnage.

“I didn’t give them boys credit for havin’ so much sand,” Captain Ben said in a low tone to Moses Salter as the stowaways disappeared, and the old sailor replied:

“It went considerably agin’ my grain to keep that little shaver servin’ me when I could see that it was about as much as he could do to raise his arms; but I reckon he’s needin’ all the lesson that can be given him aboard the *Ellen Maria*, an’ I’m blest if he didn’t hold out like a little tiger.”

“Don’t get so soft-hearted as to let up on ’em any, Moses. It’s our business to deal out a full dose of fishin’ so’s this ’ere stowin’ away will do good, instead of tryin’ to make fishermen of ’em,

though I'm allowin' that in another week they can work all 'round my Joe, when it comes to hard knocks."

The stowaways, all ignorant of the fact that they had won praise from those who posed as taskmasters, slept as only tired boys can. They were not even disturbed when Master Babbidge came below and did his best to arouse them that he might learn what decision they had arrived at regarding the beauty and pleasures of a fisherman's life, nor again when he deliberately rolled them into the trawl tubs because, as he insisted, they had taken more than their rightful share of the "bed."

And no one can say how long they might have slept, so nearly exhausted were they because of the labors of the afternoon and evening, if it had not been for those same trawl tubs in which they were reposing doubled up like jointed dolls, with nothing save one thickness of canvas between their bodies and the collection of hooks.

The sun had hardly more than shown himself next morning when Captain Ben decided that the *Ellen Maria* was on good fishing grounds, and at once called all hands to set trawls, for, as Joe had said, there was no time to be wasted when the schooner was on the banks.

In order to get the trawls it was necessary to

take the tubs out of the forepeak, and therefore it was, when it seemed to the stowaways as if they had hardly more than fallen asleep, they were rudely roused by being tumbled unceremoniously out of the makeshift for a bed, opening their eyes to hear Jimmy Brown, one of the ablest of the younger members of the crew, cry as if believing he was saying something very comical:

“Them as sleep in trawl tubs must count on gettin’ up in the forenoon, for the *Ellen Maria* ain’t any excursion boat where the passengers can have meals served to ’em in bed!”

It was on the very tip of Sam’s tongue to make an angry reply, and insist that after working nearly all night they had the right to sleep during a certain portion of the daytime; but, fortunately, he bit off the words before they could get out of his lips, and gripped Tommy’s arm hard lest that young gentleman should not be as prudent.

“We’d have taken the trawl tubs aft with our compliments, if you had sent word that they were wanted,” Sam said with a cheery laugh. “Another time, if you notify us, Tommy and I will attend to any little matters of that kind, so you won’t have to disturb yourself.”

“Hello! gettin’ your sea-tongue as well as your sea-legs on, eh? I’d kind’er run of the idee that

you got a full dose last night!" Jimmy Brown cried in surprise, and from that moment the stowaways had one more friend aboard the *Ellen Maria*.

"Will we try to get some more sleep, or shall we go on deck now?" Tommy asked when the tubs had been hoisted on deck, Master Babbidge slumbering peacefully during all the bustle in his bed-chamber.

"Let's turn out and wash ourselves once more; that'll waken us, and we'll be ready for work. You see, Tommy, unless we do our full share of what is going on, we're likely to have a rough time of it, and it stands us in hand to move lively."

Ten minutes later Moses Salter came upon the stowaways as they stood well forward scrubbing themselves in a bucket of water drawn from over the rail, and said with that peculiar twinkle of the eye:

"Tryin' to get some of the gurry off, eh?"

"We got rid of that last night, and now we're trying to part with some of the perfume," Sam replied cheerily. "What are the men doing with the boats?"

"Puttin' 'em over the rail to be ready for settin' trawls, as soon as the cap'in of the galley has a bite for 'em to eat. Where's Joe Babbidge?"

"In the forepeak, sir."

The old sailor seized the bucket which the boys were using, and, without a word of warning, threw the contents directly upon the sleeping lad, causing him to spring to his feet very suddenly, and with many an angry word.

“That’s a fisherman’s way of callin’ lazy hands to breakfast,” the old sailor said as he walked leisurely aft, and Joe came up through the small hatch like a jack-in-a-box, as he asked savagely:

“Who played that funny trick on me?”

“It was Mr. Salter who threw the water,” Tommy replied, as he refilled the bucket by lowering it over the rail, and on hearing who had thus summoned him in “fisherman’s way,” Master Babbidge’s temper oozed out at his finger’s ends, for he knew full well that his body would come in forcible contact with a rope’s end if he spoke impudently to the old sailor, who had the reputation of being the best fisherman on the banks, Captain Ben himself not excepted.

Five minutes later the stowaways had forgotten that they were hungry, for then the nest of dories carried amidships had been put over the rail, and in each were two men rowing off over the rolling ocean with the trawls that were to be set in the immediate vicinity.

Moses Salter and Jimmy Brown were making ready their craft when the lads from Philadelphia

raced aft to watch the proceedings, and the old man said as the two peered over the rail:

“Ever see trawls set, lads? I don’t reckon you ever have, an’ if so be you can hold up on yer breakfast till we get back, you may come aboard with us. Jimmy an’ me will show you the fine pints of fishin’.”

“Will the boat hold both of us while the water is so rough?” Tommy asked, as he began to clamber over the rail, and Mr. Salter, looking out over the sea, which was as calm as he had ever seen it, replied hesitatingly, much as though weighing well his words:

“I allow if you set still, an’ don’t try to wink one eye at a time, we’ll pull through without drownin’ more’n half the crew. Twist yerselves down in the bow, where you can easy jump ashore in case these ’ere vi’lent waves come aboard too fast, an’ Jimmy shall play the swell in the stern sheets, with not a blessed thing to do but let the trawl run through them ’ere delicate fingers of his’n.”

“Here, you fellers!” Master Babbidge cried as Mr. Salter pulled the dory, in the bow of which crouched Sam and Tommy, away from the *Ellen Maria*, “What right have you got to be doin’ dory work when you don’t know how to bait a trawl?”

“Keep yer eyes on ’em right sharp, Joseph, an’ see if you can catch ’em doin’ any work aboard this ’ere craft!” Mr. Salter cried in reply, and, without understanding why it should be so, the stowaways understood that Master Babbidge was decidedly angry because they had accepted the invitation to see how the trawls were set.

On first putting off from the schooner the lads from Philadelphia were by no means assured that it was safe to venture far away from the larger vessel in so small a craft. Although the surface of the water was not even wrinkled by the lightest breath, the swell rolled long and deep, causing it to seem, when the dory went into the trough of the sea, as if she was bent on going to the bottom; but when she rose quite as regularly as she slid down into the valleys of water, swinging to this side or that lightly, shipping never so much as a drop of water, they came to have some faint idea as to the seaworthiness of such a boat.

“How far are we going?” Sam asked, after Mr. Salter had pulled a long distance from the schooner without giving any indication of setting the trawl.

“I allow we’ll get far enough away to give them fellers a wide berth,” the old man replied, as he waved his hand to draw attention to the other boats which had left the *Ellen Maria*. “We

don't want to mix up any, so I reckon we'd best edge down to the s'uthard a good bit."

Then Mr. Salter gave his undivided attention to the oars, and the stowaways, all fear as to the sailorly qualities of the dory having been dissipated, found time to drink in the beauties of the scene.

CHAPTER XII

A MISHAP

THE *Ellen Maria* was the only vessel in the immediate vicinity of the dory, but far away in the distance could be seen the white sails of a large schooner flapping idly against the spars, and after a short scrutiny Jimmy Brown said decidedly:

“Yonder’s the *General Grant*; must’er run down last night. Her crew had to hump themselves quite considerable to get here so close on our heels, for when I saw her in Portland I allowed it would be four or five days ’fore she could clear.”

“Seein’ us under way put a move on ’em, an’ now if they can only square away for home before we’ve got a full fare, how Cap’in Dodge will crow! He’s been tryin’ for the last two years to get ahead of Ben Babbidge, an’ hain’t done it yet.”

“How many men does she carry?”

“The same as we do to a dot; but if we beat her home Eph Dodge will swear that our stowaways count the same as two A1 fishermen.”

“Course he’ll be needin’ some excuse if we skin

him; but sure he won't get quite so low down as to say that a couple of babies like them," and Jimmy Brown nodded in the direction of Sam and Tommy, "can be called reg'lar hands!"

"He'll say anythin' to get out'er allowin' that he's been beat agin by the *Ellen Maria*. I reckon you'd better let that 'ere trawl spin off hereabouts. I was countin' on goin' to the s'uthard a bit further; but, seein's how Eph Dodge has got erlong, we'd best keep reasonably snug to our own craft, else he'll go 'round tellin' how we stretched out all over the whole Atlantic Ocean."

Handling the flakes of line deftly, Jimmy Brown threw out the first buoy, and then allowed the baited hooks to slip over the stern of the dory as Moses Salter pulled her slowly forward, the lads from Philadelphia watching closely every movement of line or man.

"I should think you'd stand a good chance of sticking some of those hooks into your hands," Sam said half to himself, and Jimmy Brown replied with a laugh:

"So I might if I was a dummy! When you've handled as many trawls as I have, I reckon you won't be foolish enough to prick yer fingers."

Flake after flake of the line, buoy after buoy were thrown out until, when it seemed to the stowaways as if several miles in distance separated

the first buoy from the last, the end was reached, and a small keg made fast.

“There!” Moses Salter said when he pulled the dory’s head around in the direction of the schooner. “I reckon we can lay by long enough to get a square meal; but if the fish are bitin’ as they were last night, it’ll be a case of runnin’ that ’ere trawl considerable before noon.”

“That’s what!” Jimmy Brown replied emphatically; “but I’ll have a good thick linin’ to my ribs before you see them ’ere hooks agin.”

“Now that you’ve seen some of the fine pints of fishin’, I allow you know enough to set a trawl all by your lonesome, eh lads?” the old sailor asked with a twinkle of the eye as he half turned to look at the stowaways. “Seein’s how you’ve been so keen to turn fishermen, it stands you in hand to break inter dory work.”

“When we stowed away it was in order to take a cruise in the *Ellen Maria*, because Joe Babbidge put it up to us as being the tallest kind of fun; but we’ve had all we need of the business, and shall be mighty glad of a chance to go ashore,” Sam said laughingly.

“Still feelin’ pretty homesick, eh?”

“Yes, a good deal that way, but if our people only knew exactly where we were, and that we’d surely be back to Bar Harbor within two or three

weeks, I'm not so certain that we couldn't have something like a good time."

"No matter how much dressin'-down came your way?" Jimmy Brown asked with a grin, and Tommy replied promptly:

"That's mighty hard work, and I wouldn't take to it from choice; but so long as we must pay our way, it might as well be that as anything. I'm beginning to believe that fishermen don't get a great deal of fun out of the business."

"You're right, lad," Mr. Salter said solemnly; "it's a case of more kicks than kisses, an' a banker takes his life in his hands every time he leaves port; but no matter how hard the money comes, with some, like Jimmy Brown, it goes precious easy at the first port. Jimmy's my dory-mate, an' has been these two years; I brought him up to the work, so to speak, for it was me who showed him how to set his first trawl, an' the only thing I've got agin him is the way he spends his money, an' the foolishness of the spendin'. You can bet great big dollars that Ben Babbidge or Eph Dodge didn't throw around the cash they'd earned, else they'd be sailin' on shares to-day, instead of ownin' the schooners they run."

"Now look here, Moses," Jimmy Brown said as something like a blush spread over his bronzed cheeks, "don't start in on that preachin' so soon

after the cruise is begun. I'm willin' to allow that I've been foolish when I met some of them Gloucestermen ashore; but that's done with, an' I'm goin' to save my dollars after this."

"You can get a promise out'er Jimmy easier than anythin' else," the old sailor said to the lads, as he turned once more until they could see the twinkle in his eye, "an' it's no more bother for him to forget than it is to make it. He's a savin' chap when he hasn't got a cent; but mighty reckless after bein' paid off."

Then Jimmy Brown explained to the old man how he proposed to invest the money which would be his when next the *Ellen Maria* made port, and was still trying to convince his dory-mate that he had the proper idea of economy, when the little craft approached near the schooner.

Master Babbidge was standing by the rail of the vessel looking as sour as a green apple, and Tommy whispered to his cousin as he glanced at the lad:

"We must have done something wrong by going out with Mr. Salter, for it's plain to be seen that we're not in his good books now."

Sam realized that Master Babbidge had it in his power to make matters very disagreeable for himself and Tommy if he was so disposed, and with the idea of trying to placate him, he rose to

his feet in the bow of the dory as he said with a laugh:

“Why didn’t you come out with us? We’ve had the finest kind of a sail——”

“You’d better been below gettin’ breakfast, ’less you think the cook ain’t got anythin’ to do but keep grub on the table waitin’ for you!” Master Babbidge replied in a surly tone, and at that moment, when the dory was but a few feet from the side of the schooner, Moses Salter turned in surprise as if to see what had aroused the boy’s ire.

With the oarsman’s attention thus diverted, the dory came bow on, striking the *Ellen Maria* a smart blow—not sufficient to have done any mischief had none save sailors been aboard the little craft, but Sam was so green in such things that he gave no heed whatsoever to fending off, and the natural consequence was that when the dory struck, he being still on his feet, the shock toppled him over the bow.

The lad sank like a stone, but not as silently, for he floundered to the best of his ability with legs and arms, thereby insuring a more speedy descent. Tommy screamed in alarm, but without giving words to his fear, and neither Moses Salter nor Jimmy Brown knew what had occurred until Master Babbidge cried angrily, as if believing the

occupants of the dory were entirely responsible for the mishap:

“Now see what—why don’t—Man overboard!”

When Moses Salter leaped to his feet there was nothing to betoken the fact that Sam had gone on a voyage to the bottom of the sea. That he was not to be seen, while Tommy was leaning far over the side of the boat alternately sobbing and screaming, gave him as good an idea of what had occurred, however, as if Master Babbidge had retained sufficient presence of mind to explain everything.

“Back her off a bit, Jimmy!” the old sailor cried as he seized the gaff which hung in becketts on the starboard side of the dory. “I’m allowin’ he’ll come up jest outside of us, ’cause there’s a bit of a current that way. If he—Here he is! Port a little! There! Hold her steady!”

At that instant Sam rose, gasping, to the surface, and Tommy leaped aft as if it was his intention to go over the rail, but Jimmy Brown caught him by the coat-collar as he cried sharply:

“Keep back there, an’ don’t get in the way! Mose Salter can get him if anybody can, an’ you don’t want to make a fool of yourself!”

Mr. Salter made one vigorous sweep with the gaff, hooking it deftly under Sam’s coat-collar,

and then drew the lad slowly in to where Jimmy Brown stood leaning over the rail of the dory awaiting an opportunity to haul him in.

“Don’t squirm, lad, for there’s no tellin’ how stout your jacket may be, an’ if the cloth gives way it won’t be so easy to get hold of you agin. Never try to help yourself when yer in sich a fix, ’cause you can’t.”

Even while Mr. Salter was thus giving orders Jimmy Brown had seized Sam by both arms, and in a twinkling he was lying on his back in the bottom of the dory, the old sailor saying as he paddled the light craft toward the schooner:

“If so be you don’t know how to stand up in a boat, lad, it’s best to stay right where you are till we can rig a tackle to hoist you inboard. I was beginnin’ to get the idea that we might make an imitation sailor out of you after a while; but I’ll have to give it up.”

There were three men on board the *Ellen Maria*, in addition to the captain and cook, and all had rushed to the rail at the first alarm; but immediately it was seen that Moses Salter had caught the lad with the gaff, every one turned back to resume whatever task or pleasure he was bent on, treating what to Tommy was little less than a tragedy, as if of too common occurrence to warrant any needless expenditure of time.

Master Babbidge, however, was not one of those who lost all interest in the scene as soon as it was apparent that Sam was no longer in danger.

He held his place by the rail, frowning ominously as Master Chesley scrambled to his feet and began climbing aboard the schooner looking not unlike a half-drowned kitten.

“If I’d knowed that you didn’t have sense enough to take care of yourself in a dory I wouldn’t asked you to come in the *Ellen Maria*,” he said sourly, as if some grievous injury had been done him, and Tommy, angered by the tone as well as the words, cried sharply:

“It’s a big pity you didn’t know, and then we wouldn’t be here! If Sam falls overboard he hasn’t got to ask your permission first!”

Master Babbidge looked surprise, even pained, because of the sharp note in his “guest’s” voice, and was evidently about to make an intemperate reply, when Moses Salter interrupted by saying in a tone of command such as Joe did not dare to disobey, even though his father was captain of the schooner:

“There’s no call for you to put your oar in, if you can’t do it a bit more civil. It stands you in hand to find dry clothes for the lad while I give him a dose of hot coffee. He’s got pluck enough

of his own; but hasn't roughed it so much yet that a dousin' may not work him harm."

Master Babbidge disappeared aft immediately, and the old sailor said to Sam as he led him forward:

"I'm allowin' the forepeak is the best place for you till you've got over bein' shook up, so to speak. Joe'll take dry clothes there for you to put on, an' while that's bein' done I'll get some coffee."

"There's no reason why you should bother about me, sir, indeed there isn't," Sam cried, speaking for the first time since his involuntary bath. "I'm all right, and it wouldn't have done any harm if I'd stayed in the water a good while longer, for then, perhaps, I'd got rid of the smell of fish."

"I'm allowin' you're all right, lad; but at the same time you're goin' to fill yourself full of coffee, or I'll know the reason why."

Then Mr. Salter went aft, and as Tommy urged his cousin into the forepeak according to orders, he said in a tearful tone:

"Oh, Sam, Sam, wouldn't it have been dreadful if you had drowned! Just think, that might have happened, and then you wouldn't had a chance in this world to tell your mother how sorry you are because of having run away!"

“Do you know, Tommy, something like that came into my mind when I was sinking! If I ever do get home again you’d better believe I’ll make up to father and mother in some way, for all the trouble I’ve caused them!”

“If Joe Babbidge had held his tongue, instead of telling what jolly times fishermen have at sea, we wouldn’t be in this scrape!”

“Don’t let’s put the blame on him, Tommy. We’re the ones who stowed away, and we needn’t have done it unless we’d a mind. It’s a mighty wicked thing we’ve done, and whatever happens won’t be any too rough to pay for it.”

By this time Master Babbidge had arrived at the forepeak hatch with a supply of dry clothing, and although there was still an expression of sulki-ness on his face, his tone was reasonably friendly as he said:

“I reckon these will be enough, though when I fell in nobody seemed to think I ought’er put on dry clothes.”

“And there is no need for me to make a change,” Sam replied. “I’m all right, though it stands to reason I’ll feel better after getting some hot coffee, so you may as well take those things back.”

“But father says you’re to get inter ’em as

quick as you know how," Master Babbidge cried sharply, and then, as if fearing he could no longer keep back the words which ought not be spoken, he dropped the garments on the deck, walking aft just as Moses Salter came from the cabin.

CHAPTER XIII

THE NEWS ITEM

SAM stood irresolutely, looking at the garments which Master Babbidge had let fall on the deck much as if they burned his fingers, and making no move toward changing his clothing, until Tommy asked nervously:

“Why don’t you get into those dry things? We can’t go to breakfast until you do, and I’m so hungry that there’s danger of my turning cannibal if I am left alone with any one who don’t smell of fish.”

“I can’t say whether I’ll make the change or not,” and Sam looked quickly around to learn if any other than his cousin was near enough to hear what he said. “It seems to me we have shown the men that we’re no duffers, so far as being willing to do our share of the work is concerned, but if I make a great fuss about having been overboard, they may get the idea that we’re regular babies.”

“It can’t be helped if they do. The captain said that you were to change your clothes, and that’s what you must do, unless you’re willing to deliberately disobey orders.”

This view of the case caused Sam to move very lively, and while he was thus engaged in making himself more comfortable his cousin asked solicitously:

“Do you feel any worse for having fallen overboard?”

“Not a little bit, except that it wasn't pleasant to swallow quite so much salt water. What a fool I was not to have kept an eye out on the dory!”

“You can't count on turnin' sailor in a minute, lad,” Moses Salter said soothingly, he having come up in time to hear Sam's exclamation. “If anybody's to blame for what happened, it's Jimmy Brown, 'cause he ought'er sung out when he saw you standin' in the bow. Howsomever, there's no need of chewin' it over very much, seein's how no harm has been done, an' it'll be a lesson that you needed to learn, if so be you're goin' to finish the cruise in the *Ellen Maria*.”

“And that is what I suppose we must do, now that we've made so much of a start,” Tommy added with a mirthless laugh. “Sam and I have given over wanting to be fishermen, but since it's a question of staying aboard this vessel two or three weeks, we're bound to find out enough about the business so that we shan't go overboard every now and then.”

“If you keep on as you’ve begun, I’m allowin’ you’ll soon get the hang of things,” the old sailor replied approvingly, and added as he saw that Sam had completed the change of garments, “Now that your mate has got inter dry togs, I’m allowin’ you lads had best lay in what’s left of breakfast, so toddle aft where the cook is waitin’ for yer.”

“Where is Joe Babbidge?” Sam asked apprehensively.

“Don’t give any heed to him, lad. He’s humped up like a skunk eatin’ bees, jest now; but he’ll soon come ’round inter fair weather if you leave him alone.”

“I’d like to know what made him so cross?” Sam said half to himself, as he hung in the wind instead of following the advice just given, and Mr. Salter replied with a careless laugh:

“Most likely he’s got it inter his thick head that you’re bound to ask him when you shall do this or that, an’ then agin he may be in the dumps ’cause he wasn’t given a chance to go out with Jimmy an’ me. Whichever way you figger it, there’s no call to bother your heads ’bout him. Get aft lively, or Abe’ll be on his ear, seein’s he’s been waitin’ for you quite a spell.”

“Have you been to breakfast, sir?” Tommy asked as he moved slowly aft.

“Wa'al, Jimmy an' me mugged-up pretty hearty before goin' out, an' we don't need more'n a cold bite to put us inter good shape.”

Then Mr. Salter literally forced the lads to obey him, and when they were come into the cabin Abraham Gunn, the cook, said sharply, although there was an expression of good nature on his face:

“I allowed to keep things hot for you lubbers, seein's how you've been overboard like a couple of farmers; but you must remember that while we're on the banks this 'ere table don't wait for anybody, not even the cap'in.”

“We could just as well have stayed away till dinner-time,” Sam replied with a note of apology in his tones as he seated himself at the place indicated by Abraham's huge outstretched hand.

“You couldn't done anythin' of the kind! If you'd got your share of the bite after dressin'-down last night you might'er wiggled through a spell; but them as bear a hand aboard a fishin' vessel need a good bit to eat, an' want it often, 'cordin' to my experience, an' I've been on the banks, man an' boy, nigh to twenty years.”

“I wanted 'em to come below last night, but they wouldn't,” Master Babbidge cried shrilly, as he showed his head down the companionway.

“We were needin' sleep more than food just

then," Sam said with a laugh as he made a vigorous attack on the fried codfish with which his plate was heaped so generously, and, because of the hunger which assailed him, giving no heed to the uninviting appearance of the table.

"You'll find that you'd better stick to me, while you're aboard the *Ellen Maria*, 'stead of tryin' to curry favor with old Moses," Master Babbidge said with a threat in his tones, and Sam, looking up in surprise, replied rather more sharply than he should have done:

"I don't know what you mean by 'sticking to you,' but I do know that we haven't been trying to 'curry favor' with any one. This much is certain: If you had told us exactly the truth about what your father would say or do when he found us on board, we wouldn't have stowed away on this or any other vessel."

"But you did it jest the same, an' so long as you're here you'd better ask me 'bout things, an' then p'rhaps you won't be tumblin' all over the banks like a lobster!"

"Why should you care if we went out to see Mr. Salter set the trawl?" Tommy asked innocently.

"Why? 'Cause I'd rigged up a plan to have fun jest on your account, an' you spoiled it all by goin' off the very minute I'd got ready!"

No one asked Master Babbidge what his "plan" was, and after waiting in vain two or three minutes for the question to be put, he added triumphantly:

"P'rhaps you didn't know that the *General Grant* had hove in sight?"

"We saw her just before the trawl was set, and Mr. Salter told us what vessel it was," Tommy replied quietly, whereat Master Babbidge disclosed his "plan" without waiting for a more dramatic opportunity:

"Wa'al, I asked father if we could pull over to her, seein's there won't be any work for us to do till after the trawls are run, an' he said we might!"

"But Sam and I don't know anything about managing a boat when the waves are so big."

"Pooh! This is the calmest kind of a calm day, an' any baby could pull a dory! I'd do the rowin', an' all you fellers 'd have to do would be to set still an' watch me! Say, I hain't sure but I'll go after all, if you think you can keep away from old Moses when we get back!"

"Why should we want to go?" Sam asked in surprise. "We don't know any one aboard the *General Grant*, and even though we haven't been on this vessel very long, I've seen enough of fishing schooners."

“But she left port the day after we did!” Master Babbidge cried, thoroughly surprised because his generous offer had not been accepted with enthusiasm.

“Suppose she did? That doesn’t make her any different from this schooner.”

“No,” Joe replied hesitatingly and in evident disappointment until a happy thought came to him, when he added: “How do you fellers know but your folks sent some word by Cap’in Eph? They must have got your letter before she sailed, an’ knowin’ she was comin’ right down here, wrote somethin’?”

In no other way could Master Babbidge have excited any desire in the minds of the stowaways for a visit to the *General Grant*; but now they were quite as eager as he would have had them. It seemed very reasonable that their parents would have been thoroughly well informed as to the movements of the bankers sailing from Portland, and almost positive that this latest arrival had on board some message from them.

In a twinkling their hunger was forgotten in the hope of receiving a message from those whom they had so cruelly forsaken, and Sam sprang to his feet excitedly as he cried:

“Let’s go straight over to the other vessel! Perhaps father has fixed some way for us to get

back, and we ought to know about it as soon as possible!"

"I'll help you row, Joe!" Tommy shouted. "I never tried my hand at it when the waves were so big; but I've pulled a boat many a time when we've been in Atlantic City."

"I thought you fellers would get woke up after a spell!" Master Babbidge said gleefully. "Now you see what might'er been done if you hadn't been so keen to go off with old Moses an' leave me alone. But I hain't certain as I shall go."

"What kind of a game is that to play?" Mr. Gunn asked sharply as he turned upon Joe. "It don't stand to reason that the *General Grant* brought any word for these lads; but you've got 'em all haired up 'bout it now, an' they've the same as got to go!"

"S'posen I've changed my mind, an' don't want to pull a dory so far?" Master Babbidge asked sulkily.

"You ain't the only pebble on this 'ere craft," the cook replied angrily, moving toward the companionway as if to ascend. "I'd take 'em over myself if I didn't have bread to make; but I reckon Jimmy Brown won't begrudge a little extry work after you've put sich a foolish notion inter the lads' heads."

"Hold on, Abe!" Joe cried in alarm, as the

cook began to ascend the stairs. "It ain't certain but I'll go after all, so you needn't be stickin' your oar in!"

"If you're goin', get a move on, 'stead of settin' there hectorin' a couple of boys who're tryin' to make the best of the bad bargain you led 'em inter. If you don't I'll speak to Jimmy, an' then they'll go without yer."

"All right, I'll go," Master Babbidge cried sulkily, and it could easily be seen that he was disappointed at being thus deprived of the opportunity to keep his "guests" longer in suspense.

Sam and Tommy would have gone on deck without delay, so eager were they to get the message which they had come to believe was awaiting them; but Abraham literally forced them to finish the long-delayed meal, declaring that he would appeal to the captain if they "dared to move a finger till after they had put a solid linin' on their ribs."

Joe had emerged from his fit of sulks by the time his "guests" were ready to accompany him, and within five minutes after Mr. Gunn had given his permission for them to rise from the table, the three were in one of the dories headed for the *General Grant*.

Master Babbidge positively refused Tommy's offers of assistance, declaring that if he couldn't

pull a dory in a dead calm he would "boil his head," and rather than allow anything so dreadful as that to be done, the lads from Philadelphia remained idle while Joe tugged at the heavy oars, showing beyond the shadow of a doubt that he was capable of managing the boat, at least while all the weather conditions were favorable.

The stowaways were so eager to get the message which it seemed positive their parents had sent, and so deeply engaged in speculating upon the substance of it, that they had no inclination for conversation. Master Babbidge, failing to engage their attention so far as would induce them to enter into any discussion, set about spinning the wildest and weirdest tales of the sea as he pulled at the oars, and great was his disappointment at not being able to excite the surprise or fears of his dory mates.

After it seemed to the impatient boys as if the voyage had been prolonged throughout one entire day, when as a matter of fact no more than half an hour had elapsed, the dory was brought alongside the *General Grant*, and Sam and Tommy actually held their breath in suspense when Joe hailed the master of the schooner:

"Ahoy Cap'in Eph! What's the news?"

"You folks ought'er know as much 'bout what's goin' on as we do, seein's the *General* left port

next mornin' after you sailed," was the reply in an indifferent tone, as if "Cap'in Eph" was not overly eager to entertain visitors. "We've got a Portland paper, if that's what you're after."

"Didn't you bring a letter or anythin' for these fellers?" and Joe waved his hand toward his "guests."

"We ain't carryin' the mail this season," was the curt reply. "Here's the paper, if you want it," and the master of the *General Grant* tossed into the dory a much soiled newspaper.

Sam seized it eagerly, and while Master Babbidge continued his efforts to enlist the friendly attention of "Cap'in Eph," the homesick stow-away searched with his eyes every printed line in the hope of—he knew not what.

Before Master Babbidge had begun to despair of receiving an invitation to visit the *General Grant*, Sam found that which caused his face to first flush and then pale.

"Oh, Tommy, Tommy! Listen to this! Our parents couldn't have got the letter we sent!" and, without waiting for a reply, he read the following in a voice choking with sobs, while the tears slowly trickled down his cheeks:

"Messrs. Harriman & Chesley, the well-known bankers of Philadelphia, who are at present in

this city, having halted here to break the journey to Bar Harbor, are in great mental distress owing to the singular and unaccountable disappearance of their sons, Samuel and Thomas.

“The boys left the Lafayette Hotel yesterday morning for a stroll through the city, and since that time nothing has been heard or seen of them. In fact, they disappeared most mysteriously immediately after gaining the open air, and despite the searching inquiries which have been made, no person can be found who saw them on the streets.

“The authorities have been notified; a handsome reward will be offered for information which can aid in the search, and already have telegrams been sent to intercept the trains which left the city after they went out of the hotel, in the hope that they may have set off on some short excursion. It is needless to say that the parents of the missing boys are in great distress of mind.”

CHAPTER XIV

MR. SALTER'S SECRET

PERHAPS Master Babbidge had never been more surprised in his life than at the sudden change which came over his "guests" after Sam had read the brief newspaper paragraph, concerning the "unaccountable disappearance." To Joe's mind the name of Captain Ben Babbidge was a familiar one in every household, and since Messrs. Chesley and Harriman knew that their sons had sailed with the most successful and most skillful banker sailing out of Portland, what more was to be said?

"I don't see what has struck you fellers," he said in what was probably intended to be a soothing tone. "You're here, an' your folks know all about it, so what have they got to kick about? There ain't a man in the State of Maine but can tell 'em you couldn't be in a better place than right where you are."

"But they don't know where we are," Sam wailed. "This paper says they're telegraphing all around, thinking we may have gone away on some train," and Tommy added, as he turned fiercely upon Master Babbidge:

“ You didn't send the letter we wrote; that's what's the matter! After telling us what wasn't true about stowing away, you wouldn't even take the trouble to do as you had promised! ”

“ See here, now! ” and Joe half rose to his feet as if anger was rapidly getting the better of him. “ After all I've done for you fellers, you don't want to make any sich talk as that to me, for there'll be a heap of trouble right here! I put your bloomin' letter in the box. Do you think I wanted to carry around sich a thing as that? When I start out to do a thing, I do it right! ”

“ If you mailed the letter, what's the meaning of this? ” and Sam struck with his finger the article in the newspaper which he had just been reading.

“ How do you s'pose I know? I ain't got anythin' to do with the Portland newspapers, have I? Are you countin' on shiftin' all the blame off on to me if your folks don't know how to read a letter? ”

“ But they do know how! ” Sam retorted as, in turn, he began to lose control of his temper. “ We wrote explaining just what was going to be done, and you said it would get to the hotel before night. ”

“ Before night? ” Master Babbidge shrieked as if beside himself with rage. “ What was to hin-

der it gettin' there in half an hour? All them post office clerks had to do was to take it out an' go up to the hotel with it. I could have done that much in ten minutes myself, an' not been very keen at the business even then."

"What's all that row about?" Captain Dodge asked as he leaned over the rail, now grown curious concerning those who had come from the *Ellen Maria*. "I allers allowed you would go wrong some day, Joe Babbidge, you're so all-fired smart—or think you are. If you have been cuttin' any monkey shines with letters what belong in the United States mail, it's a mighty serious matter, let me tell you, an' stands to cost your father more'n he can earn in two seasons of the luckiest fishin' he ever struck."

"Who's been cuttin' monkey shines?" Master Babbidge cried, and because Captain Dodge had spoken so gravely it began to seem as if he might unwittingly have committed some act which would bring him into difficulties with the Government. "I put a letter inter the post office box for these 'ere chumps, an' that's all there was to it. You ain't got any call to say you knowed I'd get inter trouble, 'cause I've never had any truck with you, an' what's more, I don't want any."

With this Master Babbidge seized the oars, which for the moment he had allowed to fall from

his hands, and began pulling with feverish eagerness away from the *General Grant*, as if believing his safety depended upon putting the greatest possible distance between himself and Captain Dodge in the least possible time.

As he thus strained every muscle in the effort to gain his father's schooner, Tommy and Sam, too nearly overwhelmed by this blow to give further words to their grief and disappointment, sat staring mutely into each other's faces, heeding not the fact that big salt tears were rolling down their cheeks, and thinking only of the sorrow which they had caused those whom they loved. Even though they had not previously suffered because of stowing away on board the *Ellen Maria*, they were severely punished for their misdoings during the short time which elapsed before the dory was once more alongside Captain Ben's schooner.

How disagreeable everything looked when the lads came over the rail! It was much like entering a prison, and a very dirty one at that, as, unable to speak because of the grief in their hearts, they sought the poor refuge of the forepeak, eager to shut out, so far as might be possible, everything connected with the business of fishing.

Moses Salter was standing well aft when Joe and

his "guests" came alongside, and seeing the distress on the faces of the lads from Philadelphia, which was so great that it could not have been hidden even from the most careless observer, asked in a low tone of Master Babbidge:

"What has been goin' wrong, Joe? After enticin' them boys aboard have you been roughin' inter 'em?"

"Roughin' nothin'!" Master Babbidge cried irritably. "If all the fellers from Philadelpy are like them, I'm hopin' I shan't see any more, 'cause they're worse than a two-weeks baby! They've gone inter the forepeak, an' I hope they'll stay there the rest of this cruise."

"Look here, Joseph, don't you get gay with me!" Mr. Salter said sternly, as he seized the lad by the shirt collar in order to hold his attention strictly to the subject under discussion. "What did you do to the boys, or what turned up wrong while you was in the dory?"

"I didn't do anythin', I tell yer! They read some fool thing in the paper 'bout their folks shinnyin' all over the country huntin' for 'em, an' then turned on me, allowin' I hadn't put the letter inter the post office box. Of course that haired me up considerable, seein's how my end of the business was put through all right, an' I told 'em some little bit of what I thought."

“What paper are you talkin’ ’bout, Joseph? Where did they get any paper?”

“Cap’in Eph ’lowed we might want’er see the news, so he chucked us one when we rowed alongside the *General Grant*. It’s down there in the dory now,” Master Babbidge replied as he looked over the rail, and Mr. Salter leaped into the boat, taking up the printed sheet which had fallen from Sam’s hands after he read that which caused him and his cousin so much distress of mind.

Moses Salter was ever ready to confess that “readin’ didn’t come easy to him,” and several moments elapsed before he could thoroughly master the meaning of the news item concerning the “unaccountable disappearance”; but once he had done so, his course of action was decided upon.

“Poor little shavers!” he said half to himself as he clambered on board the schooner again, and, giving no heed to Joe’s eager questions, descended the companionway to find Captain Ben poring over a nautical almanac not less than three years old.

“What’s up, Moses?” the commander of the *Ellen Maria* asked quickly, noting the expression on the old man’s face.

“Them ’ere little stowaways of our’n are gettin’ it a good deal worse’n we allowed, Cap’in Ben, an’ I’m reckonin’ it’s our bounden duty to ease up on ’em a bit. Read that,” and the old sailor

handed the newspaper to his superior officer. "The boys got it from the *General Grant*, an' it ain't to be wondered at that it's causin' 'em a good bit of trouble."

Captain Ben read the paragraph carefully, and after looking at the date of the publication, said, as if to his mind there was no reason for anxiety or comment:

"That 'ere was printed before the folks in Portland got our letter by telegraph. They got the whole story 'bout the time this paper was ready to be sold, so it's all right. Now they know where the boys are, an' most likely feel like thankin' us for the trouble we've taken, which is no more'n fair, seein's how we've done the best we could, which is a good deal more'n some others would have tackled."

"Yes, yes, that part of it is all right, Ben," Mr. Salter said impatiently. "I ain't thinkin' of them as are in Portland; but of our poor little shavers here. They're gettin' it mighty rough, considerin' as how it ain't likely either one of 'em ever lived in this kind of a fashion before, an' it ain't Christian-like for us to let 'em eat their hearts out, as they're liable to do 'twixt now an' the time we make port again."

"What'er you drivin' at, Moses?" Captain Ben asked impatiently. "I don't seem to get the

drift of it, an' if it's all the same to you, why not come out jest the least little bit plainer, so's I'll have the chance to ketch an idee."

"Why, what I want'er do is to tell 'em that everythin' is all right—let 'em know we fixed things on the telegraph wires back there to Booth-bay, an' that their folks ain't fussin' any more 'cause of what they've done. I'll guarantee they won't stow away agin, even if we should do our best from this out to make things comfortable for 'em."

"Wa'al, I don't know as I've got any reason to say 'no' to that idee. All we've set out for is to give the boys sich a lesson as'll keep 'em from ever hankerin' after runnin' away agin, an' if you think the dose is heavy enough already, go ahead an' give up the whole secret."

Mr. Salter did not loiter after having thus received permission from his superior officer to do as he wished. With all speed he made his way to the forepeak, where he found the unhappy stowaways lying on the lumpy bed clasped in each other's arms, and giving full sway to their grief.

Under almost any other circumstances the old sailor might have delayed giving the information which would be so welcome, in order that the lesson he and Captain Ben wished to teach would be more effective; but their grief was so great that

he had not the heart to prolong it, therefore he said abruptly, as he laid his hand on Sam's shoulder in an awkward caress:

"I've seen that 'ere story in the newspaper you got aboard the *General Grant*, an' don't blame you for bein' so kind'er broke up about it. Cap'in Ben an' me was allowin' that after havin' run away from the folks who had most like given you all that was goin' in this world, the stiffest kind of a stiff lesson was what you needed so's the trick wouldn't be played agin'. An' I reckon you've got about as much as we believed you ought'er have, so I'm goin' to set your minds at rest by tellin' you as how as your folks know jest where you are, an' ain't worryin' a little bit 'bout yer."

"But they don't know where we are," Tommy wailed. "The newspaper says that they think, perhaps, we went away on some train, and it's certain mother is just about crying her eyes out. If I ever see her again she shall believe that this is the last time I will ever be so mean!"

"But she knows where you are now, lad, an' I'm givin' you my word for it. Why do I figger that she knows? 'Cause the night after we left port, while you were asleep down here, what was Cap'in Ben Babbidge an' me doin'? Why we was tryin' to fix it so's your folks wouldn't have sich a hard time. An' how did we fix it? Why the *Ellen Maria* was hove to off Boothbay, an' I went

ashore myself, so's to send a letter over the telegraph."

"Did you tell father where we were?" Sam asked with a gasp.

"Of course I did, sonny, an' allowed as how we'd put you ashore inter Bar Harbor as soon as you'd got what we reckoned was a full dose of fishin'."

"Then why did the paper say that nobody knew where we were?"

"'Cause when that 'ere story come out they hadn't had time to know. You see, I didn't get hold of the man what runs the telegraph till 'long 'bout midnight, an', of course, the newspaper people had told their story before then, even though it didn't get 'round the city till mornin'. I saw to it, though it went terribly agin the grain of the telegraph man, that the news was shoved right through before sunrise, an' if you don't want to take my word for it that your folks know the whole story, go aft an' ask Cap'in Ben. He'll tell you a straight yarn."

Much to the old man's surprise, it was as if the grief of the boys increased even while he was trying to lessen it, and he stood gazing at them in helpless perplexity as, clasped in each other's arms, they gave way to a fresh outburst of what had every appearance of sorrow.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE FOG

MR. SALTER stood looking down upon the weeping boys with an expression of bewilderment on his face. He had expected the grief would be changed to joy immediately he informed them that their parents were, beyond a peradventure, acquainted with their whereabouts, and in such a manner that no serious anxiety could be felt concerning them. Instead, however, it was as if the divulging of his secret had plunged them into yet greater grief, and he failed to understand the meaning thereof.

While one might have counted twenty he remained silent and motionless, as if racking his brain to know exactly what course should be pursued, and, failing in coming to any definite conclusion, said in a tone of perplexity:

“I declare for it, lads, you beat my time cut an’ out. It must be you’ve got somethin’ more on your minds than I had any idee of, else why is it you take on so keen when you know things are as nigh right with your folks as they can be? I was allowin’ that by my holdin’ back the fact

of what was done in Boothbay, you would be gettin' considerable more of a lesson in this business of stowin' away, whereas it seems as if you'd be kind'er relieved if your folks didn't know quite so much."

"It isn't that at all, Mr. Salter," Tommy said, looking up at the old sailor with a smile on his face even while the tears were flowing freely. "I wasn't crying because I felt badly; but somehow, when I know that mother and father had got over worrying because of the telegram you sent, the tears just had to come. It was because I was glad, not sorry, and yet—I don't know how to explain it; but all of you aboard the *Ellen Maria* have been a good deal more kind to Sam and me than we deserved, and perhaps that had something to do with our last fit of crying. When we talked about stowing away Joe made it appear as if we would only be gone a day or two, and neither of us realized how much trouble we would be making for our parents; but we know all about it now, and you can be certain we'll never do such a thing again."

"Wa'al, lad, I'm allowin' you have caused your folks more worry than you had any right; but p'rhaps this has been a good lesson for yer. It don't stand to reason an old moss-back like me, who never had any book larnin' an' wouldn't

know enough to go in out'er the rain if he hadn't been caught in a shower two or three times, has a right to say very much, except in the way of fishin', to two boys like you, who most likely know all there is in books, an' have lived in a different world, so to speak, from what I ever saw. But I'm goin' to take it on myself to remind you of what you're owin' them as you ran away from. They've given you everythin' you've had to eat, or to drink, or to wear, since you was born; they've looked after you like you was eggs, for fear somethin' might hurt yer, or make yer feel bad, an' they've spent—more especially your mother has—a good portion of her time coddlin' you up. An' all that has been goin' on for ten or a dozen years. By this time you're so much in debt to her that you never can pay it; but yet you keep on addin' to the bill, instead of tryin' to square it up. Most likely you've got it in your mind that your folks are bound to do everythin' they can for yer, whereas there's thousands an' thousands of lads that don't come within four years of bein' as old as you, who have to earn their own livin', an' help others besides. If, for the rest of the time you're aboard the *Ellen Maria*, you'd like to think these things over, it won't do any harm, an' I'm allowin' it would be to some advantage."

Having thus read the stowaways a lesson which he believed was the natural sequel to the good news he had imparted, Mr. Salter turned to leave the forepeak, but before he could do so Tommy had taken both the old man's hands in his, as he said in a tone, the sincerity of which could not be mistaken:

"You have been mighty good to us, and mustn't think we don't appreciate it because we can't talk very much. To thank you wouldn't be enough, and for my part I don't know how to say anything different; but we'll show you and Captain Ben, as well as the rest of the crew, that we understand how much we owe you all, and I'll never forget what you have said about my duty to mother and father."

"There, there, sonny, don't make mountains out'er molehills. Things are as we've made 'em, up to this p'int, an' now we'll take a fresh start, so to speak. There's no need of strainin' yourself tryin' to do more'n a lad's share; but of course you're expected to turn to with the rest of us, 'cause we bankers can't afford to idle away the time, an' don't allow to have aboard the kind of cats that won't ketch rats."

Then the old man went out of the forepeak, looking much as if matters had progressed to his entire satisfaction, and ten minutes later the stow-

aways also appeared on deck, their eyes red and swollen from much weeping, but otherwise appearing reasonably cheerful.

“Wa'al, got over your fit, have yer? Or do you still want'er make a row 'bout what I have or haven't done?” Master Babbidge asked in an ironical tone, giving every evidence of his willingness to continue what, while they were in the dory, had seemed much like a quarrel.

“We were more to blame for the stowing away than you, Joe,” Sam replied in a friendly tone. “When we read that story in the newspaper it seemed as if everything had gone to smash, and very likely we said what should not have been spoken.”

“Oh, comin' 'round to find out that you'd better curry favor with me than old Mose, eh? What's he been doin'? Roughin' inter you pretty strong?”

“Mr. Salter has been very kind, and I hope we shall be able to show him that we are thankful, before we get a chance to leave this vessel.”

Having said this, and fearing to linger longer near Master Babbidge lest he should continue in his unpleasant mood, the stowaways went amidships where two or three of the crew were making ready to run trawls, and there strove to do whatsoever they might in the way of assisting.

Later in the day, when dory after dory came alongside laden with silvery fish which had been taken from the trawls, the lads from Philadelphia stood by to do their share of the work in taking them aboard, and as each boat was unloaded they voluntarily did their part toward cleaning it up, by scrubbing the sides, bottom and thwarts to remove the blood and gurry.

Then came the dressing-down, when all hands, including the stowaways, worked as they had on the previous day; but this time the hearts of the lads from Philadelphia were very light, for the greater portion of their mental burden had been removed, and it was possible for them to take pride in the size of the "catch," knowing as they did that each fish taken brought them just so much nearer the time when they might say to their parents the words of contrition which were in their hearts.

Before the labor of dressing-down had come to an end there was a decided change in the weather which was by no means agreeable to the crew of the *Ellen Maria*, as could be seen by the expression of anxiety which gradually came over their faces.

The air had suddenly become chilly; far away to the eastward Sam and Tommy had observed what seemed like heavy gray clouds lying close upon the surface of the water, and coming nearer

and nearer each moment; but they gave no particular heed to the change until it was as if suddenly the schooner had become enveloped in a dense fog.

“I reckon one of our new hands can tackle the horn an’ make a better fist at it than in passin’ fish,” Captain Ben said when it was impossible to see the full length of the *Ellen Maria* in either direction because of the dense vapor. “Joe, give one of your chums a taste of what’s comin’ to ’em the best part of the time while we’re on the banks.”

Then, while Tommy was trying to understand the meaning of this last command, Joe thrust into his hands a huge tin horn, saying as he did so:

“You’re to keep that a-tootin’ the best you know how till word is passed for somebody to spell yer.”

“What’s the sense of it?” Tommy asked in surprise, and Master Babbidge replied curtly, for he had not yet recovered from the ill-humor which had been caused by the idea that his “guests” had not shown him proper attention:

“I reckon you’ll find out if one of them ’ere ocean liners comes stormin’ along. They don’t make any great account of fishermen, an’ I could name a dozen good craft that have been cut down by ’em, sendin’ all hands to the bottom.”

Tommy was not exactly certain he understood that which Master Babbidge had said; but the words had been spoken in a sepulchral tone, which gave the impression that something horrible might happen if he failed to "keep the horn a-tootin."

Sam was waiting on Mr. Salter, and while Tommy made the most dismal noise imaginable with that long cone of tin, Master Chesley asked why it was necessary to thus make the night hideous.

"You see, lad," old Moses said, working even more rapidly, if that could be possible, while he talked, "we bankers are in the track of all the big steamers that come to this country, an' seein's how we're helpless here, not able to see a hand's breadth either way, it comes mighty awkward when one of them iron tanks storms down on yer, for once a craft like this is struck by 'em it's like puttin' an ax through a sheet of paper. The only way we have of defendin' ourselves is by kickin' up so much of a row that they'll know somethin's in the road. I've heard——"

Mr. Salter ceased working and speaking very suddenly, as did all the others of the crew, and as Sam looked around curiously to make out what had caused this sudden cessation of activity, he could distinguish amid the swish of the waves and the whistling of the wind through the rigging, a

strange splashing sound, such as he had never heard since coming aboard the *Ellen Maria*.

It was as if some huge beast was floundering and splashing close at hand, and would not have been to him fearsome but for the fact that he saw even through the gray vapor which enveloped everything, the greatest alarm written on every face within his limited range of vision.

Almost at the same moment this noise was heard, Jimmy Brown sprang forward, seizing the horn from Tommy's hand, and began blowing on it at the full strength of his lungs, while Captain Ben, leaping on the rail near the after shrouds, shouted "Ahoy! Ahoy there!" as if he had suddenly gone daft.

The stowaways were yet in a maze of bewilderment, understanding nothing whatsoever of the situation until, like a phantom, there appeared through the fog twinkling lights, and, immediately following, a huge, dark, mountain-like mass, which towered far above the schooner, seemingly about to overwhelm her.

Then could be discerned the shape of an immense vessel, while the splashing and churning of the water sounded close aboard.

In a twinkling every man sprang toward the rail where the dories were made fast alongside, and the boys from Philadelphia knew that that

danger of which Master Babbidge and Mr. Salter had spoken was close upon them.

There seemed to be no way of escape, and yet when the huge hulk was apparently so near that one could stretch out his hand and touch it, the threatening mass swerved sharply to port, gliding past so close aboard that the *Ellen Maria* tossed and plunged as if a tempest had suddenly arisen, while the glare of lights from every port-hole and deck-window shone out bright and cheery, in wonderful contrast with the desolation which would have been wrought but for that sudden sheer which the enormous bulk had made.

Then, swiftly, the dark form was merged into the gray of the vapor; the lights were shut out from view; the noise as of splashing and churning died away in the distance, and Mr. Salter said with a long-drawn breath of relief as he laid his hand on Sam's head:

“ My boy, God has been good to us! Though you live to be a hundred years old you'll never again come so near death, an' be missed by it, as you have been in these last thirty seconds! ”

CHAPTER XVI

AN IDLE HOUR

MOSES SALTER was not only the only member of the *Ellen Maria's* crew who felt deeply thankful to his Maker for the escape from the peril just past.

Every person aboard, from Captain Ben to Joe Babbidge, with the exception, of course, of Sam and Tommy, knew how near they had been to death when the huge ocean liner came out of the fog directly upon them, for there was never one among the crew who could not recall the memory of relatives or acquaintances who had lost their lives by being cut down on the banks, and all realized fully the danger which hung over them by day as well as by night when the fog shrouded the face of the sea.

Therefore it was that the nature of every member of the crew had seemingly been changed in that one short moment of deadly peril. Twenty seconds before the churning and thumping sounds had been heard, there was a jest and a laugh, or a careless word, on the lips of every one. Immediately the monster of steel had been lost to view in the fog, and the terror which had taken

possession of all was overcome, there was apparent a certain thoughtfulness—seriousness, in striking contrast to what had preceded those few seconds of peril.

In silence, save for the tooting of the horn which Jimmy Brown had given back to Tommy, the work of dressing-down was finished, and then, instead of leaving to the boys the task of cleaning the decks, all the crew lent a hand until the work was done, when, as if by common consent, the men and Joe started aft.

The stowaways, who were not so fully sensible of the narrowness of the escape as were the fishermen, and therefore failed of being so deeply impressed, were at a loss to understand the real reason for the silence and the unusual demeanor of the crew, therefore, when, without speaking, all went below, Sam and Tommy turned to go into the forepeak, but were stopped by Moses Salter, who said in a grave tone, such as one uses when speaking in the presence of the dead:

“Come aft, lads, an’ we’ll all mug up. This ain’t jest the night for turnin’ in alone. We’re needin’ to be livened a bit.”

“Knowing that we have got through dressing-down for a while ought to make us quite lively,” Sam replied, not knowing what else to say, and the old sailor wheeled about to face the lad.

“I’m allowin’ you don’t fully take in how nigh a shave we had, an’ of course it ain’t reasonable for you to feel as the rest of us do. I had a brother who left Orr’s Island in a new schooner, an’ was never heard from agin; there hadn’t been any bad weather to speak of, so we knew that his craft was run down by jest sich an iron tank as gave us the slip by the breadth of a hair. Two mates of mine that I’d sailed with many a year, went the same way, an’ I could tell of a dozen I’ve known to speak with, whose bones are layin’ on these ’ere shoals through their vessels havin’ been in the track of some big craft on a foggy day or night. An’ I ain’t the only one aboard the *Ellen Maria* who gets to thinkin’ of them things at sich a time, for all hands of us can tell pretty nigh the same story. Besides, we know that it’s no two to one we won’t meet with the same fate ourselves ’twixt now an’ snow flies. Come aft, lads, an’ we’ll mug up.”

Without further hesitation the stowaways followed the old sailor who had shown himself so good a friend, and when they descended the companionway into the little cabin lined on either side with bunks, and lighted only by a single swinging lamp, it looked wonderfully bright and snug in contrast with the grayness outside wherein lurked so many dangers which could not be guarded

against. The men were standing while Abraham Gunn filled for each a mug of steaming coffee, and not until all had been served did any one venture to drink the welcome beverage.

Then it was done in silence, never a man speaking until the last mug had been emptied and Abraham had begun to refill them, when Captain Ben said, speaking not as the master of a vessel, but rather as a shipmate:

“ I’m allowin’ we’ll make it turn an’ turn about on half-hour stretches to-night, seein’s how there ain’t any of us feelin’ overly perky, an’ it’s for the crew of Number 1 dory to start the trick. Who goes? ”

“ I’ll try my hand at it first,” Jimmy Brown said, for he and Moses Salter were the dorymen to whom the captain had referred, and even as he spoke he went up the companionway, Sam and Tommy hearing an instant later the long screech of the tin horn, thereby understanding that it would be the duty of some one member of the crew to keep that unmelodious instrument sounding while the *Ellen Maria* was enshrouded in fog.

It seemed much as if the noise of the horn, discordant though it was, served to revive the spirits of the men, for immediately the air of restraint began to wear away; one after another seated him-

self on a locker, or stretched out at full length in a bunk; Abraham Gunn commenced to grumble because of waiting upon the crew when it was the custom for them to pour their own coffee, and, as the moments passed, a general conversation was started.

One man, whom the stowaways afterwards came to know as a native of Isle au Haut, began to tell a story concerning the *Mary Baker* when she was cut down by the Allan Liner *Canada* and he, with a mate, were the only persons who escaped a watery grave; but Captain Ben cried peremptorily:

“We’ll have no yarns like that to-night! It comes too nigh the heart, so to speak. If it’s a case of waggin’ your tongues, let it be of somethin’ as far from a sitooation like this as you can get it. Talk of layin’ in a snug harbor, or of bringin’ a fare inter port when the prices are way up—somethin’ cheerful. An’ you may give me another mug of that ’ere coffee, Abe.”

Then the men fell to spinning yarns quite as wild and improbable as those Master Babbidge had spun when the stowaways set out for the *General Grant*. By Moses Salter’s invitation, which was much the same as a command, the lads from Philadelphia curled themselves up on one of the lockers, enjoying the warmth of the fire after hav-

ing been so long on deck in the heavy fog, and Sam whispered to his cousin, when he could do so without seeming to interrupt the story-telling:

“This is the first time since we started out to stowaway that I have even had an imitation of being comfortable,” and Tommy replied:

“It makes a big difference now that we are certain our parents know where we are, and will not be worrying about us. I’m not ready to say that I ever want to go on a fishing cruise again; but at the same time I wouldn’t wonder if we got some little pleasure out of this one, after all.”

Sam did not venture to make a reply, for at this moment Moses Salter yielded to the entreaties of his mates to tell again the story of the *Greyhound*, which craft put out from Bath after mackerel, and landed a cargo in Boston within seventy-two hours, thereby netting each member of the crew, owing to the high price of fish, nearly three hundred dollars, and he was still describing the “royal time” they had while in port, when everyone was startled by hearing Jimmy Brown shout, as if hailing a craft:

“Ahoy! Who are you? What ’er you doin’ out in this smother at sich a time of night?”

Sam and Tommy sprang to their feet in alarm, for it seemed positive that the *Ellen Maria* was again in danger of being run down; but their fears

were allayed immediately by the manner in which the others apparently looked upon this unexpected intimation that some craft was near at hand.

“I’m allowin’ Cap’in Eph’s strainin’ himself so hard to get a fare aboard before we can, that all hands are runnin’ trawls in the night, an’ most likely goin’ to sleep while they’re dressin’-down,” Captain Ben said with a laugh, as he followed those who had begun to troop up the companion-way.

The stowaways feeling that, because of their position on board the schooner, they must perforce give way to every one else, were the last to gain the deck, and because of such tardiness failed to hear whatsoever reply the newcomers might have made to the hail. That they had answered was apparent from Jimmy Brown’s remark when he shouted laughingly:

“We aboard the *Ellen Maria* take time now an’ then to sleep. It ain’t as if we’d got to carry everythin’ away jest for the sake of makin’ port an hour or two earlier.”

And Captain Ben said gleefully in a low tone to old Moses:

“What did I tell yer? It’s as true as preachin’ that Eph Dodge has got his crew out runnin’ trawls! He’ll make every man Jack of ’em strain himself to the breakin’ point, an’ take all the

chances that are to be had on the banks, jest for the sake of beatin' the *Ellen Maria*."

By this time the stowaways could hear the faint chug of oars in thole-pins, and, a few seconds later, came the sound of voices in what was evidently intended to be a private discussion.

Then came a sharp blow as the bow of a dory struck the *Ellen Maria's* quarter, and three or four of the men ran aft to make the newcomer fast.

Captain Ben stepped quickly to the rail, peering searchingly into the faces of the two men who came aboard as soon as their craft had been made fast, and, the scrutiny at an end, said as if in disappointment:

"I reckon I made a mistake. I was allowin' you'd come from the *General Grant*; but there wouldn't be any aboard her whose faces I can't bring to mind."

"She's the craft we've been lookin' for these last two hours," the foremost of the men said wearily.

"Ain't you new to the banks? I don't remember ever seein' you before."

"We ain't new to the banks; but we're mighty strange to this 'ere Yankee way of fishin'. We come from Shediac—our schooner was lost last month—cut down off Quero—we were carried to

Boston, an' the first chance we got to ship on anythin' like a decent lay was aboard the *General Grant*. I reckon blue-nose fishin' is good enough for me after this, without tryin' my hand agin under a Yankee skipper."

"What's the matter, mate? What's the matter?" Captain Ben asked heartily. "A leetle put out, I reckon, over pullin' 'round here in the fog, an' I can't say as I blame yer. Go down an' mug up, an' you'll feel better. What time did you lose yourselves? This 'ere smother didn't strike us till well to dark. You wasn't out then, eh?"

"No, we wasn't out then," the man replied irritably, as he followed the captain down the companionway, and was in turn followed by his mate and all the crew of the *Ellen Maria*, save him whose duty it was to sound the horn. "We didn't get through dressin'-down till the smother was well on us; an' then what does Cap'in Dodge do but say we must run trawls. Think of an honest man runnin' trawls well nigh to midnight in a fog thick enough to choke him!"

"I knew it! I knew it!" Captain Ben cried in a tone very like that of triumph. "Your skipper has an idee that he's goin' to beat us out on this cruise, eh?"

"If this is the *Ellen Maria*, that's what he's got in mind," one of the newcomers replied, and

added in a more cheery tone after he had swallowed a full mug of streaming coffee at imminent danger of scalding himself. "He's agreed to give all hands two dollars apiece if the *General Grant* is tied up at the dock in Boston half an hour ahead of you. But he can keep his money, an' two dollars more of mine alongside it, before I'll run trawls agin at sich a time as this!"

Then the stranger and his mate held out their mugs to Mr. Gunn for the refilling, and Captain Ben cautiously beckoned Mr. Salter to follow him on deck, whereupon Master Babbidge, forgetting that he was not on the most friendly terms with his "guests," whispered to them exultantly:

"Father's got some scheme in his head for beatin' out Cap'in Eph, an' makin' a fool of him, you see if he hasn't! I tell you there'll be fun 'round here before a great while!"

CHAPTER XVII

FOOLING CAPTAIN EPH

THE lads from Philadelphia, having become considerably better acquainted with Master Babidge than they were on that day when he induced them to stowaway aboard the *Ellen Maria*, put but little faith in his predictions concerning what it might be possible to do; but in this particular they learned right soon that Joe had very good ideas as to the opportunities of such a cruise as they were then making.

The men who had come up from out the very heart of the fog, as it were, finding a haven aboard the schooner at a time when there were many chances they might drift about all night, were seemingly in no haste to rejoin their rightful shipmates. In fact, as it appeared to Sam and Tommy, they intended to remain where they were, at least until morning, and one could not well blame them for hesitating about venturing out in that smother, with the possibilities of again going astray.

The crew of the *Ellen Maria* seemed to take it as a matter of course that their visitors would remain for a long while, and all hands had settled

down to a time of mugging-up and yarning, when Captain Ben, followed by Moses Salter, came down the companionway as if bent on business.

There were others besides Master Babbidge who were inclined to think that the master of the *Ellen Maria* had a "bee in his bonnet," which had to do with the men so lately come aboard, and in an instant all eyes were turned toward him, while as if by common consent conversation ceased entirely.

"Now it's comin'," Joe said gleefully, as he prodded Sam with his elbow. "I ain't got any idee of what may be in father's mind; but you can set it down as a fact that there's somethin' sich as won't work to the advantage of Cap'in Eph."

And this prediction also was verified very shortly afterwards, for Captain Ben, clearing his throat as a means of attracting attention, although his audience could not well have been more attentive, said to the newcomers in what he intended should be a careless tone, but which had underlying it a certain note of seriousness that could not be mistaken:

"Did I understand you to say that Cap'in Eph Dodge allowed to give each man of his crew two dollars in case the *General Grant* made port with a full fare of fish before the *Ellen Maria* did?"

"That's the offer he made before we'd got

abreast of Portland Head Light," the elder of the two strangers replied.

"An' you shipped with him on the reg'lar lay, I allow?"

"That's what we did, an' it's the last Yankee craft we'll ever take a berth aboard."

"Of course you're allowin' to finish out the season, seein's how it's well along, so to speak?"

"Oh, yes; we can stand that much of it, I s'pose."

"Wa'al, now, hark ye! So long as you're goin' to fish for one season on a Yankee craft, I'm allowin' you ain't so much in love with Eph Dodge as to prevent you from goin' aboard another vessel, if so be things were a leetle more'n equal, eh?"

"What's that?" the second stranger asked quickly, and the crew of the *Ellen Maria* were listening with painful intentness, for it was evident to all, even including the stowaways, that Captain Ben was not talking simply for the sake of multiplying words.

"I was thinkin' if you could have as good a lay on some other craft as you had on the *General*, an' a leetle more, it wouldn't go agin your grain to make a shift of quarters, would it, seein's you don't allow to fish aboard any Yankee craft very long?"

"If you mean by that to ask if we're tied up

with Cap'in Ephraim Dodge, I'm free to tell you that we ain't," the elder of the strangers replied. "We've got no love for him, an' we only shipped from trip to trip."

"An' he's drivin' of yer pretty hard, eh?"

"It's certain there won't any moss grow on us from settin' 'round idle."

"Wa'al, look here; I'm a man of few words, an' there's no need of beatin' 'bout the bush with this thing. I've got an offer to make, which, of course, you're free to take, or leave, jest as best pleases you; but in case you don't see fit to help out in the little scheme I've got in mind, I wouldn't like to have it carried back to Cap'in Eph, 'cause it might make bad blood betwixt us. We've got a good set of boys here; all know each other, an' have stuck together these last three years. They can tell you what kind of a craft the *Ellen Maria* is, an' I'm offerin' you the same lay, with an easier lookout, that you've got aboard the *General*. What's more, I'll give five dollars to every member of this 'ere crew, countin' you in, if we tie up to Leavitt's Wharf before the *General Grant* comes 'round Bug Light."

The men from Shediac hung in the wind a few seconds, while they looked around among the crew much as if trying to decide from the faces of those in the cabin what kind of shipmates they

might find on the *Ellen Maria*, and then the elder said hesitatingly, as if he was already half inclined to accept the offer:

“I can’t figger how it could be done, seein’s we’ve got the *General’s* dory with us.”

“If she’s all that stands in your way, I’ll soon set it right. As soon as this smother lets up, some of the boys can take your dory over to the *General*, sayin’ she came swashin’ up alongside of us, an’ we made her fast, all of which is strictly the truth. Then Cap’in Eph will have his property, an’ you’ll stay here. Now I ain’t askin’ you to make up your minds right on the jump. Think it over, an’ talk it over with all hands, while I take my trick on deck, for in this ’ere craft it’s allowed the cap’in does the same work as the men.”

Having said this, the master of the *Ellen Maria* approached the cook with a certain air of dignity; received from him a mug of coffee; drank it, and then slowly ascended the companionway.

Immediately he disappeared a regular babel of confusion ensued. The crew of the *Ellen Maria* saw in Captain Ben’s proposition nothing whatsoever of dishonesty; but a right good opportunity to turn the tables on Captain Dodge, who, as it appeared, was straining every nerve to outstrip them, and doing it, from a fisherman’s point of view, in an unfair manner, because, as one of the

men expressed it, "it wasn't no ways decent to dress down half the night, an' run trawls the balance."

Therefore it was that they were eager to aid the skipper in his little plan, and in order to do so used every argument which could be brought to bear upon the strangers, until from their florid description of life aboard the *Ellen Maria*, one who had never seen her, nor knew of the work that was to be performed, might have fancied she was a veritable palace set adrift for the sole purpose of ministering to the pleasures of fishermen in need of a long vacation.

Sam and Tommy were astonished at the wonderful consumption of coffee which accompanied this unusual effort to increase the number of the schooner's crew by two. Abraham seemed to think that he was doing more than a man's full share toward persuading the seamen from Shediak, for he replenished the mugs as often as they were emptied, and twice before a decision had been arrived at was one or the other of the huge coffee pots refilled.

Once during the confusion Tommy proposed to his cousin that they go into the forepeak in order to get some sleep before the next day's work should be begun; but Sam refused by saying laughingly:

“I wouldn’t miss this part of it for considerable. It’s the only sport we’ve had, and we can’t afford to cut it short. I want to know whether this crew can persuade the men to leave the *General Grant*, and allow her master to think they are drowned, for that’s what he would believe if the dory was taken back with such a story as they evidently count on telling.”

Therefore it was Tommy turned his attention once more to the noisy group, hearing but little of what was said, for there were many times when the men were talking simultaneously, and often when comparative quiet had been restored, there were no less than three who insisted on being heard at the same moment.

However, it came to an end finally, as all things will, and the men from Shediac announced their willingness to do as Captain Ben desired; but they insisted that there should be no question as to the gratuity of five dollars which had been promised if the *Ellen Maria* arrived at Portland, with a full fare, in advance of the *General Grant*.

Not until this decision had been arrived at did the master of the schooner show himself; but that he had been on deck attentive to duty all knew, because even above the noise of the boisterous conversation could be heard the long, mournful blasts of the horn.

Moses Salter had not taken any prominent part in persuading these men from Shediac; but had rather directed it by urging this member of the crew or that to paint some alluring picture, or make an additional suggestion of the comfort to be enjoyed aboard the *Ellen Maria*, when the conversation seemed to lag.

However, immediately the decision had been made, the old sailor posted on deck as fast as his two legs could carry him, and an instant later Captain Ben came down alone, the vigorous tooting of the horn telling that Moses had taken up the task with a pair of fresh lungs that were capable of coaxing from the instrument of tin its full volume of sound.

“Wa'al,” the captain said as he came below, and halted at the foot of the companionway, “I’m told you’ve made up your minds to jine us?”

“That’s what we’ve done, with the understandin’ that you’ll get the dory back to the *General* with whatsoever yarn you see fit, an’ that we’re to have five dollars apiece if so be we make port with a full fare before Cap’in Dodge does. Besides, we’re to have the same lay as we had there.”

“Right as a trivet, my man, an’ we’ll consider the bargain closed. You make a bit by the change, seein’s how we’ve got more fish aboard than

Cap'in Eph has, with all his night work, an' now I'm allowin' that it's time to turn in, for if the crew of this 'ere schooner count on makin' an extry five-dollar bill apiece, there can't be much sogerin done after the first crack of day. I'm not askin' you to go out in the night; but I do claim that so long as a man can see he ought'er work, except what time he has to spend in fillin' up."

"It's all over," Master Babbidge whispered triumphantly to his "guests." "I told you father had some plan to work on Cap'in Eph, an' he's done it. Now we had better turn in, for it will be a case of humpin' ourselves livelier than any crew ever did on this schooner before, an' we won't have any too much time for sleepin' even if we catch every nap that comes our way."

Then Master Babbidge made his way out of the cabin, the stowaways following in the belief that his advice was good, and on deck they saw Moses Salter pacing to and fro, looking in the gray vapor not unlike a ghost, if it so be there are such things.

"Wa'al, lads, you're like to see the bright side of a fisherman's life this cruise. It's astonishin' how lucky some boys are! Now you might have come to the banks forty times, an' it wouldn't have been anythin' more'n everyday work—pullin' in an' dressin'-down; but this 'ere takin' on new men makes a change come over the whole thing."

“ In what way? ” Sam asked with a laugh. “ It strikes me we’ll be pulling in and dressing-down with mighty little change, even though we have got an addition to the crew.”

“ Ay, lad, p’rhaps that’s what it amounts to in the end; but you’re goin’ to have the chance of your lives to jump to it. Up to this time we’ve been kind’er sogerin’ along, takin’ our ease, so to speak; but beginnin’ to-morrow (mornin’ you’ll see things fly.”

“ If they can fly any faster than they have been doing since we began to fish, I shall be out of the race,” Tommy said with a hearty laugh, and then the stowaways, bidding Mr. Salter good-night, joined Master Babbidge in the blackness of the forepeak, where the odors were so strong that it seemed as if it would be necessary to put double bars across the hatch in order to keep them down.

CHAPTER XVIII

SIGNS OF TROUBLE

IT was not necessary the stowaways should spend very much time in settling down to sleep once they were stretched on the lumpy bed in that abode of foul odors—the forepeak.

The severe labors of the day, together with the lateness of the hour, had brought slumber so near their eyelids that it was almost as if they lost consciousness while going from the cabin to their quarters, and within a very few seconds after lying down they crossed over into Dreamland.

Master Babbidge was so excited over the rare scheme of his father's for getting the best of Captain Dodge, and because of anticipating the coming race in the taking of fish, that it was as if to him sleep would never again be necessary. When he and his "guests" were alone he began to explain in what way the work aboard the *Ellen Maria* would be different now that they were engaged in a contest of fishing with an old rival, and talked at considerable length before coming to understand that the boys from Philadelphia were wrapped in slumber. Then he exclaimed in a tone of mingled disappointment and anger:

“ I did think I'd found a couple of fellers what would make things pleasant on this 'ere cruise; but they might as well be wooden boys, so far as my gettin' any fun out of 'em is concerned. When I pick up anybody agin to give 'em the time of their lives, I'll be mighty sure they've got some get up an' get to 'em! ”

With this supposed scathing remark, which fell far short of its purpose because of not having been heard by those for whom it was intended, Master Babbidge pulled from beneath the sleeping lads such of the dunnage as might serve to make a softer bed than he had had on the night previous, and then gave himself up to the luxury of sleeping, which was by no means as satisfactory as if he could have discussed at length that which was to be begun on the following morning.

He would have had keen eyes, indeed, who could have seen any signs of the coming day when the occupants of the forepeak were aroused by Jimmy Brown, who, first throwing upon them a coil of wet rope in order to attract their attention, shouted vigorously:

“ Ahoy there, you lubbers! Have you forgotten so soon as this that it's a case of workin' close up on Cap'in Eph's back, or givin' him the chance of sayin' that we're a set of duffers at fishin'? Turn out! Turn out, I say, an' bear a hand! ”

Tommy came first through the hatch, rubbing his eyes and looking about in surprise as he said mildly:

“Why, we’ve just gone to bed, and it is yet night!”

“Oh, it is, eh?” Jimmy Brown cried in an ironical tone. “Wa’al, you’ll find out before many minutes go by that it’s near enough bein’ day for us to begin work. The first half is mighty nigh through with their breakfast, an’ Abe’ll be shoutin’ for you before you can get ready to go below. You stowaways want’er remember that from this out, until we make port again, it’s a case of takin’ your grub when you can get it, for the cook’ll have somethin’ better to do than keepin’ the table waitin’ for them as are slow.”

Before he ceased speaking Tommy had drawn a bucket of sea water and was splashing it over his head and face in order the more quickly to drive slumber from his eyelids, and Sam stood awaiting his turn at the same primitive toilet arrangements, but Master Babbidge yet remained below enjoying the alleged luxury of his bed.

“The orders are for all hands to turn out lively!” Jimmy Brown cried as he pounded once more on the hatch, and then, since Joe gave no evidence of life, he seized the bucket of water which the stowaways were using, throwing the

contents directly upon the son of the owner of the *Ellen Maria*.

There was a noise as of some one choking; a sound as if two or three pop-guns had suddenly been discharged, and then came the cry in an angry tone:

“Mind your eye up there! You ain’t goin’ to play any funny tricks with me, or there’ll be trouble!”

“It’s the cap’in’s orders for all hands to show up on deck, an’ we haven’t got the time to spend in writin’ out invitations.”

“I’ll soon know whether Jimmy Brown, or any other man aboard this ’ere schooner, has got the right to douse me with cold water before there’s the least little crack of daybreak!” Master Babbidge cried in a voice trembling with passion, as he made his way aft evidently with the intention of complaining to his father, but before the stow-aways had finished their apology for a toilet the young gentleman came forward again, looking as if he had met with a very disagreeable rebuff, and he did not venture to explain what had occurred or been said while he was aft.

There was no longer any reason for Master Babbidge to complain that he had been unfairly dealt with in the way of being aroused too early, for even though there were yet no signs of the

coming day, all was activity on board the *Ellen Maria*.

Those of the "first half" who had finished breakfast were coming up from the cabin; already two dory crews were making preparations for setting out; bait for the trawls was being brought up from the hold, and while every man, except those at the table, was doing his best to advance matters that the crew of the *General Grant* might be beaten in the contest, Captain Babbidge went hither and thither, first into the hold and then boarding the dories, to make certain everything was as it should be, performing meanwhile the work of at least two men.

The "first half" had left the schooner to run the trawls before the "second half" was called below, and if the stowaways had thought that previous to this they had witnessed an exhibition of hurried eating, they soon learned that whatever the crew of the schooner had done heretofore in the way of bolting their food, was as nothing compared with that which was accomplished on this morning. It was as if a man had no more than seated himself and poured a mug of steaming coffee down his throat, than he was up again, his hands and mouth full of food, finishing the meal even as he tumbled over the rail to take his place in the boat.

“It’s a case of you lads turnin’ to with me here below this forenoon,” Mr. Gunn said, as he placed before each of the boys a large amount of food, and then seated himself, beginning the meal in very much the same hurried manner as had the others. “I’m allowin’ to set a trawl myself this mornin’, if so be I can find a mate, an’ what’s cooked ’twixt now an’ nine o’clock will have to last this ’ere crew till nightful, ’cause ’cordin’ to the cap’in’s orders, there’s to be no shilly shallyin’ ’round with dinner from this out till our hatches are put on for the last time before makin’ port.”

“I don’t know much about cooking,” Sam said, doubtfully, “but if there’s anything else I can do to help, all that’s needed is to tell me.”

“I didn’t allow any of you would bear a hand with the cookin’ part of it; but there’s dishes to be washed, potatoes to peel, the cabin to clear up, an’ forty other things that take time, sich as you lads can do as well as anybody else.”

“We’re ready,” Tommy said cheerily, while Master Babbidge gave unmistakable evidence of dissatisfaction; but before he could make any decided protest Captain Ben’s voice was heard from the deck, as he shouted:

“Bear a hand lively, Joe, at that ’ere eatin’! You an’ your mates ain’t expected to stay below all day, an’ I’m wantin’ you to carry this ’ere dory

over to the *General Grant* before I leave. Get grub enough there to blanket your stomachs, an' put the rest in your pockets so's to eat as you go, for this ain't any time to be at all finicky at the table."

"Get along an' do as the skipper says," Mr. Gunn cried, literally forcing the boys toward the companionway. "There'll be plenty of time to fill yourselves up after you get back."

It was as if they had but just begun the meal before the three stood by the rail listening to Captain Ben's commands:

"You're to tow this 'ere dory to the *General Grant*, an' say she washed up alongside of us last night. Findin' Cap'in Eph's name on the oars, I've allowed she belonged to him. Don't wait any longer than's necessary to tell the yarn, for fear you'll let out somethin' 'bout the men from Shediac what's joined us. Now get away, an' keep a quiet tongue between yer teeth."

It was to the lads from Philadelphia as if the trip to the *General Grant* was begun without their knowledge, so rapidly were they forced by Mr. Gunn, Captain Ben and Master Babbidge to move; but the hurried departure did not prevent them from insisting on doing a full share of the labor.

Brief as had been the experience of the lads in

the work of fishing, it was sufficient to give them a far different idea as to the possibilities of danger in handling a small craft on the long swell of the ocean, than they previously had. The fog had disappeared; the gray light of the coming day was stealing over the waters from the eastward; there was a sense of invigoration in the still, salt air which seemed to give them strength, and while Sam held the steering-oar, clumsily to be sure, Tommy very nearly did his full share of the rowing.

Master Babbidge had very much to say about what the crew of the *Ellen Maria* would do during the coming contest; but Sam and Tommy gave little heed to his words, so strange and yet so beautiful was everything around them. Sunrise on the ocean, with the two schooners rising and falling on the swell, and the dories dancing here or there, made up such a marine picture as would have delighted any save him who was suffering from an attack of seasickness.

When the *Ellen Maria's* dory came alongside the *General Grant* no person was to be seen on the deck, and Master Babbidge said as if the fact displeased him:

“They’re workin’ mighty hard to beat us, I can tell you—all hands out at this time in the mornin’; but they’ll find that we can give ’em a

mighty smart tussle!" Then, raising his voice, he cried: "Ahoy! Ahoy on the schooner!"

In reply to this hail a head appeared from the companionway of the forward house, for the cook on the *General Grant* was quartered well up in the bow, instead of aft as on the *Ellen Maria*, and the owner of the head asked gruffly, as if angry at having been disturbed:

"What's crawlin' on you now?"

"Here's a dory with Cap'in Eph's name on the oars what washed alongside of us last night," Joe said, speaking sharply, for he believed that the son of Captain Ben Babbidge should have been treated with more respect by the cook of a fishing vessel.

"Our dory, eh?" the man muttered, as if he had fresh cause for discontent. "I allowed them hands from Shediack was farmers, even though they did claim to be sich crack fishermen! So they've gone an' drowned themselves, have they? Wa'al, pass up the painter."

Sam and Tommy felt relieved because the cook of the *General Grant* was not inclined to ask questions. They had feared that it would be difficult to carry out Captain Ben's commands without telling a deliberate falsehood, and yet the matter had arranged itself very comfortably. The painter of the dory which they had been towing was passed aboard the schooner, and without having

been delayed more than a single minute, the boys were on their way back to the *Ellen Maria*.

When they came alongside the schooner, which presented much the same appearance as had Captain Eph's vessel, not a person was to be seen on her decks, nor even after the boat was made fast alongside, and Master Babbidge said in an explanatory tone, with no slight evidence of satisfaction:

"I'm reckonin' our folks can show them as sail the *General Grant* how to get to work in the mornin'."

"Have all hands gone away, do you suppose?" Sam asked curiously.

"Of course Abe is below. It's allers allowed that the cook of a fisherman looks after the vessel while the men are out trawlin', but if so be father's willin' for me to bear a hand in one of the boats with Abe, I reckon you'll have to keep ship, for it don't stand to reason he can set a trawl alone, an' I'm the only one as can go with him."

"But we don't know how to take care of the schooner——"

Sam did not finish the sentence, for at that instant a sharp cry of pain was heard from the cabin, and immediately afterward a cloud of smoke and of vapor came up from the companionway, giving every indication that the *Ellen Maria* was in flames!

CHAPTER XIX

ABRAHAM DISABLED

WHILE one might have counted thirty the boys remained motionless in terror, unable even to speak, and during this time the clouds of smoke or of vapor continued to ascend from the cabin as if the interior of the schooner was in flames.

“Sing out for father!” Master Babbidge finally cried, he being the first to use his tongue. “Yell the loudest you know how, else the *Ellen Maria* is a goner!”

He suited the action to the words, sitting idly in the dory as he yelled at the full strength of his lungs the single word “father,” repeating it again and again until the volume of sound became little more than an unmeaning howl of terror.

Then Sam had so far mastered the surprise and fear which beset him when the first token of danger was seen and heard, as to have a very clear idea of what should be done. Even though he had had no experience as a sailor, he possessed sufficient common sense to understand that there is little difference between a fire at sea and one on land, except in the method of fighting, and it surely seemed as if an ounce of work performed

immediately was worth a ton of such noise as Joe was making, if through it assistance would not be procured instantly.

“Pull in alongside!” Sam cried sharply to Tommy, as he wrested the oar from Master Babidge’s hands. “We’ve got to get on board right away, for there *must* be something we can do!”

Tommy obeyed the command intelligently, his cousin’s voice seeming to aid him in collecting his partially scattered senses, and while struggling to do his share toward bringing the dory alongside the schooner, he cried impatiently, as if Sam was in some degree at fault because of the noise:

“Why don’t you shut off that screeching? There ain’t a boat within sound of his voice, and no good can come of so much yelling!”

“He seems to have lost his head, and we mustn’t waste time trying to beat sense into him,” Sam said curtly, and at that instant the dory, under their united efforts, was swung in so far that it was possible for him to lay hold of a boat’s fender which was hanging over the schooner’s rail.

“Make the dory fast, and come on as quick as you know how!” Sam cried as, after waiting until his cousin had clambered forward past the noisy Joseph, he leaped aboard the vessel.

The clouds of smoke or of vapor had already begun to thin out when he darted down the com-

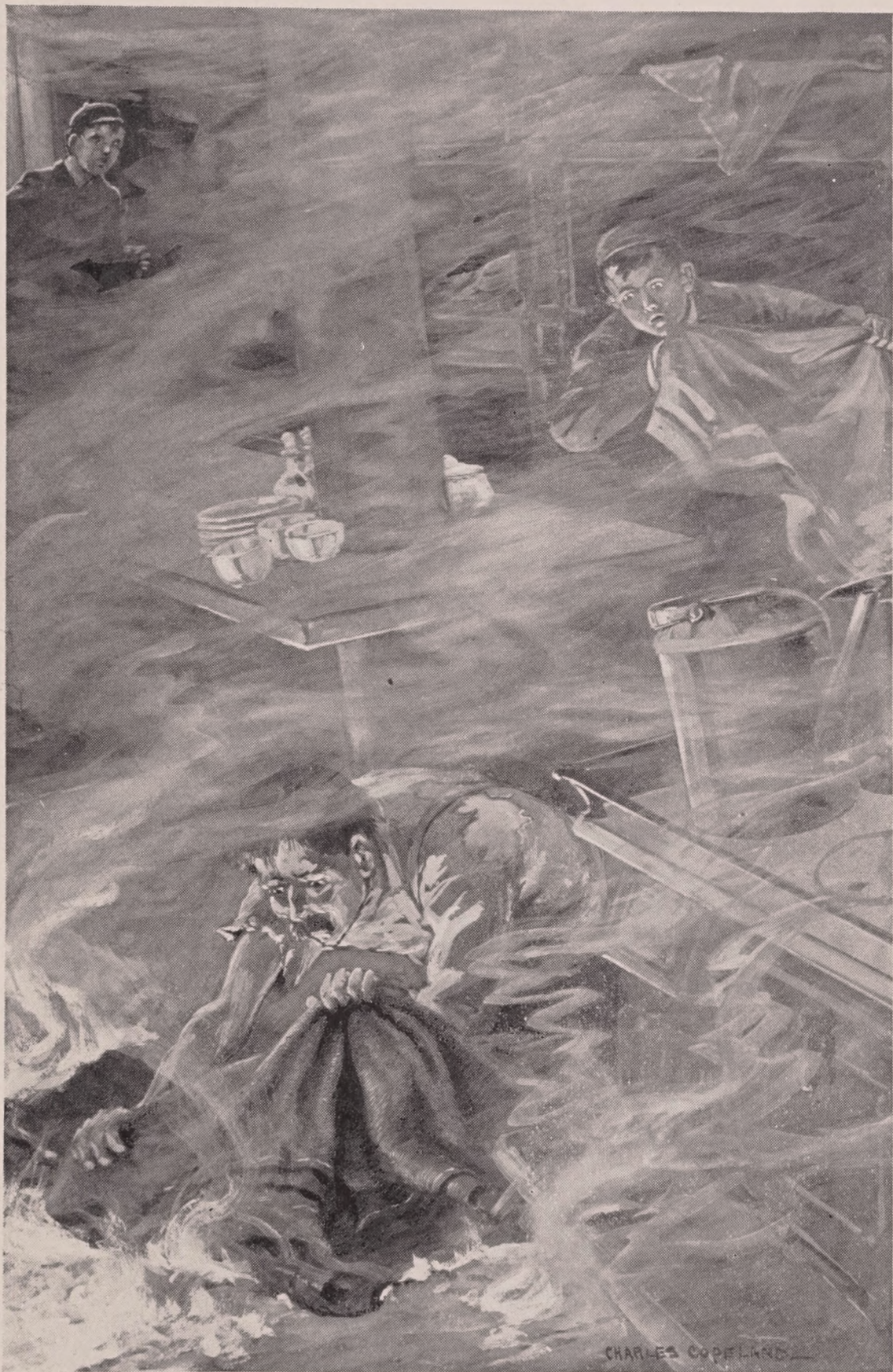
panionway regardless of the possible danger which awaited him, and once in the cabin, although nearly blinded by steam and smoke, he could see Abraham Gunn on his hands and knees in front of the cook-stove.

“What has happened? What is the matter?” Sam cried, speaking angrily because of his nervousness, and the cook replied hoarsely:

“By makin’ a fool of myself I overturned the coffee pot into a fryin’ pan of hot lard, an’ there’s a chance this ’ere schooner will be on fire if you don’t bear a hand! No, no, never touch the water!” the cook added when Sam seized a bucket and turned as if to ascend the companionway. “Pull the blankets out of the bunks an’ do your best at smotherin’ the flames with them.”

Then it was that the lad understood, rather than saw, that the cook was half lying upon a lot of bed clothing which he had thrown on the cabin floor, and, seeing the flames curling up from the port locker, Sam began to carry out Abraham’s instructions, Tommy coming on the scene just in time to lend him valuable assistance.

It is not necessary to make any attempt at going into the details of this battle with the burning fat, for it simply consisted of determined efforts on the part of the cook and the stowaways to smother the flames, which, like some living thing,



"THIS 'ERE SCHOONER WILL BE ON FIRE IF YOU DON'T BEAR A HAND!"



seemed vindictively to seize upon this or that unguarded spot.

How long this fight continued, with the human combatants half blinded and nearly choked by the smoke and steam, neither the man nor the boys could have told; but certain it is that when Abraham Gunn announced the end of the conflict in a tone of deepest relief as he staggered toward the companionway to fill his aching lungs with fresh air, Master Babbidge was still shrieking for his father, and, judging from the continued strength of his voice, he could not have been engaged in these strenuous efforts more than ten or fifteen minutes.

Sam and Tommy staggered after the cook, and when they gained the deck it was a full minute before either had sufficiently recovered from the effects of the battle to be able to realize clearly the condition of affairs. Then it was that Sam saw at what expense Abraham had saved the schooner from destruction. One sleeve and nearly half of his shirt had been literally burned from his body, and the exposed skin showed a hue of angry red which told of the injuries received.

“Are you hurt much, Mr. Gunn?” Sam asked, speaking with difficulty because his lungs were not yet free from the choking vapor, and the cook replied in a tone of agony:

“I reckon I’m burned pretty bad, lad. First off I got a full half of the boilin’ coffee on my hand an’ arm, an’ then came hot fat enough to do up the job in good shape. If you could contrive to get some thin slices of fat pork to put on the worst places, I reckon it would ease up the pain a bit.”

Sam ran below again, not knowing where to find that which was desired, but eager to accomplish his purpose in the shortest possible space of time, and Tommy, who had been leaning over the rail gasping for breath, now turned to aid the sufferer in so far as he might.

By this time Master Babbidge had come to understand that his share in saving the schooner from destruction was of no account, noise being of but little service where work of the hands was required, but he came over the rail as if believing he had already played a manly part.

“Why don’t you get up an’ do something?” he asked irritably of the cook, who, with Tommy’s assistance, was striving to cover with Sam’s coat that portion of his body which had been burned, knowing full well that the sooner it was screened from the air the better. “Seems to me there’s no need of makin’ so much fuss if everythin’ is all right, an’ if it ain’t, I’ll ’tend to it.”

“Go back inter the boat an’ screech some more,

for that's all you seem able to do!" Abraham cried angrily, and by this time Sam had come up with a huge piece of salt pork and a knife.

Under the cook's instructions the two stowaways bandaged the burned and scalded flesh to the best of their ability, Master Babbidge standing near by helpless, but giving many wild commands to which no one paid any heed. That Mr. Gunn had been injured seriously could be told by the quivering of his lips as he strove to repress any moan of pain, and Sam said solicitously:

"Don't you believe you would feel better if you got into one of the bunks?"

"There will be no 'better' to it, lad, for quite a spell. It's a case of grinnin' an' bearin', accordin' to my way of thinkin', until the fire has worked its way out. The biggest part of the hurt is that this should have happened just now."

"I can't see why it wouldn't be just as bad at any other time," Tommy said, with a nervous laugh, and Mr. Gunn replied bitterly:

"Don't you understand that I'm like to be laid up for two or three days? Inside of an hour my hand an' arm will be one mass of blisters, an' how am I goin' to do any cookin'?"

"There must be some one else aboard who can attend to your work," Sam suggested, soothingly, and the cook cried as if the words angered him:

“ I’m not sayin’ as they can’t make shift somehow without me, but we’re tryin’ to keep ahead of Cap’in Eph, and how’s that to be done if one of the crew’s told off to do my work? I ain’t such a baby but what I can stand a bit of pain. It’s the idee of gettin’ beat in what’s the same as a race ’twixt the *Ellen Maria* an’ the *General Grant*, that hurts me most.”

“ I’ll go right off an’ find father,” Master Babbidge cried, as if he had hit upon a plan to avert the threatened disaster, and he would have gone over the rail on the instant, but that Abraham shouted savagely:

“ Stay where you are, you idjut! Do you think it’s goin’ to better matters any if you pull the men off from their work? Let you go out there an’ tell Cap’in Babbidge what has happened, an’ he’d think the schooner was the same as disabled.”

“ Sam an’ I can’t do much in the way of fishin’,” Tommy began thoughtfully, “ and I don’t suppose we would make any better fist at trying to cook; but what’s the reason we couldn’t do a good deal of the work if you stayed close by to tell us exactly what ought to be done? I’m sure I could fry fish and wash dishes, and in the evening, after the catch has been dressed down, perhaps some of the men can do the other things.”

“ Say, there seems to be considerable sound

sense in you lads, even though you were such fools as to stow away aboard a fisherman," Abraham said approvingly. "This 'ere ache won't come any harder if I keep my mind at work, an' unless we're willin' Cap'in Eph shall beat us out an' out, it's a case of hustle."

Having said this Mr. Gunn went below, the stowaways following, and Master Babbidge overhung the companionway that he might see what was going on in the cabin; but making no offer of assistance, probably because of yet being so confused as not to realize that a third pair of hands might make the work lighter.

The first thing was to set the scene of the accident to rights, and while the stowaways did this the cook walked to and fro in the narrow space, striving unsuccessfully at times not to give way to the pain which must well-nigh have overpowered him.

It so chanced that Captain Ben and his dory-mate were the first to come in with a load of fish, and before they were alongside Joe, who yet remained idle on deck, shouted out his version of the accident, making it appear much as if the cook was at the point of death, with the *Ellen Maria* so nearly destroyed by the flames as to be little better than a wreck upon the waters.

It can well be fancied that the master of the

schooner lost no time in going below, and when he gained the cabin a look of relief overspread his face.

There were no visible signs of injury to the schooner; Abraham Gunn, his arm bandaged until it looked to be nearly as large around as the main-mast, was still pacing to and fro, struggling to hold the mastery over his agony, while Sam and Tommy, acting under his instructions, had the second meal of the day nearly ready for the eating.

“Why, I thought you was all burned to a cinder down here?” Captain Ben said in surprise. “How is it, Abe? Done up pretty bad?”

“If that fool Joe would work with his hands as hard as he’s been workin’ with his tongue since this ’ere thing happened, dinner might be ready by this time,” Mr. Gunn said angrily. “As it is, by keepin’ these ’ere bloomin’ stowaways down here I reckon we’ll pull through without any great trouble, except that you’ll have to go short on bread.”

Then he explained to the master of the schooner how the accident had occurred, and concluded by praising Sam and Tommy for their willingness to assist, and their deftness at performing unfamiliar tasks, until the lads’ faces reddened with pleasurable pride.

“It’s bad enough; but I’m glad it ain’t any

worse," Captain Ben said when the story was concluded, and Abraham added fiercely:

"How could it be worse, unless the *Ellen Maria* was burned outright? Here's Cap'in Eph strainin' himself to beat us into port, an' I'm laid by when I might be out doin' a man's work in the dories."

"Now, now, Abe, don't take it to heart that way! What if the *General Grant* does happen to get into port a few hours ahead? It'll be the first time Ephraim Dodge ever got the best of us, an' I'm allowin' it will be the last, for it ain't in him to hold such a gait as he's struck this cruise. The next trip you won't take to mixin' boilin' coffee an' hot fat, an' I'll go bail we'll have another try at the *General Grant* before we're many years older. Besides, even with you laid up an' one of the men called off to help in the cookin', we ain't what you might call short-handed, seein's we've got the two Shediac fishermen aboard. If these 'ere stowaways of ours can keep on as they give promise of doin', an' the fish don't go back on us, I'm allowin' our chances are mighty nigh as good as they were last night; any how, we'll keep pluggin' at it, an' the crew of the *General Grant* have got to stir their stumps if they beat us into port."

CHAPTER XX

AMATEUR COOKS

IT sounded strange to the stowaways to hear the men as they came aboard, boat crew after boat crew, and were told what had happened, speak of the matter as if the only sad portion of the whole business was that they would be hampered just so much in the contest with the *General Grant*.

It was as if they had no sympathy with the cook, whose suffering increased as the hours wore on, and yet such was by no means the case. At sea, when every man stands in momentary danger of his life, an accident which does not terminate fatally is quickly dismissed from mind while the future is being discussed, and the person who escapes with his life is not accorded many words of consolation.

In this case, the *Ellen Maria's* chances of winning the contest were, through the mishap, lessened to the extent of one dory crew, for, as has already been set down, it had been Abraham's intention to do his share at running trawls, taking Joe as dory-mate, and even though he was able to work only half the time, his would have been valuable assistance. Therefore, on first

learning of what had occurred, every member of the crew thought only of the weakening of the working force, giving but little heed to the suffering cook.

It was later, when the amateur cooks, meaning the stowaways, had got well into the routine of their work, that the crew of the *Ellen Maria*, during the few idle moments accorded them, found opportunity of showing that they sympathized with Mr. Gunn in his affliction.

As a matter of course, Sam and Tommy were exceedingly awkward when they first attempted to work under Abraham's direction, but they were so very eager to aid in the labor, knowing of how much importance their share might be in this contest with the *General Grant*, that, as Mr. Gunn himself said, they "broke in mighty quick."

They put potatoes on to boil, made coffee while Abraham stood over them directing every movement, and fried the fish more creditably than could have been expected. In fact, when the first half were summoned to what might have been called "dinner" because it was the second meal of the day, Moses Salter said in a tone of approbation, after watching the stowaways a few seconds:

"I declare for it, them Philadelpy lads give promise of earnin' a full share on this cruise! 'Cordin' to the looks of things, Abe's plan of

pourin' boilin' coffee inter hot fat won't turn out so serious as I first reckoned. Our stowaways have their eyes out for dirt sharper'n Brother Gunn, an' the cuddy looks cleaner than I've seen it since we left port."

"They're good lads," the cook said heartily, as he stood in one corner of the cabin where would be the least danger any one might come in contact with his injured arm. "I make no doubt but that they'll pull through on the gingerbread we're goin' to make this afternoon; but how we'll get along for white bread beats me, 'cause it don't stand to reason I can show 'em, tied up as I am."

"I reckon we can stagger through a few days without bread, Abe, seein's how it can't be helped," Captain Ben cried cheerily. "It's big luck for us that the lads are aboard, for my Joe would be worse'n a wooden boy at sich work. Cook up what grub comes handy, an' we'll agree not to pull long faces while we stand a show of beatin' Ephraim Dodge at his little game."

When the second half came below for their share of the dinner the amateur cooks received yet more praise, much to Master Babbidge's displeasure, as could be seen when the men resumed their tasks, leaving the lads to set the cabin to rights, for then he said stiffly, much as if he had been wronged in some way:

“ It seems to me all hands have got somethin’ better to do than run on in sich a strain ’bout nothin’. I don’t think it’s so very wonderful you fellers can get dinner when Abe sticks close at yer heels, tellin’ jest when you ought’er wink! I could do as much as that an’ never turn a hair.”

“ Then why don’t you do it? ” Mr. Gunn cried as he turned sharply on Master Babbidge, for the great pain rendered him irritable. “ The day’s work ain’t finished by a long chalk, an’ I’m allowin’ that these lads would be mighty glad for you to spell ’em. Take hold an’ wash the dishes, an’ when that’s been done I’ll hunt up another job so’s you’ll have a chance to show what’s in yer.”

But Master Babbidge was by no means eager to assist the cook; it displeased him because his “ guests ” were praised so heartily, yet he did not feel inclined to win any share of the honors even though he was most anxious that the *Ellen Maria* should make port in advance of the *General Grant*.

“ Somebody’s got to look after the schooner while all hands are out in the boats,” he muttered as he went up the companionway, “ an’ if I do that much I reckon I’ll be doin’ my share of the work, though you won’t find anybody comin’ ’round actin’ as if he was most s’prised to death ’cause I manage to wiggle through it! ”

And Master Babbidge took exceedingly good care not to show himself below during the remainder of the day; but remained on deck as if believing the *Ellen Maria* needed most careful watching, although the weather was so fine, with not a suspicion of a breeze blowing, that the most clumsy craft ever launched could not have come to harm if she had been deserted entirely.

And now because each day was to our stowaways so nearly like the one preceding it, there is no good reason why overly many words should be spent in telling how the *Ellen Maria's* cargo was taken on board.

Abraham Gunn's injuries were more severe than was at first supposed, and during the ten days which followed the accident he not only suffered great pain, but was unable to perform even the most trifling tasks. The consequence was that Sam and Tommy did all the cook's share of the work, save in the way of making bread, which fell to Moses Salter, who mixed and kneaded and mixed night after night when he had finished his portion of dressing-down.

As a matter of course, the stowaways were not called upon to aid in caring for the fish as they were taken on board. From an hour before day-break, until the last tired man of the crew had mugged-up before turning into his bunk, the lads

from Philadelphia had never an idle moment, and the fact that they could thus aid in the necessary labor had not a little to do with the success of the *Ellen Maria's* crew in their contest with the men on the *General Grant*.

More than once did Captain Ben order Joe into the cabin to assist his "guests," to the end that they might not be forced to work so hard; but the boy was so awkward, or professed to be, that Abraham finally gave him strict commands to remain on deck save at such times as he was entitled to be at the table. That he was forced to sleep in the forepeak caused Master Babbidge many a disagreeable moment, for he allowed himself to believe that he was ill used by being forced to occupy the narrow quarters with Jimmy Brown, while those whom he had invited on board remained aft.

Because Sam and Tommy had taken it upon themselves to assist the cook, it seemed necessary they should remain, by night as well as by day, where Mr. Gunn could readily communicate with them, and, therefore, Captain Ben called for a man to voluntarily give up his bunk to the use of the boys.

"I'll do it," Jimmy Brown said promptly, on the evening after the accident, when it had been decided that the stowaways must live aft. "I

can't say that I'm hankerin' after havin' the ill-natured Joseph as a mate; but I'll ship on that lay jest for the sake of keepin' him straight, as I've been achin' to do this many a day."

And, if Joe can be believed in the matter, Jimmy Brown did exactly as he had been wanting to do, for, according to Moses Salter's testimony, the captain's son had never been on deck so promptly when all hands were called, as during the time he shared the comforts, or the discomforts, of the forepeak with Jimmy.

"Jest as soon as we get below, he acts as if he was the boss of everythin'," Master Babbidge complained one morning to his "guests" when he appeared in the cabin before Sam had built a fire in the cook-stove. "If I try to make any kick he ties me hand an' foot, an' threatens to put a gag in my mouth if I so much as speak."

"An' that's what I'll have to do some of these fine nights before this 'ere cruise comes to an end," Jimmy Brown added, he having followed Joe aft without that young gentleman's knowledge. "You've got it inter your head, Joe, that you're the whole thing aboard this schooner, whereas you're a mighty small part of it since our stowaways got their sea-legs on, an' if you kick over the traces a little bit, you'll soon see that I am really the boss while we're in the forepeak."

More than once did Master Babbidge declare emphatically that he would never allow another fellow to stow away on board his father's vessel, and in making the terrible threat he took every precaution to insure its being heard by the lads from Philadelphia; but if he hoped to annoy them by such words he was most woefully mistaken. On one occasion his father, overhearing the words, said emphatically, and in a tone so loud that every man aboard could not fail of hearing him:

"You can set it down in a book, Joseph, that you'll never play the same game agin while I'm in command of the *Ellen Maria*, or any other vessel that you happen to be on board of, else you'll get a taste of the rope's end sich as you won't forget. It was mighty lucky for all hands, though, that you did coax Sam an' Tommy inter makin' this cruise, else we'd stood a good show of bein' beaten out'er our boots by Cap'in Eph, whereas it's be-ginnin' to look now, unless I'm dreadfully mistaken as to the fish the *General Grant* was gettin', that we'd make port a good twenty-four hours ahead of him."

Surely it did begin to appear as if Captain Ben was correct, for on the night when Moses Salter declared that another day's work at the trawls would fill the hold of the *Ellen Maria* so full that "the hatches wouldn't fit," the *General Grant* yet

showed enough of her hull above the surface to prove that she still lacked a good quarter of her proper fare.

“Under way to-morrow night by this time,” Abraham whispered to his assistants, as they crawled into Jimmy Brown’s bunk, so weary that it seemed to be a severe exertion to move their limbs, and this welcome intelligence, to which they had been looking forward so eagerly, revived the lads until it was as if they had been idling the whole day through.

“Oh, Sam!” Tommy whispered. “Only one day more, and then we’ll be sailing toward mother! If this fine weather will only break now, so that we’ll have all the wind the *Ellen Maria* can stagger under, it won’t be many hours before we can say to those who will be glad to hear it, how sorry we are for having run away!”

“It’ll be almost the next thing to Heaven!” Sam replied fervently, and then the slumber which had been hovering so very near his eyes, closed the lids until the cheery voice of Moses Salter caused them to open very suddenly as he shouted:

“Ahoy, you cooks! One day more to wrastle with the pots an’ pans all by your lonesomes, an’ then you’ll have the whole crew to bear a hand! Turn out, my hearties, an’ do your level best at showin’ us that you won’t be sorry when this ’ere

cruise comes to an end, leavin' you high an' dry at Bar Harbor!"

Far less than this would have aroused the lads to do their best. Mr. Salter had hardly ceased calling when they were at work making ready the breakfast, and doing everything so deftly that Abraham, turning over in his bunk for another nap, declared it was worse than useless for him to arise, because his assistants would get on better without him.

It was a day filled with nervous excitement for the stowaways, although nothing out of the ordinary occurred on board the schooner, save when Joe came below shortly after the crew had gone out to run the trawls for the last time on that cruise, and said with something like a note of threat in his tones:

"I want you fellers to remember that if it hadn't been for me you wouldn't got the chance to make this trip in the *Ellen Maria!*"

And Sam replied with an inflection which puzzled Master Babbidge not a little:

"Don't you worry about our forgetting it! We'll remember it the longest day we live!"

"An' I'm thinkin' you'll remember it, too, Joe," Mr. Gunn added, "for now that your father has seen what a couple of lads green to the business can do when they've got a willingness, he'll take

good care that you step right lively. On account of havin' so much business in the way of gettin' the upper hand of Cap'in Eph, he's kind'er allowed you to drift your own way; but once our hatches are on you'll walk a chalk mark, or I'm mistaken."

On that noon, when the crew came into the cabin for dinner, it was known that the last trawl had been taken up; the last load of fish brought aboard, and it only remained to dress down the catch which remained on deck before the *Ellen Maria* would be ready for sea.

"But we won't get under way till well inter the night, for I'm not minded to let Cap'in Eph know we've left till he finds us gone in the mornin'," Captain Ben said, speaking now as the master of the schooner. "This breeze gives token of freshenin', an' we shan't be losin' much time by holdin' on till after dark. I reckon that I'll be called on to pay the five dollars I promised each man."

CHAPTER XXI

WINNING THE RACE

THE sudden change in the crew when it was known that the cruise was much the same as at an end, puzzled the stowaways not a little, and while the lads and the disabled cook were at dinner on this, the last day at the Banks, Sam said in a tone of bewilderment:

“I can’t guess what’s gone wrong. Now that we have much the same as beaten Captain Dodge, it seems as if all hands were so nearly tired out that they couldn’t finish the job.”

“I don’t jest get hold of your meanin’, lad,” Mr. Gunn replied, craning his neck in order to look through the deckhouse windows that he might have the evidence of his own senses as to whether the crew of the *Ellen Maria* really had abandoned the contest, and he added with a laugh, after a long survey of the deck, “Wa’al, now, my boy, don’t let a thing like that jar you. Because the men seem to be loafin’ at the work of dressin’-down, you get the idee that they’re tired out. They’re fresh enough to run trawls from now till midnight, an’ dance a jig afterwards, in case it

was needed; but, if you remember, Cap'in Ben allowed he wouldn't get under way till after dark, an' our folks are sogerin so's to pass the time an' yet have it seem as if there was plenty to be done. S'posen a dory from the *General* came 'round this way, an' our crew was loafin'? Then they'd know the *Ellen's* hold was full, an' away they'd go to give the news to Cap'in Eph, so's he could get under way with half a fare, countin' on makin' us believe he was chock a-block."

This explanation was sufficient to check Sam's fears, for it must be understood that he and his cousin were as eager the *Ellen Maria* should come out first in the contest as was the oldest shellback aboard, and, now that he had been given a hint, it was possible for him to detect the men in their pretense at working hard while in reality they idled about, bent only on prolonging the task until after sunset.

Then what a change there was when the night had come, and it was no longer possible that those on board the *General Grant* could make out, even with a strong glass, what was being done aboard the *Ellen Maria*! All hands set to with a will making ready for getting under way, and no one thought of supper until the schooner should be homeward bound.

Abraham Gunn and both the boys were on deck

when the main hatch was battened down, and as the stowaways heard Captain Ben give the word which headed the *Ellen Maria* for a home port, it can well be fancied how fervent a hymn of thanksgiving came from their hearts. The cruise had not been one of hardship, save as they had been deprived of the comforts of home, and they might have stowed away on a hundred different vessels without finding a captain and crew who would have treated them as kindly as they had been treated by Captain Ben and his men; but the memory of that mean thing which they had done caused bitter suffering of mind.

It is very likely the lads understood somewhat of that which had been done for them by the crew of the *Ellen Maria*, and that they realized how great was the debt of gratitude owing from them; yet all this was forgotten in the exceeding joy of knowing that, God willing, they would in a few hours be face to face with those whom, even while loving so dearly, they had wronged.

Captain Ben's prediction as to the weather was verified before sunset, for then the wind came over the sea with greater force, while the scudding clouds gave token that it would gather strength as the night grew older. When the *Ellen Maria's* wings were spread to the favoring breeze she darted off with a bone in her teeth as if, like the

boys from Philadelphia, she was eager to atone for what had been done.

It is not often that Captain Ben Babbidge will admit to having made a blunder, but he did so within five minutes after the *Ellen Maria* had started on her homeward way, by saying in a low tone to Moses Salter, who stood at the helm:

“ I’ve been a bit too brash, Moses. We ought’er laid low till midnight.”

“ Have they made us out? ” and the old sailor stooped to peer under the main boom at the *General Grant* lying two miles or more away.

“ They’ll be blind if they haven’t, an’ you can set it down as a solemn fact that Eph Dodge has had his eye skinned for us ever since the schooner gave token of havin’ a full fare aboard. I’ll boil my head if they don’t get under way inside of the next ten minutes, with all hands ready to swear she’s full to the hatches, when we know they haven’t taken in what she can carry by a good third.”

Moses Salter could not afford to gaze at the rival schooner many seconds, because it was necessary he should hold his own craft true to her course, and Mr. Gunn had just suggested to the stowaways that now was come the time for the crew to give undivided attention to the long de-

laid meal, when the silence was suddenly broken by Jimmy Brown, who shouted in a tone of anger:

“Look at the sneaks! They’re gettin’ under way, leavin’ all the trawls behind ’em, countin’ to make out she’s got a full fare!”

Even in the gloom it was possible to see that sail was being made on the *General Grant*, and the triumph of the men was drowned in anger because their rival was playing unfairly in the contest.

“Keep cool, boys,” Captain Ben said in a low tone, as if afraid Captain Dodge might hear him. “We’ve beaten ’em at fishin’, an’ we’ll soak the tar out of ’em at sailin’! I’ll agree never to smell the banks agin if we don’t lead ’em inter Portland by a good ten miles. Trim them head sails a bit, an’ I’ll show you what the *Ellen Maria* can do when she’s forced to it!”

Then Captain Ben took the wheel from Moses Salter, and Mr. Gunn said to his assistants:

“It’s all right now, lads, for we’ll hold every inch she makes while Ben Babbidge is at the helm. We’d best get the grub ready, an’ keep busy cookin’, for with a race on hand it’ll be a case of all hands on deck from now till we make fast to the dock. That skipper of ours is a driver, when it comes to a pinch like this, an’ he’ll crack on everythin’, blow high or blow low!”

Now it was that an air of suppressed excitement

was apparent throughout the schooner. Smarting under the knowledge that Captain Dodge was playing unfairly, every man aboard, even including the two from Shediac, would have been willing to give up his share of the catch rather than be beaten in the race, and it was not necessary the skipper should speak twice in order to have a command obeyed, for both "halves" remained on deck constantly, except during the brief time spent in eating or mugging-up hurriedly.

At midnight, when all save Captain Ben had satisfied their hunger, the stowaways crept on deck with difficulty to get an idea of what was being done in the way of winning the race, and that which they saw sent the hot blood tingling through every vein.

The wind had increased in force until to the lads from Philadelphia it seemed as if a full gale was raging, and yet the *Ellen Maria* carried every inch of canvas that could be spread, staggering under the weight of sail as if bent on tearing out her own spars. The sea was running high, and there were times, as the gallant little schooner stormed along, when it seemed as if she leaped directly from one mountain of water to another—as if she cleared the surface at every bound. Then, again, when the press of canvas forced her bow down, she plunged into the yeasty waters, flinging the spray

from stem to stern, heeling over to it until the lee rail was awash, and he who went fore or aft was obliged to cling like a monkey to whatsoever gave him a hand-hold, otherwise he would have gone overboard.

Captain Ben stood at the helm watching keenly every movement of the struggling vessel, easing up on her now, and again forcing her to take all the buffeting of the waves lest a single inch of the furious headway be wasted.

“Wa'al, what do you think of the *Ellen Maria* now?” Moses Salter asked as he came to the head of the companionway where the lads crouched, his oilskins dripping water from every fold, and glistening in the rays of the cabin lamps like cloth of gold.

“It's great!” Sam exclaimed with a long in-drawing of the breath. “It's great; but where is the *General Grant*?”

“Somewhere astern, I reckon; at least that's where she was when we saw her last. I ain't sayin' that she can't sail some, but Eph Dodge never had it in him to handle a craft at a time like this, as has Ben Babbidge. I'd put him agin any of the crack skippers that sail an ocean race, an' are puffed up to the skies by the newspapers, an' you'd see him work all 'round 'em. A master hand is Cap'in Ben, an' 'less somethin' carries away, we'll

be tied up at Leavitt's wharf before the *General* has made the Light Ship!"

The old sailor clawed his way forward in response to some suggestion from the captain, and the boys crept back to their bunk, wondering where Joe Babbidge might be during these exciting times.

When the stowaways were aroused next morning by Mr. Gunn, the *Ellen Maria* was still storming along as when they had turned in, and, quite naturally, their first question was as to what had happened while they slept.

"We're still holdin' our own, an' a leetle more," Abraham replied in a tone of satisfaction. "The *General* ain't in this race for a small minute—can't even be seen, an' unless Cap'in Eph has gone daft, he must 'a steered the same course we did. Say, what do you think of Joe's bein' sicker'n a hoss? Jimmy says he's rollin' all over the forepeak, or was the last time they had a chance to take off the hatch, swearin' that he couldn't live much longer."

"Joe sick?" Tommy repeated in astonishment. "I thought he was a regular sailor!"

"So he is, as much of a one as his lazy bones will allow; but that don't save him from bein' sick when his stomach is in jest the right trim. I've seen them as have lived on the banks all their lives, so to speak, give in now an' then same as he has."

"I'll go forward and see what he needs," Sam

said as he started toward the companionway, but Mr. Gunn stopped him by saying:

“ You may as well save yourself the trouble of crawlin’ forward, lad, ’cause to take off the forepeak hatch jest now would be the same as drownin’ him out. The *Ellen Maria* is duffin’ inter it considerably harder than when you turned in, an’ everythin’ is awash fore an’ aft. We’ll find him all right, an’ p’rhaps, a bit the better for havin’ his stomach turned over a few times, when there’s a chance to get at him.”

There was considerable work to be done on this morning, and however much the stowaways sympathized with Master Babbidge, it was necessary to leave him to his fate while they ministered to the wants of the crew, nor did they see him again until the race was ended and won.

When the *Ellen Maria* arrived off Portland Head, with no sign of the *General Grant* astern, Master Babbidge came aft looking pale and dispirited, as he asked humbly for a mug of coffee.

“ I’ve had an awful time,” he groaned as Sam supplied his wants. “ The forepeak hatch was under water ’bout all the time, an’ they couldn’t get at me; it seemed like I was goin’ to die! ”

“ But the *Ellen Maria* has won the race, Joe! ” Tommy cried excitedly, and Master Babbidge replied petulantly:

“ I don’t care if she has won a dozen of ’em! Give me another mug of coffee, an’ try to have some sense about yer. You can bet I don’t get another crowd of fellers ’board this schooner what’ll loaf ’round aft without tryin’ to lend me a hand when I’m most dead! ”

Then Master Babbidge crept into one of the vacant bunks, and the stowaways heard nothing more from him until the *Ellen Maria* was made fast to Leavitt’s Wharf, when Captain Ben, coming below for something to eat, said to the lads:

“ You boys have turned out to be considerable help, an’ I’d be right glad to have you with us another cruise; but I reckon you’ve had all the fishin’ you want this season. I dunno what we’d done, when Abe got used up, an’ we buckin’ Cap’in Eph, if it hadn’t been for you. Now you can see that I ain’t achin’ to be rid of yer; but it’s a sure case that we’ll be here at the dock two or three days, an’ I’m allowin’ you can’t get to Bar Harbor any too quick. There’s a train leaves in a leetle more’n two hours, so Moses says, an’ if so be you’re minded there’s nothin’ to stop you from goin’ on it.”

“ If we only could! ” the lads cried in the same breath, and then both suddenly fell silent, whereupon Captain Ben added:

“ I’ll see to buyin’ the tickets on the train,

'cause you've earned that much, an' a great deal more."

Five minutes later the stowaways were scrubbing themselves furiously, making ready for the journey, and Master Babbidge, who had crawled feebly out of the bunk when Mr. Gunn told him the lads from Philadelphia were about to set off for Bar Harbor, said with no little of scorn in his tones:

"Some time, if you fellers think you can treat me halfway decent, I'll get father to take you on another cruise, an' then——"

"Never mind about that part of it, Joe," Sam interrupted. "We've had all the fishing we want." But, two hours later, when the lads parted with Moses Salter at the railroad station, Master Chesley said, as if in addition to his remark to Joe:

"We're counting on seeing you all again before we go back to Philadelphia, Mr. Salter, and then we'll try to show how thankful we are for the kindness shown us aboard the *Ellen Maria*. Who knows but that we might make another cruise with you next year?"

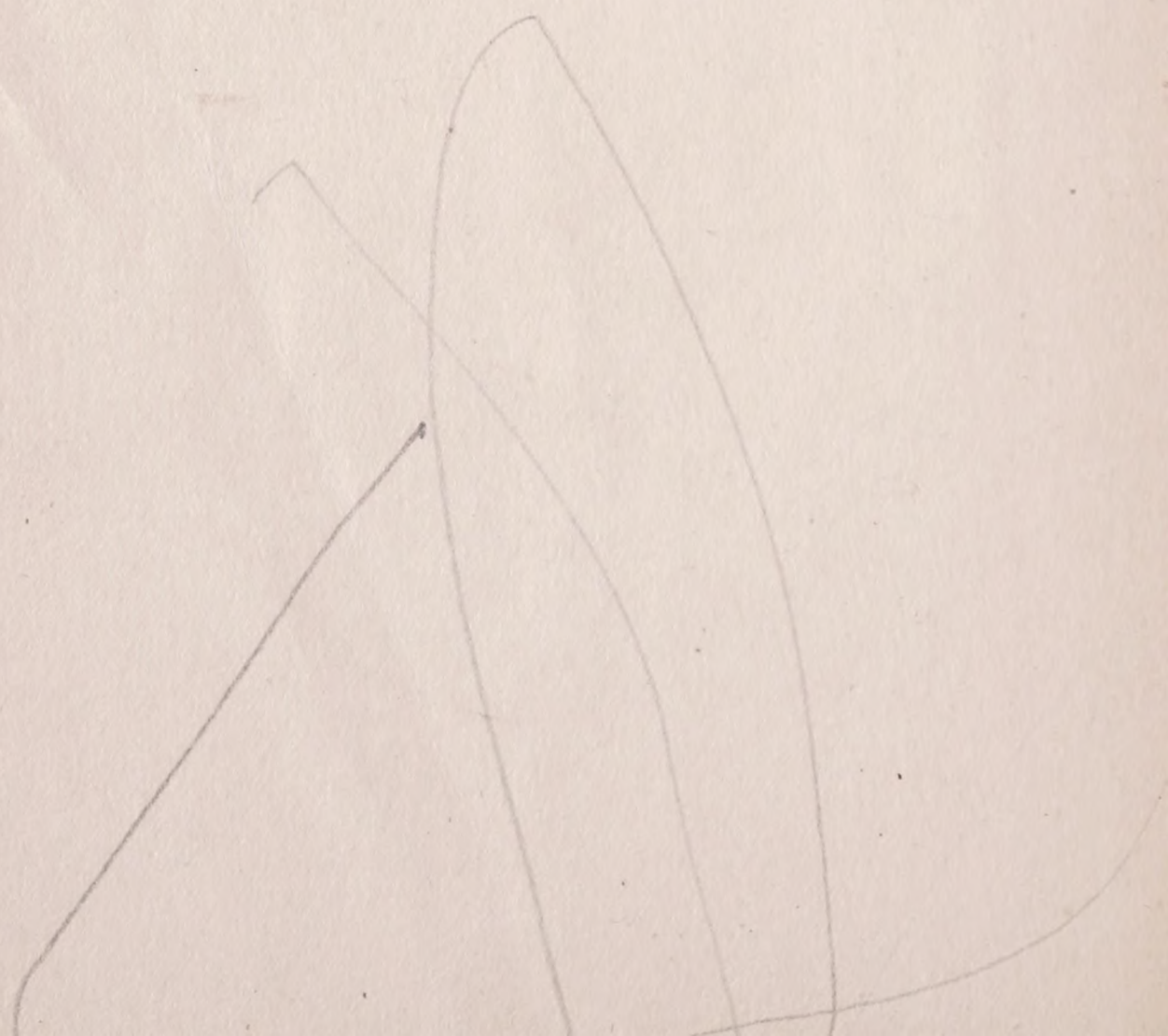
"If you come as decent lads should, with the knowledge an' consent of your folks, we'll be mighty glad to see yer, an' then you shall have a chance to do some fishin', instead of spendin' your time below. Be good boys from this out, an' re-

member that you've got to hustle lively if you count on payin' any part of the debt you owe your folks."

Then the train pulled out of the station, and the next time our stowaways saw Mr. Salter—well, perhaps it is not best to speak of that time now; but if those who have made the acquaintance of the stowaways aboard the *Ellen Maria* really want to hear how and when they next saw those with whom they had been shipmates during the contest with the *General Grant*, they may have the story for the asking.

THE END

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