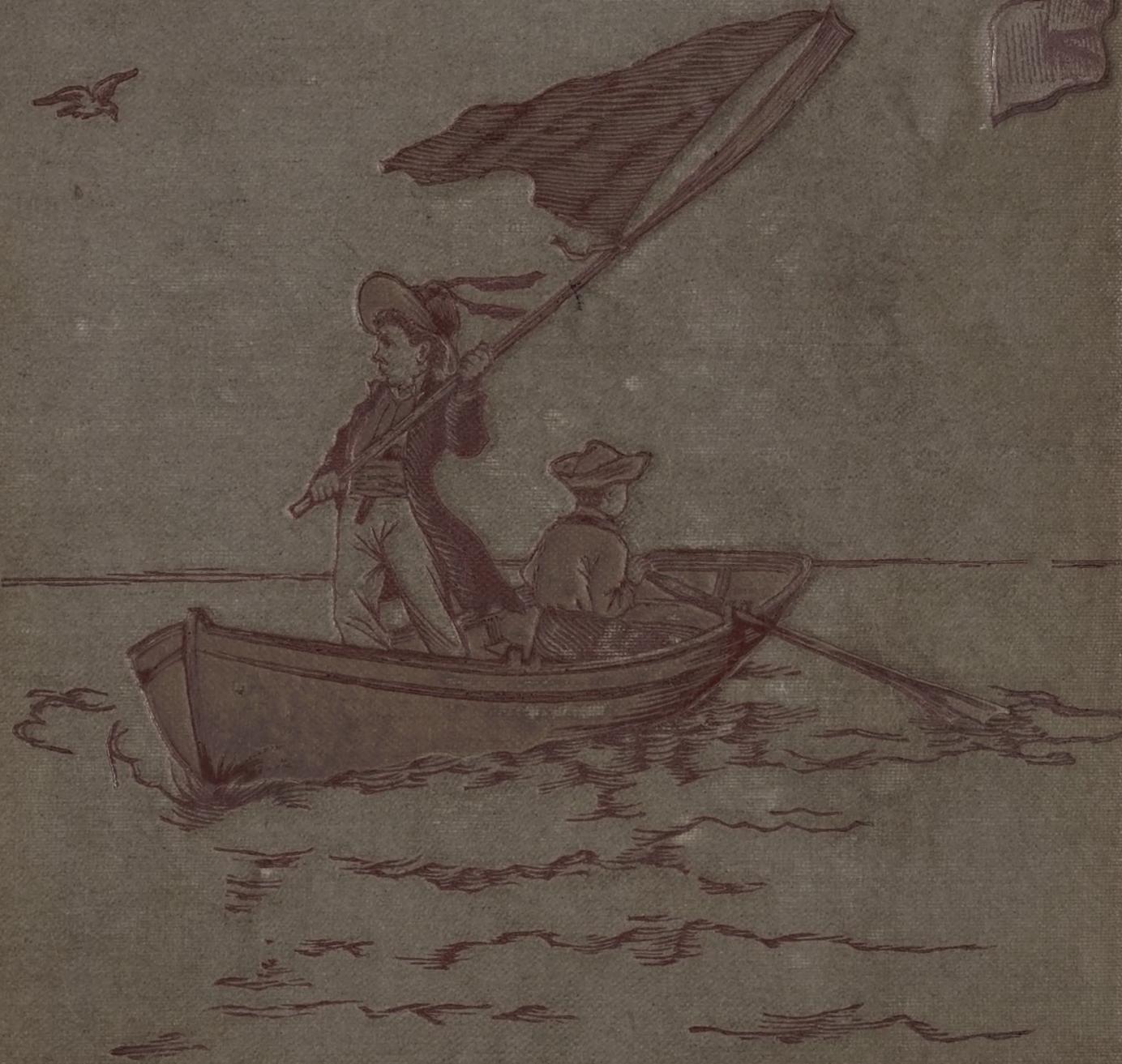


Raising The Pearl





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THOSE ON SHORE SET UP A LOUD SHOUT OF TRIUMPH.

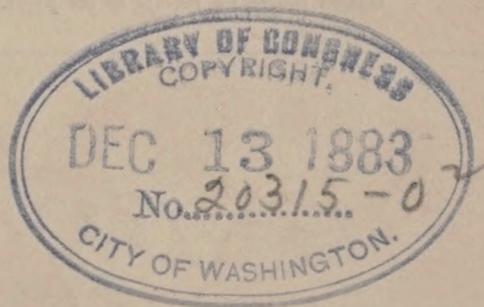
RAISING THE "PEARL"

By JAMES OTIS *Kaler*

AUTHOR OF

"TOBY TYLER" "MR. STUBBS'S BROTHER" "TIM AND TIP" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED



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RAISING THE "PEARL."

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN SAMMY'S OFFER.

“ 'D risk the chances of raising her if she was ours, and it wouldn't be such a very hard job, after all. She must be within ten feet of low-water mark, and the water there at ebb-tide can't be more than four feet deep.”

This remark was made by the eldest of three boys who were standing on the shore of Hillsboro' Bay, about half a mile from the little town of Tampa, in the State of Florida; and it referred to a small steam-yacht, the spars and smoke-stack of which were just visible above the surface of the water.

These boys, Darrell Evans, his brother Charley, and his cousin, Robert Hayes, were New York boys, who had been permitted to accompany Mr. and Mrs. Evans in the latter's

search for health, with the agreement that they should continue their studies while there as regularly as if they had remained at school.

Tampa had been selected by the physicians as the place where the invalid should spend the winter, and the boys on their arrival were greatly disappointed at finding that they were not on the coast, where they could realize their dreams of turtle-fishing and sponge-gathering.

On the second day after their arrival one of the boys of the town had told them of a famous little steam-yacht which Captain Sammy Basset owned, but which had been run on a rock, a short distance from the town, and sunk.

Captain Sammy, whom this boy represented as being a surly, ill-tempered old sea-captain, who had lost one leg by a pressing invitation from a shark, had not done anything toward raising his property from her watery resting-place, and had even been heard to say that she might lie there until she went to pieces, for all he cared about her.

Of course the boys were very anxious to see the craft, even though they could have no idea that they would ever own her, and on the first opportunity they visited the spot where she lay, regardless of the heat, which, even in November, was uncomfortable.

From what it was possible to see of the boat beneath the

water she was evidently not large, but appeared to be the exact size of their idea of a craft for their own sailing. It seemed a shame that so beautiful a boat should be left to go to pieces, more especially since the boy who had first given them information regarding her told them that the only injury she had sustained was a hole that had been stove in her bow.

"It's a shame to let such a handsome boat stay there, when a little work would make her as good as new;" and there was a very perceptible shade of envy in Charley's tones as he spoke.

"Don't you suppose we could buy her?"

"There is only one thing that would prevent us, Bobby, and that is the money," laughed Dare. "I don't think this party has got more than ten dollars in cash, and that amount wouldn't buy the paddle-boxes."

"Perhaps Captain Sammy would let us have her cheap, since he says he won't do anything toward raising her, and we might get father to buy her for us," suggested Charley; but he did not speak as if he had any very great belief in such a possibility.

"That boy who told us about her said that Captain Sammy was a regular old shark himself, so I guess there isn't very much chance that he would sell her unless we should pay him all she is worth;" and Dare shook his head

sadly at the thought that the owner of such a beautiful craft should be such an illiberal citizen.

The boys were so deeply engaged in conversation that they had not noticed the approach of a short, fat man, with a wooden leg, who was stumping along the beach at a furious rate, as if he was thoroughly angry with himself and every one around him.

"Now, then, what mischief are you boys up to? Thinking of burning my boat?" he growled, rather than said, as he reached the yacht-admiring group; and his presence there was so unexpected that the boys started as if they had really been meditating some act of mischief.

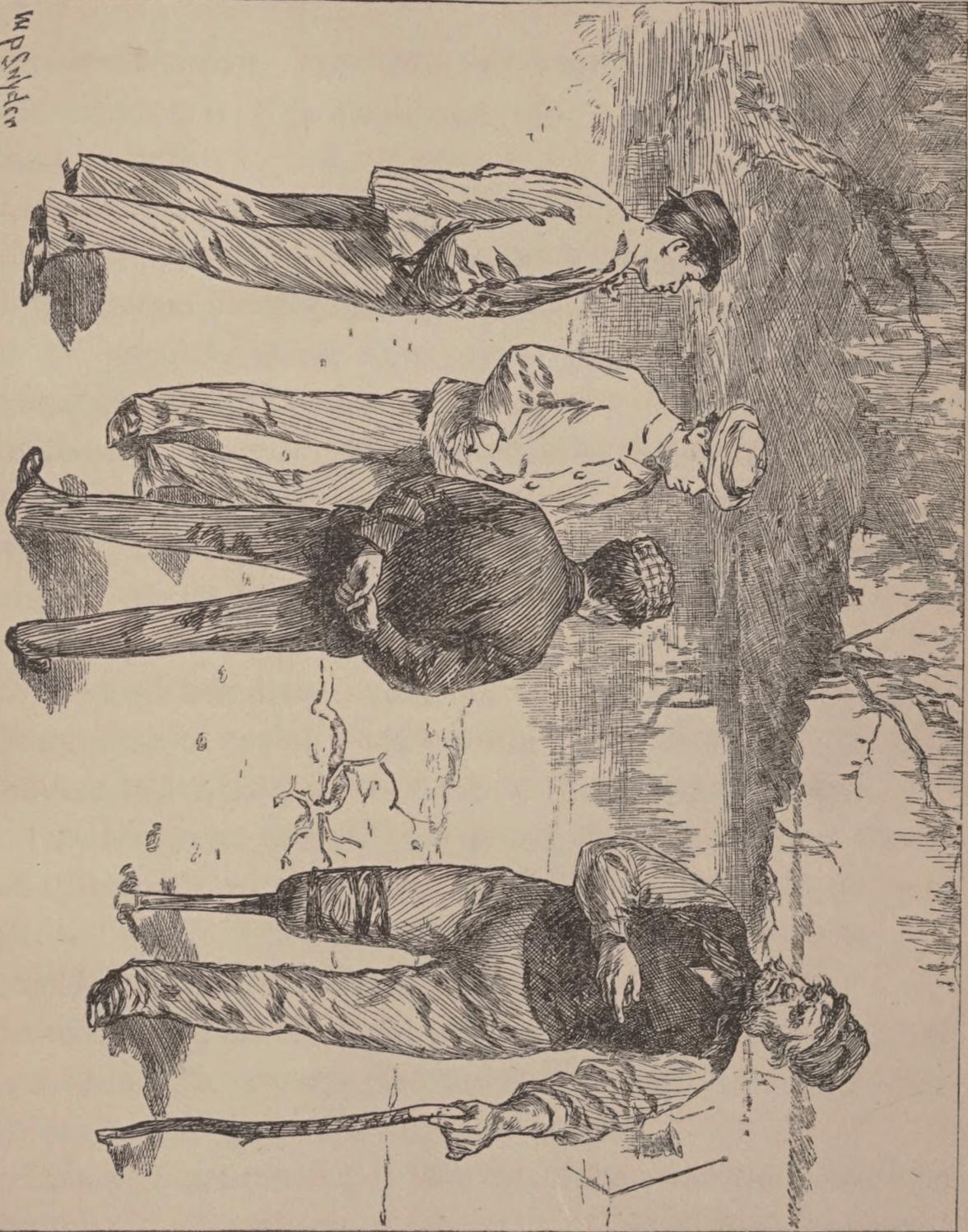
"Well, why don't you answer me?" he demanded, furiously, as the boys were still too much surprised by his appearance to speak. "Tell me what you're doing here;" and the little man jammed the wooden stick that served him as leg into the sand much as if he was trying to make a passage through which he could go when he was ready to take his departure.

"We came here to look at the yacht, sir," replied Dare, angry that the little man should speak in such a way, and conscious that they were doing no wrong. "We surely can't do any mischief to a sunken boat."

"I don't know about that," was the fierce reply, and the one-legged man began to grow red in the face, as if making

“NOW, THEN, WHAT MISCHIEF ARE YOU BOYS UP TO?”

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every exertion to keep his anger within bounds. "We'll see whether you could or not, after you tell me what you came here for."

"We came to look at the yacht."

"Well, what were you going to do then?"

"I'm sure I don't know, sir," replied Dare, with a smile, as he began to think that the greater portion of Captain Sammy's ferocity might be assumed.

The little man bored at the hole in the sand in an impatient way, and then asked, speaking each word with a jerk of the head, as if it was only by a muscular effort that he could utter it, "Well, now that you've seen the yacht, what are you goin' to do about it?"

"I don't suppose we can do anything about it," replied Dare, with a laugh; "but we can't help thinking that it is too bad to let such a nice boat lie there under the water."

"So you set yourself up to tell Captain Sammy Basset what he shall do, eh?" and the little man appeared to grow furious again. "If you think that craft ought to be floated, why don't you bear a hand and do it?"

"We'd be glad to if she was ours," said Charley, eagerly, as a sudden hope came to him that perhaps, after all, some bargain might be made with the owner.

"So you couldn't do it for the sake of helping any one else, eh?"

"Indeed we could and would, if you wanted us to," replied Dare, quickly, for he had no idea of being considered selfish even by this queer-acting stranger.

"Well, I don't want you to help me," snapped Captain Sammy, "and I suppose I can do as I want to with my own property, even if she does go to pieces. But I don't see why you boys should have come away out here just to look at a sunken boat, for even if she was afloat and ready to sail, you wouldn't know where to go with her, if she was yours."

"Indeed we should," said Charley, quickly; "we should sail straight for the Caloosahatchee River, and go through that into Lake Okeechobee, in order to get into the Everglades."

"What do you know about the Everglades, and why do you want to go there?" snarled Captain Sammy, at the same time seating himself on the sand, as if he intended the conversation should be a long one.

"We don't know very much about them, and perhaps that is the reason why we are so anxious to go. I have read that scientific men think the entire lower portion of the State was originally formed of coral reefs, and that in the Everglades the forms of the reefs can still be seen."

"And the hunting is so good there!"

"And the fish so plenty!" Charley and Bobby added, eagerly.

"I guess it is the hunting and fishing rather than any scientific question that causes you to want to go there!" and as Captain Sammy spoke he came very near smiling—an act so entirely out of keeping with his supposed character, that had any of the village boys seen it they might have been seriously alarmed.

Dare thought it best not to contradict the little man, for in his guessing he had come too near the truth to admit of any denial.

"Now, look here"—and Captain Sammy assumed a stern air again—"are you boys so foolish as to believe you could float that yacht if she belonged to you?"

"I believe we could," was Dare's decided answer. "I don't exactly know how we should go to work to do it; but I am sure that we could get it done in time."

"She is forty feet long."

"Larger boats than she have been raised from a greater depth."

"She is ten feet wide."

"Then it would be easier to raise her than if she was narrow."

"And she has a ten-horse-power engine on board."

"A good deal of that could be taken out at low water."

"Then her port bow is stove in, and in repairing that it will be necessary to put nearly a new bottom on."

"But one of the boys told us that she was flat, so it would not be such a hard job."

Captain Sammy looked at Dare a moment, as if he was angry with him for making light of all his objections, and then said, in a musing way, which raised Charley's hopes very high, "There couldn't be a better boat built to cruise around Florida in than that same little *Pearl* that lies under the water there. She can steam eight miles an hour, only draws fifteen inches of water, and can stand a pretty heavy sea, which is more than you can say for some larger craft."

"Is her name the *Pearl*?" asked Bobby, his eyes growing larger, and his desire to own such a boat growing more intense, as Captain Sammy spoke of the good points of the sunken steamer.

"The *Pearl*, of Tampa Bay," continued the little man. "I built her at odd jobs, thinking it would be handy to have a steam craft to run around in, for I own a good many turtling and sponging schooners, and have to run back and forth a good deal. But I found that there was nothing like the motion of a sailing craft, and when a greenhorn, who had borrowed the *Pearl*, sunk her there, I didn't care so very much."

"How much would you sell her for, just as she lies?" asked Dare, forgetting the remark he had made a short time before as to the finances of the party.

"I ain't trying to sell her," said Captain Sammy, with another show of anger; "and I haven't said I wanted to; but if you boys have got pluck enough to raise and repair her, you shall use her as long as you stay in Florida."

"Do you mean that?" asked Dare, in surprise; and Charley gave Bobby such a vigorously triumphant poke with his elbow as to make that young gentleman's ribs sore for some hours after.

"Of course I meant it, or else I shouldn't have said it. But mind what I say: if you don't do the work in ship-shape way I shall take a reef in my offer."

Not one of the three boys could overcome his surprise at the little captain's proposition in time to thank him for it, for as soon as he had spoken he arose and hobbled rapidly off, as if he feared they might attempt to detain him.

When he was some distance away he turned around and shouted, loudly,

"Remember that the job has got to be done properly, or I shall back out of the bargain, even if you have floated her;" and then he started off at full speed again, while the three boys appeared much as if they thought they had dreamed of instead of heard Captain Sammy's offer.

CHAPTER II.

THE AMATEUR PIRATE.



AFTER the boys recovered from the surprise into which Captain Sammy had plunged them they at once began to lay plans for the raising of the craft which had come into their possession so unexpectedly. The conversation soon assumed an argumentative tone, and it was nearly dark before they realized that they had spent the afternoon in almost useless talk, and yet had a walk of half a mile before they could get any supper.

For the twofold purpose of getting something to eat and to consult Mr. Evans on the best method of setting about the work they had so suddenly taken upon themselves, they started toward their boarding-house at full speed.

They were nearly home, when a small-sized boy with a very large-sized coat appeared from behind one of the buildings, making the most frantic signals to attract their attention. He presented such a comical appearance as he stood there, holding his large coat from actually flying out

on the breeze, that the boys would have stopped to listen to him, even though they had been in much more of a hurry than they were.

The stranger came toward them stealthily, as if he had an idea some one might try to prevent him, and when he was as near as he could get without actually touching them he said, in a most mysterious whisper,

"Come down to the beach in half an hour."

He made no attempt to say anything more, but as soon as he had delivered his message, or command, he darted back behind the building again so quickly that hardly anything could be seen save the fluttering of one ragged and patched coat-tail as its owner turned the corner.

It was too mysterious a summons to be disregarded. The supper was eaten hastily, Mr. Evans given a very brief account of Captain Sammy's proposition, and then the boys started at full speed for the beach, their curiosity to know what was wanted of them driving nearly all thought of the yacht out of their mind for the time being.

Had the large-coated boy been a traitor to both State and friends he could not have acted in a more mysterious manner than while he was delivering his message; and Bobby could almost feel his hat lifted from his head by his hair as it tried to stand on end, when he realized that they were hastening at the height of their speed to the

rendezvous where all sorts of horrible trials might be awaiting them.

Only the thought that his cousins would think him a coward prevented him from refusing then and there to move another step seaward, and he moved along a few paces in the rear of the others, feeling as if he were hastening to some horrible doom.

Prompt as they had been in obeying the summons, they found the mysterious stranger at the appointed place before them. He was standing in the shade cast by some mangrove-trees, and as soon as the three boys came in sight he started toward them, much as if he fancied each individual inhabitant of the town was on the alert to prevent him from keeping his appointment. He stepped lightly and cautiously, as if he feared the very sound of his footsteps might betray him, and glanced behind him every few moments to make sure he had not been followed.

His excessive precaution in a quiet town like Tampa increased Bobby's fears to an alarming degree, and he was obliged to exercise the full power of his will to prevent himself from running away.

As when he had met them earlier in the evening, it was not until he was so near to them that a whisper could be heard that the new-comer spoke, and then he asked, as he glanced suspiciously around,

"Did anybody know you was comin' here?"

"No one but my father and mother," replied Dare, wondering what all these precautions could mean; and Bobby was now more positive than ever that a plan was on foot to rob them.

"What made you tell them?" asked the boy, in an angry tone. "Now, just as likely as not they'll tell the rest of the folks, an' they'll come down here an' nab us."

"They won't tell any one," replied Dare, hesitatingly; "but if they should, why would any one trouble us?"

"Hush!" exclaimed the boy, warningly, as he crept cautiously around on his tiptoes, looking suspiciously at each shadow, as if he thought an enemy might be lurking near. Then, having examined the vicinity thoroughly, he beckoned them to come down nearer the water, where he crouched behind a small clump of bushes.

Now, Bobby would not have been frightened by this one boy; but from the manner in which he had spoken it seemed almost certain that there were others somewhere near, who would spring upon them at a given signal.

"Don't go," he said, as Dare and Charley started to follow their mysterious acquaintance. "There may be a whole crowd round here somewhere who will try to rob us."

"Now, don't be foolish, Bob. No one would try to rob us; and I want to know what this fellow has got to tell us."

Charley was quite as anxious as Dare was to solve this apparent mystery, and, very much against his will, Bobby was obliged to follow or be left behind alone.

"Get down here where nobody can see us," said the boy, as he crouched closer behind the bushes; "an' if you hear a lot of men comin', run jest as fast as you can."

"What for?" asked Charley, in surprise.

"What for?" repeated the boy. "Why, don't you know who I be?" and he spoke as if he felt greatly injured because they had not recognized him.

"I never saw you before," said Dare, looking at the boy more closely, thinking it just possible that he might have met him somewhere.

"I don't s'pose you ever did; but hain't you heard of me 'round Tampa yet? Didn't Cap'n Sammy tell you all about me?"

"No," replied the boys, in one breath, and Bobby forgot his suspicious fears in his desire to know what distinguished person they had among them.

"Then cross your throats that you won't tell nobody you was here with me," said the boy, sternly.

Dare was about to take the required oath, when he remembered that his mother would surely ask some questions about how they had spent the evening, and he said, quickly,

"We won't tell any one but mother, and she'll have to know all about it."

"Well! when I saw you fellers I thought you'd have more nerve than to run right to your mother with everything you know," said the boy, contemptuously.

Such sarcasm had very little effect on Dare. He was a boy who would never have thought for a moment of doing anything he could not tell his mother, and he had not the slightest desire to embark in any venture about which he could not talk freely with her. He considered her the truest friend and confidante a boy can ever have, and he said, quite sharply,

"I don't want you to tell me anything I can't tell my mother, and I'd have you know that it would take more of what you call 'nerve' for me not to run to her."

The boy was evidently abashed, and to cover his confusion he went through the form of scurrying around to see if any one was concealed near them. When he came back he said, in the lowest of whispers, which he tried to make sound as hoarse as possible, in order to give more effect,

"I'm Thomas Tucker!" Then he started back, as if he expected to hear an exclamation of surprise from his listeners.

But none was heard. The name sounded peaceful

enough, and they could not understand why so much caution had been used in telling it.

"Don't you know who I am now?"

"I never knew of any one by that name," said Dare, and the others declared that they were equally ignorant.

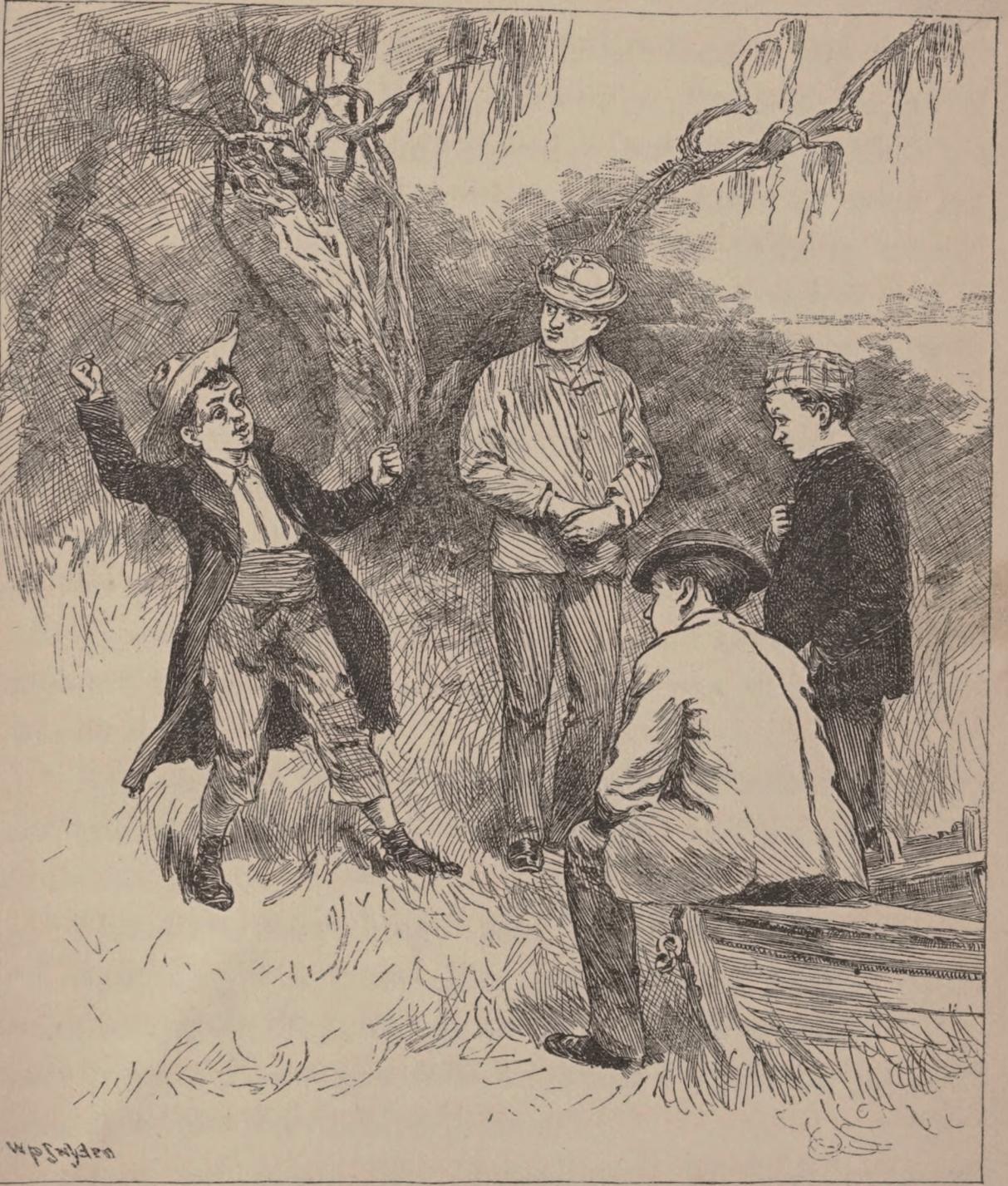
"Well, I don't see what the matter is. You can't have been 'round this town much if you never heard of me, an' I thought sure Cap'n Sammy would have told you; but I s'pose he didn't want to scare you at first;" and Master Tucker seemed to find a deal of consolation in the thought.

"Why, who are you?" asked Charley, impatient at the delay in learning who this evidently important though small and dirty person was.

"I'm a pirate!" and Master Tucker assumed a ferocious air as he gave this startling information; and then he added, confidentially, "That is, I shall be as soon as I get a crew an' a boat an' some pistols."

It was impossible for the boys to make any reply to this bold assertion; they were even at a loss to know what he meant.

"I'll tell you all about it," said the pirate Tommy, in the most friendly tone, and without the slightest tinge of blood-thirstiness about him. "I've turned a reg'lar pirate, an' I've got a black flag that I made out of a piece of mother's dress, an' the folks in this town know all about it,



“I’M THOMAS TUCKER !”

'cause I tried to get some of the fellers here to join me, an' they went an' told. Folks is awfully afraid of me, an' I don't s'pose Cap'n Sammy would go out in one of his boats after dark when I was 'round—not if he knew he could get six turtles for nothin'. That's why I had to be so careful when I asked you to come here to-night, 'cause if any of the folks thought I was shippin' a crew they'd be sure to come down here an' arrest us all."

Bobby looked around timidly, as if he expected to see at least a dozen officers of the law ready to pounce on him at once, and he bitterly regretted that he had thus put himself in the power of a regular pirate. Dare and Charley did not appear to be troubled in the least, and Bobby could not account for their unconcern, unless it was that the pirate was so small.

"But why did you tell us who you are?" asked Charley, not understanding why these disclosures had been made to them.

"That's the very thing," said Tommy Tucker, eagerly. "I want to get a crew—I've got one now, but he can't come out after dark, an' so he hain't much good—an' the very minute I saw you fellers I know'd you'd be jest the ones as would like to turn pirates."

It was not much of a compliment to their personal appearance; but Master Tucker did not appear to think

he had said anything out of the way, and he hastened to add,

"I heard that Captain Sammy had told you that you might have the *Pearl* if you could float her, an' I've had my eye on you since that, 'cause she'd make the best kind of a boat for a pirate, an' if you'll join me we shall have a boat an' a crew all at once. Of course I should be captain, but you fellers could be mates, an' Ikey Jones—that's the other feller—could be the crew. You see, the first thing that made me want to be a pirate was so I could serve Captain Sammy out. He thinks he's awful smart, he does, an' one day he took off his leg an' give me a whippin' 'cause I was tryin' to have a little fun with his turtles."

"Took off his leg!" repeated Bobby, forgetting the little captain's infirmity.

"His wooden one, you know; he can take it off awful quick when he wants to. Now, I jest want to catch him, an'—an'—well, I'll serve him out in some way. Now, say, will you join me?"

Aside from the wickedness of the business, neither of the boys had any desire to become pirates; for, even though it had not occurred to Tommy, they wisely concluded that it was not such a business as would flourish any length of time, more especially if Captain Sammy should come after them, with his leg in his hand.

"No, Tommy, we don't want to turn pirates," said Dare, thinking the matter too foolish and trifling to make much conversation about.

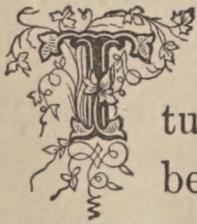
"You're reg'lar cowards, that's what's the matter with you!" shouted Master Tucker, angrily, as he retreated to what he considered would be a safe distance. "But you'll hear from me again, an' then you'll be sorry you didn't join me. Remember Thomas Tucker and his vengeance!"

Then the pirate with neither crew nor vessel disappeared in a stealthy way, as if the officers of the law were already on his track.

And the three boys did hear from Master Tucker again, although at the time they did not think there was a possibility that they should.

CHAPTER III.

OPEN PIRACY.



THE idea of a boy so small as Tommy Tucker turning pirate, in the belief that he could thereby better wreak his vengeance on Captain Sammy, was very funny to our three boys, as they walked home that night; and lengthy was the discussion as to how long he might continue his piratical career.

Mrs. Evans did not think Tommy was such a dangerous character as to make it necessary for her to inform the authorities of his whereabouts, and, greatly to Dare's relief, she promised to say nothing about the matter. But she did insist that the boys should not become friendly with him, unless it was to try to persuade him of the evil and folly of his ways.

Bobby was not in favor of acting as missionary to Master Tommy, for he was rather inclined to be afraid of him; but Dare promised to try to do the would-be pirate chieftain all the good he could, although he hardly thought he

could effect as much with his tongue as Captain Sammy could with his leg.

That night, after the question of Tommy's piracy had been discussed, the boys laid Captain Sammy's offer before Mr. Evans more in detail than they had done before supper, and, to their great delight, were told that they might suspend their studies during the time they were engaged in raising the *Pearl*, provided they gathered all possible information as to the supposed formation and history of the Everglades. Mrs. Evans also stipulated that they study, from such authorities as were obtainable, the cause and formation of the coral reefs which enframed the State of Florida in a net-work so dangerous to navigation.

Such study as that seemed but play, and they were perfectly willing to give the required promises.

On the following morning they were at the wreck of the *Pearl* nearly as soon as the sun had peeped over the trees at the quaint little town of Tampa; and they had brought their dinner with them, in order that they might not be obliged to waste any time in the walk to the hotel for something to eat.

As yet they had no idea how they were to go to work to raise the sunken steamer. Dare had asked his father to advise with them as to how they should proceed; but Mr. Evans had refused to have anything to say about the mat-

ter, alleging that, since Captain Sammy had made such an offer as he had, it was but right that they should work and plan unaided, for that was the price they were to pay for the use of the boat after she was afloat.

It was high-water when they arrived on the beach opposite the point where the *Pearl* lay submerged, and it seemed much more of a task to raise her than it had appeared when a portion of her upper works was visible.

Both Charley and Bobby looked upon Dare as the leader of the enterprise; therefore, instead of making any suggestions as to the work on hand, they looked to him for orders.

Dare was almost at a loss to know how they should set about their work, although he had spoken so confidently the day before; but he did not then care to acknowledge that fact fully.

"I don't exactly know how we are going to raise her," he said, after as long a delay as he dared to make, lest his companions should discover how entirely he was at a loss to know how to proceed; "but there is one thing sure, and that is, we must build some stout rafts, which we can anchor along-side of her."

As he said this a perfectly feasible plan for raising the boat presented itself, and he added,

"If we could make rafts large and stout enough, we

could get some chain-cables, pass them under the *Pearl* at low-water, and make them fast to the rafts. When the tide rises, of course the rafts would raise the steamer, and we could float her in nearer the shore, doing the same thing each day, until we got her where she would be wholly uncovered at low-water."

The plan seemed so simple that the other boys came to the conclusion that raising steamboats was the easiest thing in life, and the question of how large the rafts should be was being discussed, when Captain Sammy was seen stumping along the beach toward them.

"Well, boys, have you got the *Pearl* afloat yet?"

"We've hardly had time for that yet, sir," replied Dare; "but we shall do it."

Then Dare asked the little man what he thought of the plan he had just proposed, and was delighted at the hearty approval it met with.

"I have got some small chain-cables that will be just the thing, and you can go to my dock for them whenever you are ready for them. Of course the success of your plan depends more upon your raft than anything else, and if you'll row me over to that little island there I'll show you some trees that will make excellent timbers for the heavier portions, although, of course, it will take you some time to get them ready for use."

As he spoke Captain Sammy pointed to a small island, about two miles from where they were standing, and which appeared to be covered with a fine growth of heavy timber.

Dare's idea had been that they could buy some thick planks, which would make better rafts than any they could build of trunks of trees; but thinking Captain Sammy might have some reasons of his own for wanting to visit Dollar Island, as it was called, he agreed to the proposition, and all started for the little captain's boat.

Before Dollar Island was reached the boys found that Captain Sammy could be quite a tyrant when he was on the water, for he kept them pulling at the oars, while he sat in the stern-sheets and steered, much as if they were a crew which were obliged to serve him.

But it was not such a remarkably hard pull, after all, and when they stepped ashore on the beautiful little island they felt fully repaid for their work.

"Now, one of you stay by the boat, while the others come with me around the shore," said Captain Sammy, as he placed the luncheon the boys had brought with them carefully under the stern seat, and then started along the shore, leaving them to follow as they chose.

Bobby was anxious to be left as boat-keeper, a position which Dare and Charley were only too willing to accord

him; so they started off after the little captain, while Bobby curled himself up on the bank, where he could watch the boat and take his ease at the same time.

He had been on guard in this leisurely fashion more than an hour, when he was startled by a sound from among the trees just behind him, and at the same time saw a little round head, surmounted by a wonderful kind of cap, just moving out from behind the trunk of a tree.

"Who's that?" he asked, quickly.

"Captain Thomas Tucker," was the bold reply, in a very thin, squeaky voice, as the rather diminutive form of the pirate chieftain came into view, closely followed by another boy, of about the same size and appearance, whom Bobby concluded was the pirate crew, Ikey Jones.

Master Tucker still wore the long coat, but he had made several additions to it. On each shoulder was sewn a piece of yellow cloth, evidently intended as epaulettes; around his waist was a large piece of red flannel, tied as a sash, and in this was stuck a pistol, without a lock, and a small carving-knife. The cap was evidently the pirate's crowning glory; it had several strips of red and yellow cloth tied around it, with long ends hanging down on one side, while in the gay-colored folds were fastened several feathers, that gave a startling appearance to the whole costume.

The crew, as represented in the meek-looking person of Ikey Jones, wore no distinguishing marks of a sanguinary calling save a leathern belt around the waist, in which was placed a not very dangerous-looking table-knife.

Now, Bobby was rather a coward, more especially when he was alone, and the appearance of these two avowed pirates, when he thought his party were the only ones on the island, rather frightened him.

"Where's the old heathen gone?" asked Master Tucker, as sternly as his thin voice would permit.

"Who?" asked Bobby, in surprise.

"The old heathen—Captain Sammy."

"He's somewhere along the shore, with Dare and Charley. How did you get here?"

"Took an old boat that would just hold together, an' started after you did."

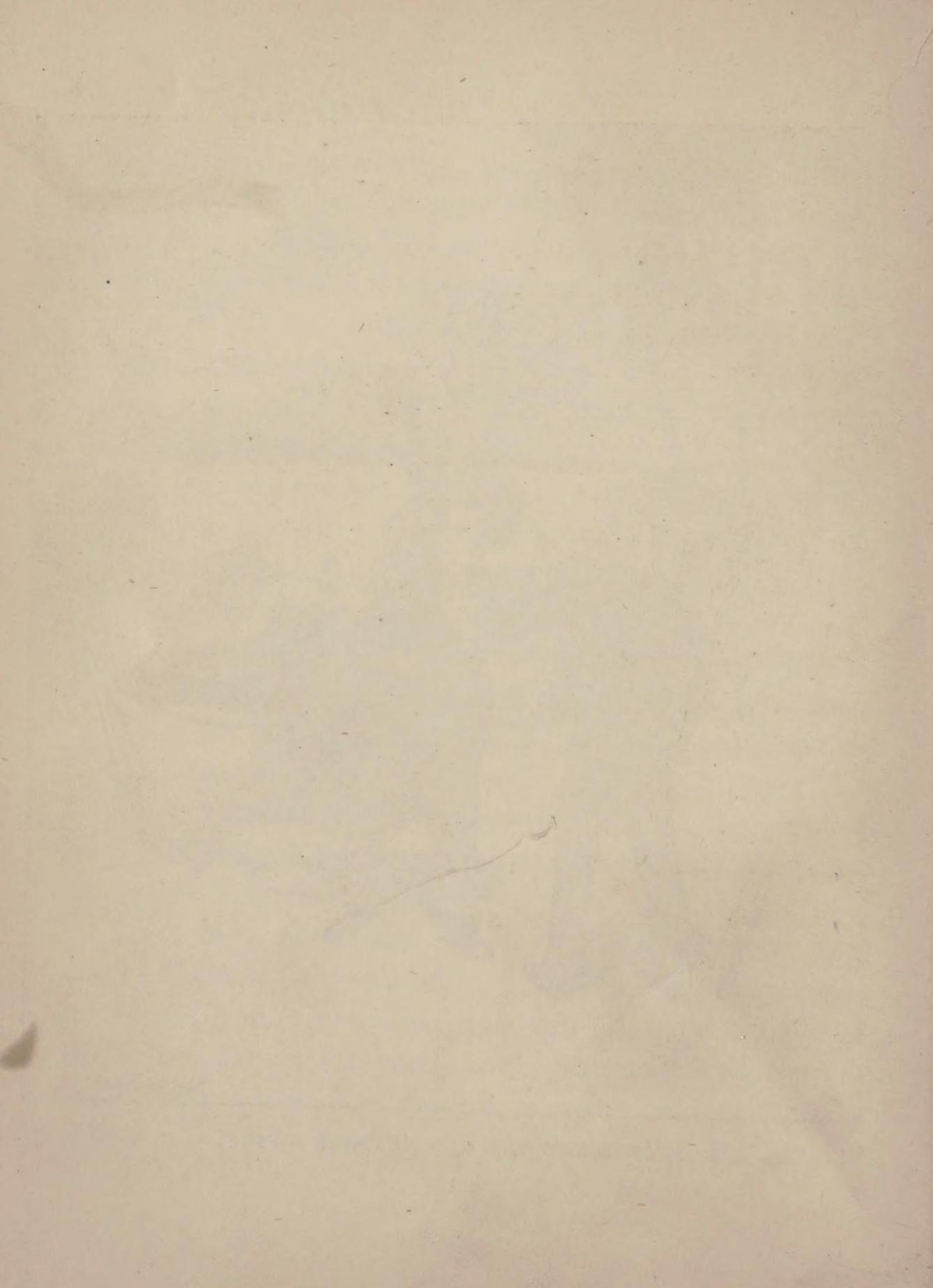
Bobby trembled with apprehension, for if the piratical crew had followed them so closely they must have had some sinister motive.

"Look here, now," said Tommy, as he and Ikey went toward Captain Sammy's boat: "here's me an' Ikey Jones, an' there's you. Now, that's enough to make a little pirate's crew, if you say you'll come with us. You shall be the mate, an' boss Ikey 'round as much as you want to. Will you do it?" And Tommy began to push the boat off,



W. J. W. W.

“WHERE’S THE OLD HEATHEN GONE?”



as though there was no question but that Bobby would accept the offer.

"No, I won't; and you mustn't touch the boat, or Captain Sammy will be angry," said Bob. But his courage was not sufficient to admit of his going down to the boat and pulling her up on to the beach again.

"I'll tell you what I'll do if you'll come," said Master Tucker, persuasively, having now launched the boat until she was held only by the anchor-rope. "Ikey has to go home every night at seven o'clock, an' I'll let you go too, so's you won't get into any trouble with your aunt."

This idea of being a pirate by day and a peaceful citizen by night was a new phase of life to Bobby, but yet he was not pleased with it.

"I tell you I don't want to be a pirate," he repeated; "and you must pull the boat up again, for Captain Sammy will be here pretty soon."

Tommy glanced over his shoulder quickly to assure himself that the little man was not in sight, and then he said, sternly, while Ikey Jones got behind him, in order to be safe in case Bobby should be made angry,

"There's no use talkin', for I'm a reg'lar pirate now, an' you don't want to fool 'round much with me. I come here to get this boat, an' to have you fellers join me; but

if you won't, I'll take the boat anyhow, an' I'll serve you out awful if you try to stop me."

"But it's stealing to take her, and we can't get home again if we don't have her."

"I can't help that, for I'm a pirate," was the brief reply of Master Tucker, as he motioned his crew to get on board, and then giving the boat a vigorous push, he jumped into her, and the pirates were afloat.

It was not until the little craft was at such a distance from the shore that it was impossible to get at her that Bobby had sufficiently recovered from his fear and surprise to run down to the beach. There he called, imploringly,

"Come back, Tommy! come back, an' don't be so mean as to steal Captain Sammy's boat!"

Tommy paid no attention to the appeal. He had come out that morning all equipped for his piratical work, and he proceeded to business at once.

He took from his pocket the symbol of his new calling—the horrible black flag, which had been made from pieces of a dress of his mother's. The material, which was about one yard long and half as wide, had originally been black, but was now a sort of dingy green. In the centre was what had probably been intended for a skull and cross-bones made of white cloth, but which really looked like an unskilfully made Jack-o'-lantern with the face chalked.

This terrible symbol of death Master Tucker tied to one of the oars, and planted it firmly in the bow of the boat, where it hung as innocently as ever it did on Mrs. Tucker's person.

Then, seating himself in the stern-sheets, with the tiller-ropes in his hands, the newly-fledged pirate gave the order for his crew to pull at the oars, and the piratical craft slowly left the island, while Bobby stood on the beach in a state of agitation not easily to be described.

CHAPTER IV.

ON DOLLAR ISLAND.



WHEN Bobby stood watching Tommy Tucker and Ikey Jones as they sailed slowly away, he realized that it was no longer possible for him to leave the island until some boat should pass that way, or come directly to their assistance.

Bad as such a position was, Bobby did not look at it as the worst of his troubles. He had yet to meet Captain Sammy, and explain what he, who had been left in charge, was doing when the pirates stole the boat. This he considered was trouble by the side of which being obliged to remain on the island any number of days was absolute pleasure.

Bobby knew that he ought to have resisted with force any attempt to take the boat, and he feared that Captain Sammy, in the absence of the real culprits, might wreak some signal vengeance on himself.

He continued to run back and forth on the beach, imploring Tommy to return, but making no attempt to warn the

others of the evil that had been wrought, for Captain Sammy's coming was worse, he thought, than Tommy's going.

But Bobby was not left long in uncertainty as to what the little man might say or do, for while he was still intent on trying to persuade the runaways to return, he heard a most unwelcome and gruff voice from the thicket behind him,

"Halloo! What's in the wind now? What are you kicking up such a row about?"

For a moment the unhappy boy could make no answer, and while he thus hesitated the little captain came into view, where he stood looking in surprise at Bobby, not observing the theft of his boat.

"What's the matter with you? What are you yelling so about?" he asked, impatiently.

"They've gone! they've gone!" cried Bobby, pointing to the boat, whose occupants were now making every exertion to get away even from the sound of the one-legged man's voice. Tommy had laid aside his dignity of captain for the time being, and was tugging away at one of the oars as if he feared pursuit, even though he knew it was impossible.

Captain Sammy gazed out over the water, shading his eyes with his hand, as if it was difficult for him to believe that he was not deceived, and then he looked down at the

place where his boat should have been, too much surprised even for words.

Dare and Charley had come up beside him, and they too were at a loss to understand it all.

"It's Tommy Tucker; he's taken the boat," cried Bobby, growing more frightened at this unaccountable silence on the part of the captain. "They've stolen her, an' gone off to be pirates!"

"Come back here, you rascals! come back here!" shouted Captain Sammy, as he realized all that had been done; and then, with a quick, angry movement, he unfastened his wooden leg, and stood with it in his hand, as if deliberating whether or not he should throw it at them. "Come back here, or I'll break every bone in your bodies!"

The boys in the boat made no reply, but bent all their energies at the oars, until Tommy, in his eagerness, dipped too deep, "caught a crab," and fell over backward in the bottom of the boat, a confused mass of gorgeous piratical uniform and frightened boy.

Dare and Charley ran down on the beach, as if they thought they might do some good by thus getting nearer the runaways; while Captain Sammy, without stopping to think that he still held his leg in his hand, attempted to do the same thing.

Of course there could be but one ending to such a start; and when the angry and forgetful little man attempted to step on the leg that was no longer in its accustomed place he very nearly turned a somersault, and came rolling down on the beach, very much to his own discomfiture, and frightening Bobby almost out of what few senses still remained to him.

Captain Sammy choked and sneezed, because of the sand that had gone down his throat and up into his nose, while Dare and Charley had considerable trouble to keep from laughing at the comical appearance he presented.

This accident did not lessen Captain Sammy's anger, and when at last he succeeded in standing on his one foot he was in a fine state of rage. He began to realize that he could effect nothing by holding his wooden leg in his hand, while he might work himself farther injury if it was not placed where it belonged; so he adjusted it at once.

"How did it happen? how did they get her?" he demanded, furiously, as he turned to Bobby with a threatening gesture.

Although Bobby was not a brave boy he could never be accused of lying, even when the truth was as much against him as it was in this case, and, with considerable hesitation and evident shame, he related the events as they had occurred.

"Why didn't you stop them? Why didn't you chew 'em all up?" demanded Captain Sammy, furiously.

Bobby thought it was absurd in the captain to talk about his chewing two pirates up, and he replied, almost piteously,

"I couldn't; there were two of them, and they said they'd serve me out if I tried to stop them."

"Serve you out!" sneered Captain Sammy. "Why, they couldn't have done anything if you'd only dared to go up an' knock their heads together."

There was a difference of opinion between Bobby and the captain as to what Tommy and Ikey could have done; but, as Bobby thought it would be useless to attempt to make the angry man view the matter in the same light he did, he remained silent.

"How did they get over here?" asked the little man, after he had relieved his mind somewhat by shaking his fist savagely at the retreating pirates.

Then Bobby told what Tommy had said about coming over in an old boat, and Captain Sammy started around the beach to find her, filled with the hope that she might serve as a means of pursuit. But one glance at the boat, after they had found her, was sufficient to show that nothing could be done with her. She was so old and worm-eaten that it was a wonder she had held together long



“WHY DIDN'T YOU CHEW 'EM ALL UP?”

enough to bring the boys over. The Wise Men of Gotham who went to sea in a bowl had a more staunch craft than she was.

Captain Sammy surveyed her in silence for some time, and then said, emphatically,

"Well, this *is* a nice kettle of fish, an' no mistake!"

"How are we going to get home?" asked Dare, thinking of the anxiety his mother would suffer if they were not with her by night.

"That's jest it! that's jest it!" cried Captain Sammy, again giving way to his anger. "Oh, how I wish I had hold of them precious villains for a little while! They'd wish they really was pirates. I'll tell you how we're goin' to get home. We're goin' to stay here till somebody comes along an' takes us off; an' we may be here a week, for the matter of that, for nobody would understand any signals we could make from here. It's worse than a regular shipwreck."

For some time the party stood in silent despondency, the boys thinking of the fears which would beset Mr. and Mrs. Evans at their absence, and Captain Sammy wondering if sleeping in the open air would not be sure to bring on an attack of his old enemy the rheumatism.

"It won't do any good to set here," said the little man at length, speaking in a more cheerful tone. "We're here

for a while, anyhow, an' we might as well make the best of it. How are we off for provisions?"

There was no need for any one to reply to the question, for the moment it was asked each one knew that the only things they had taken out of the boat on their arrival were the axes, and the pirates had not only captured a boat, but they had gotten one that was provisioned for several hours at least.

"Well, we shall have to suck our thumbs for a while, at any rate," said the little captain, as if he had resolved to bear his troubles as philosophically as possible. "We will build up a fire, in the hope that some one in Tampa may see the smoke an' come over here to find out the meaning of it. And, since you boys came here for timber for your rafts, the best thing you can do is to go to work felling it. The work will keep you contented, and you won't be wasting your time."

Bobby, who should have done something toward preventing the misfortune that had come upon them, was charged with the work of building the fire-signal and keeping it going, while Dare and Charley started about what was really the preliminary work of raising the *Pearl*.

It was then hardly more than ten o'clock, and they had quite a long day before them in which to work, even if they were prisoners on an uninhabited island.

All hands went to work with a will, and while Dare and Charley were blistering their hands in their efforts to hew down the largest trees, Captain Sammy busied himself with gathering the tiny oysters that were fastened to the rocks just below the surface of the water.

These little shell-fish were very acceptable to the boys, who had grown hungry the moment they knew their food had been carried away, and, thanks to the lunch the little man brought them, they were able to keep at their work all the more closely.

Captain Sammy had a small canteen of water with him when he left the boat, and the contents of this he doled out very sparingly, but in such quantities that they were not actually suffering with thirst.

By six o'clock the boys had felled and trimmed of their branches ten trees—a sufficient number, in Captain Sammy's opinion, to form the heavier portion of the rafts they wanted to build—and then it was time to make some arrangements for a place to sleep that night, since it was hardly probable any one would come to their rescue before the next day.

Bobby had kept the signal-fire burning all day, and after some consultation it was decided that they should use the level piece of ground just back of it as their camping-place.

The little captain had had no voice in the selection of the camp, for after he had given the boys all the oysters they wanted for dinner he seemed to have forgotten his philosophical ideas, and had relapsed into a moody silence.

It was after Dare and Charley had decided upon the camping-ground that they went to the point of reef on which Captain Sammy was sitting, enveloped in a cloud of tobacco-smoke.

"We think we had better camp for the night near the fire, sir," said Dare, "and if you have no objections we will put up some kind of a shelter."

"It don't make much difference where we lay, my lad," said the little man, without looking up. "I'll be sure to have the rheumatiz anyhow, an' it's no odds to me whether it comes when I'm layin' on the ground or settin' here by the water. But I'll show that Tucker boy what a pirate is when I get hold of him."

CHAPTER V.

SEA-URCHINS.



HE labor of putting up a shelter for the night was not hard, since all that was necessary to do was to pile up against two trees the branches they had hewn off in finishing their timber.

After this was done the question of supper presented itself; and since Captain Sammy showed no disposition to do anything about gathering more oysters, the boys started out to do it for themselves.

Bobby had an idea that in order to gather oysters successfully he should wade into the water after them, instead of reaching down from the top of the rocks, as he had seen Captain Sammy do, and his shoes and stockings were off in a twinkling, while his trousers were rolled up as far as possible.

His example was closely followed by Charley; but Dare, who was doubtful as to whether such a proceeding was wise or not, concluded that it was safest to try first for their supper as the little captain had done.

Both Charley and Bobby plunged into the water when they came to the line of reef from which they expected to find the food, while Dare crept along the top of the rocks.

Bobby had taken but a few steps in the desired direction, and was congratulating himself upon having been more wise than Dare, when suddenly he gave vent to a scream that was almost blood-curdling, while his face exhibited signs of the most intense fear.

"What is it? What is the matter?" cried Dare, as he jumped into the water, regardless of the fact that he was not prepared for such immersion, and ran toward the apparently suffering boy.

Bobby paid no attention to his questions, but continued to scream, while he held up first one foot and then the other, thus showing that they were in some way connected with his pain or terror.

"It's a shark! It must be a shark!" cried Charley, now stepping around in the greatest excitement, but attempting neither to aid Bobby or to gain the shore.

At the suggestion that it was a shark Bobby redoubled his efforts at screaming with such success that the din was almost deafening.

Dare tried in vain to quiet Bobby sufficiently to learn what the matter was; but finding that an almost impossible task while Charley was doing so much to add to the excite-

ment, he said to his screaming brother, in tones that were not exactly mild,

"Now see here, Charley: you are not hurt, and I want you to stop your noise. See if you can hold your tongue long enough to help me get Bob ashore."

It seemed as if Charley had just realized that he was not injured in any way, for he ceased his screams almost as soon as Dare spoke, and, like the sensible boy he usually was, at once commenced to do what he could in aid of his cousin.

When the two boys waded up to where Bobby was standing he had for the moment stopped screaming, and was about to tell what had caused the outcry. But he was interrupted by Charley, who now also commenced to scream loudly, this time from pain rather than fear, and going through the same peculiar motions with his feet that Bobby had been indulging in.

Dare stood for several seconds as if he was paralyzed by the noise, and he was as thoroughly mystified and surprised a boy as ever visited the Florida coast.

"What is the matter?" he cried, forgetting that he was in the water above his knees, and trying to stamp his foot in order to command attention. "Tell me what the matter is, or I shall think you are both crazy."

Charley paid no attention to the question. He managed

to stagger to the projecting reef, across which he leaned, kicking his heels high up in the air, as if only in that position could he find relief.

That Charley was in the same predicament he was helped to restore Bobby to one or two of the five senses he appeared to have been frightened out of, and he started, in a very painful way, for the shore, saying, as he did so,

"We've been bitten by something. It must have been a scorpion, I am sure, and just as likely as not we are poisoned."

"Don't be so foolish," cried Dare, impatiently. "You're old enough to know that scorpions don't live in the water;" and then he added, for he was really afraid they might have been bitten by some poisonous reptile, although he did not want them to know of his fears, "Even if a scorpion had bitten you it wouldn't kill you."

By this time Bobby had gotten high up on the beach, and was examining the sole of one of his feet, which was bleeding considerably.

"Tell me how it felt," asked Dare, nervous and anxious to learn as nearly as possible just what had caused the trouble, for the sight of Bobby's bleeding foot added to his fears.

"All I know about it," sobbed Bob, as he wiped away the blood and sand with the sleeve of his shirt—for his handkerchief was in his coat-pocket, tucked snugly away

in one corner of the camp—"is that when I went to step, after I got out where the water was over my knees, I felt something sting me."

"What's the matter now? Who's killed? Have more pirates come?"

It was Captain Sammy who asked the question. The outcry had broken in upon his smoky reverie, and he had hobbled along the beach at such a rapid pace that his usually red face was now almost crimson, while the perspiration was running down his neck in small streams.

"Bobby and Charley waded in to get some oysters, and something stung them," explained Dare, feeling relieved that Captain Sammy was there to take some of the responsibility from him.

"Stung, eh?" said the little man, as he carefully adjusted his spectacles and examined Bobby's foot with the air of a physician.

What he saw did not appear to frighten him very much, for he took out his knife very deliberately, and, after some little cutting of the flesh, which caused Bobby to scream again, he drew out of the foot a long, dark-greenish splinter, which he held up laughingly.

"They've stepped on some sea-urchins, that's all; and the next time they wade around this coast they had better keep their shoes on."

Great was the relief of all three of the boys at knowing that the matter was no worse; but the faces of the two sufferers clouded again very quickly as Captain Sammy went to work with his knife, and they knew each of the spines of the sea-urchins must be dug out.

Owing to the fact that his eyesight was not very keen Captain Sammy was not remarkably quick about his work, and more than once had Bobby cried aloud and pulled his foot back from the detaining grasp, but all without troubling the little sailor in the least.

He continued at his work until he had extracted thirteen of the needle-like spines from the feet of the two boys; and then, after advising them to bandage the injured members with their handkerchiefs, rather than try to put on their shoes, he hobbled back to his perch on the rocks, to resume his pipe and vengeful dreams of Tommy Tucker.

There were no farther thoughts of oysters after the surgical operations were ended, and, in fact, it seemed as if the fright and pain had quieted their hunger so far that they no longer thought of it.

With Dare's assistance Charley and Bobby limped back to the rude brush camp, and there they lay, with feet smarting with pain, thinking over the same subject that was occupying Captain Sammy's attention — the pirates and their work.



W. P. G. H. A. E. N.

“THEY’VE STEPPED ON SOME SEA-URCHINS, THAT’S ALL.”

Dare, from whose clothing the water was trickling in little streams, had commenced to undress, for the purpose of hanging his clothes before the fire, when Captain Sammy shouted from his rocky perch,

"Here! what *are* you goin' to do now?"

"Going to dry my clothes," replied Dare, still continuing his work.

"Stop it!" roared the little man, energetically, as he hobbled toward the camp. "It would be worse than wading into the water barefoot to undress here."

"Why?" asked Dare, in surprise. "My clothes are soaked with water, and I don't see any reason why I shouldn't dry them."

"You'd see and feel mor'n ten thousand reasons why you shouldn't as soon as you were undressed. Haven't you been complaining of the mosquitoes all day? They are active little fellows down here in Florida, especially just at nightfall, and I had rather step on two sea-urchins than to give them a chance at my naked body."

There was no need for the captain to say any more; Dare realized at once the trouble he would have been in had he done as he proposed, and he contented himself with wringing the water from his coat and vest, and squeezing it from his trousers-legs as best he could, sitting as near as possible to the fire, in order to dry them.

When the sun set, and the shadows began to lengthen, the wind came up from the sea, causing the fire to roar and crackle in a cheerful way that had a soothing effect upon the one-legged man.

The warmth was grateful to all; and the smoke, which was now driven closer to the ground, served to keep the mosquitoes away to a certain extent; and in case anything should have been learned of their misfortunes, by those on shore, the flames would serve as a beacon.

"Now make yourselves just as comfortable as you can," said Captain Sammy, as he seated himself so near the blaze that he ran great danger of setting his wooden leg on fire, in order that he might ward off the expected attack of rheumatism. "It ain't any kind of use to grumble at what you can't help, an' you might as well have a good time as to sit mopin' 'round."

This was good advice; but it sounded rather strange, coming as it did from the one who had been doing all the grumbling, while the boys had really made the best of the adventure.

From the first moment Dare had seen the little captain, with his wooden leg, he was sure that he had a perfect fund of stories from which he might draw without fear of exhausting it, and he thought the time might be pleasantly occupied in listening to them.

"Can't you tell us some stories, sir?" he asked, both fearing and hoping that the request would call forth one of those fits of scolding for which Captain Sammy was famous, and out of which the desired stories would finally come.

"Stories!" growled the little man. "Do you s'pose I went to sea jest for the sake of gettin' a lot of stories to tell to boys who have got me in such a scrape as you have?"

"No, sir," replied Dare, thinking the latter portion of the captain's speech had especial reference to Bobby. "But you would have had the adventures, whatever you might have gone to sea for; and now that we are here, and where we can't get away, we would like very much to hear of them."

It seemed as if Captain Sammy was about to accede to the request, for he reseated himself in a more comfortable position, and gazed out over the water, as if he expected from there would come memories which would aid him in the task.

Dare, who was watching him closely, saw his face suddenly light up, and felt certain that thoughts of some pleasant episode in his life had come to the little man. But just when he expected to hear him commence a story Captain Sammy jumped to his feet, and cried, joyfully,

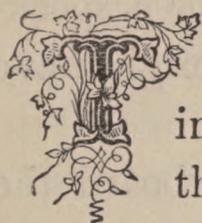
Raising the "Pearl."

"Here's a boat now! Those little rascals must have told where we were, and some one has come for us!"

Then he stood gazing out over the water with as much anxiety as if he were a shipwrecked sailor who had been waiting months in the hitherto vain hope of seeing a friendly sail.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WRECK.



HE boys were obliged to look several moments in the direction Captain Sammy pointed before they could distinguish anything that had the slightest semblance to a boat, and then they saw indistinctly, in the fast-gathering darkness, a small, white cloud on the water that grew to look more and more like a sail.

Captain Sammy seemed almost beside himself with joy, for in this approaching craft he saw the means of escaping from the necessity of giving an invitation to his old enemy the rheumatism, which invitation he felt he should surely give if he slept in the open air all night.

But the boys looked at this boat, which was coming along so merrily under the influence of the strong sea-breeze, with far different thoughts. They had counted on this enforced camping-out as an adventure which could be told their friends at home as having some tinge of danger in it; but to be rescued before nine o'clock in the evening made of it an exceedingly tame affair.

On came the little boat, thus viewed with such opposite feelings by age and youth, until she could be quite clearly distinguished, although the white sail hid those on board from the view of those on the island.

They could almost hear the water ripple around her bow, and Captain Sammy could restrain himself no longer.

"Boat ahoy!" he shouted, using both hands for a speaking-trumpet, and making such exertions that he might have been heard half a mile away.

There was no answering hail from those on board the little craft; and while Captain Sammy was wondering why no reply came the boat luffed up into the wind, presenting to the watchers only the bellying sail and the bow.

"Why—why," stammered Captain Sammy, in surprise—"why, that's my boat!"

The boys thought this rather a rash assertion for the little man to make, since it was impossible to distinguish her with sufficient clearness to be positive as to the fact; but the captain continued:

"That's my boat sure, for there's the very patch I put on her sail last Wednesday."

In trying to make out this distinguishing mark the boys now saw what they had not noticed before. At the mast-head floated a black substance, which Bobby was sure he recognized as the piratical flag Tommy Tucker

had displayed on the oar shortly after he had captured the craft.

It was all very strange, for it did not seem possible that Master Tucker would come to the island, so great had been his fear of Captain Sammy. Besides, now that it was evening his "crew" must be on shore, transformed into a peaceful boy again.

But as the boat went slowly ahead, and then came up into the wind, there could be no mistake made. Master Tucker was there, and alone, in all the glory of his gorgeous uniform, while his flag floated proudly, even if indistinctly, over him. He surely had come back, although for what purpose it was impossible even to conjecture.

At the sight of this boy, whom he had resolutely put out of his mind, in order that he might be more reconciled to his fate, all of Captain Sammy's anger was aroused again, and intensified because of the revival.

"You villain!" he cried, "come in here this minute and let me get my hands on you once."

It is hardly possible that Captain Sammy thought Tommy would obey the command in view of the implied threat, and yet he waited patiently, as if he expected such would be the case.

"I'm comin' over here in the mornin' to serve you out," cried Tommy, defiantly, to the angry man; "but I've come

now to tell them boys that Ikey went up to the hotel an' told that they wouldn't be home to-night."

"Does my mother know where we are?" asked Dare.

"No; he jest told her that you was off with that old heathen, an' wouldn't be home to-night."

"Did he tell her *why* we couldn't come back?" And Dare grew anxious now.

"Of course he didn't. What kind of a feller do you think I am? If he'd told her that she'd sent over here to-night, an' I hain't goin' to let Cap'en Sammy get away till I've fixed him out, so's he'll be sorry he ever took his leg to me."

"I'll beat it up about your miserable body," roared Captain Sammy, as he started to take off his leg again; but remembering his former mishap, he shook his fist instead.

"*Will* you come in here and take us off?" he shouted.

"No, I won't," was the pirate's defiant reply. "If them fellers want to go home I'll carry 'em over, provided they'll tie you hand an' foot, an' let me pound you as much as I want to first."

Under other circumstances it would have been impossible for the boys to have restrained their laughter at the very comical appearance of Captain Sammy; but now it seemed all too serious for mirth. He ran along on the

beach, first this way and then that, shaking his fists at the small boy in the boat, and acting in every way as if his anger had deprived him of his senses.

"Will you do what I want you to?" asked Tommy, evidently referring to the capture of the captain.

"We can't do that," replied Dare; "but we'll do almost anything else you want us to, if you will take us home."

"I'll never take you away if you don't tie the old heathen," and, from his very decided tone, it was easy to understand that Master Tucker had paid them this evening visit in the sole hope of inducing them to help him to his revenge.

While they had been talking the wind had been increasing in force, and already the waves had begun to put on their white caps, as if preparing for a regular lark. The little craft, laying head to the wind, tossed about like an egg-shell, and Captain Sammy saw that she was being forced slowly but surely toward the beach.

If Tommy could only be induced to remain there long enough he might be aground before he was aware of the fact.

"Keep talking to him," whispered the captain to Dare, "an' we may get our hands on him after all."

But it was almost as if Tommy had heard what his enemy had said, for hardly had the words been uttered when

he discovered his peril, and began making preparations to avoid it.

He got an oar out and began pulling the boat around so that the sail would fill again. Had he been a better sailor he would not have pulled so long before he attended to the sheet and helm, and this same inexperience brought the pirate's voyage to a more speedy ending than he had anticipated.

He worked at the oar until the wind completely filled the sail, forcing the little craft around suddenly, and bearing her directly on to the sharp reef of coral that showed itself just above the water, not more than fifty feet from the main line of the shore, and a little to the right of where the party on the island were standing.

The force of the wind, which was now increasing each moment, sent the boat on toward the sharp coral points, which could pierce her timbers so easily, with a speed that seemed to paralyze Tommy. He made no attempt to divert his craft from the dangerous position in which he had placed her, but clung to the rail, crying for help in the most unpiratical manner.

"Let go your sheets, and put your helm hard down!" shouted Captain Sammy, forgetting, in his eagerness to save the boat, that he was giving advice which, if followed, would enable the marauder to escape.

But Master Tucker, in his agitation, was incapable of deciding what ought to be done, or even of understanding what was said to him.

He remained by the rail, looking at the reef toward which he was being borne, while his craft was at the mercy of both wind and waves, which were dashing her onward to destruction.

With only one thought, and that of trying to save Master Tucker when the final crash came and he was hurled into the water, the three boys, regardless of the wounds caused by the sea-urchins, ran down the beach. Captain Sammy, still shouting his orders to the terrified pirate, followed their example, and all stopped opposite the point toward which the boat was heading.

It was but a few moments before Tommy Tucker's career as a pirate was ended.

The boat, lifted high on a wave larger than the preceding ones, hung for a single instant over the reef below, and then was dashed upon it with a force that shattered every timber, and, fortunately for him, hurled the pirate captain entirely over it almost upon the beach.

Master Tucker was not at all injured by the fall; but he was terribly frightened at being thus literally thrown at the feet of the man whom he expected would murder him at the very least.

Before the boys could reach him—and they started to his aid at once, fearing lest he was injured by the fall—the disheartened pirate, who had lost both weapons and his gorgeous cap, sprang to his feet and made all speed toward the interior of the island.

His short voyage, during which he had destroyed nothing more than Captain Sammy's boat and temper, was ended; his craft was a complete wreck upon the little reef, and the pirate himself a prisoner upon the same island to which he had doomed the others.

It was a quick ending to Master Tucker's dream of wickedness, and one that seemed all the more cruel to him since he had never dreamed that pirates were in the habit of being wrecked.

When his boat first struck the reef Captain Sammy dashed into the water as if he was going to her rescue, regardless of the rheumatism; but before he had gotten in above his knees he turned around and came back.

He knew from the sound when she struck the reef that she had been injured beyond all hope of mending, and that it would be a more than foolish task to attempt to wade out to where she was being torn in pieces by the waves.

"Look out for the oars and sail," he shouted to the boys, while he waited for the small water-cask—which he always carried, no matter how short a voyage he was making—in



THE BOAT HUNG FOR A SINGLE INSTANT OVER THE REEF.

the hope that it would be washed ashore, affording them an opportunity of replenishing their stock of water.

It was hardly ten minutes, so furious had the waves become, and so strong did the wind blow directly toward the land, before the boys had secured three of the oars, and, soon after, the sail came ashore directly in front of the captain.

He ordered the boys to drag the canvas up to the camp, and they wondered why he remained there so anxiously, when there was no longer a hope that any portion of the boat, save small fragments, could be washed ashore.

But Captain Sammy's watching was at length rewarded, and when he saw the water-cask floating heavily on the waves he rushed into the water for the second time, and brought it ashore triumphantly.

"It come just in time," he said, gleefully, "for there hain't over an' above half a pint of water in my canteen, an' you boys would have wanted a drink pretty soon."

In fact, they began to grow thirsty just as soon as they realized how near they had come to being without any water, and it was not until they had each drunk twice from the cask that they felt satisfied, even though they had not thought of it before.

Captain Sammy spread the wet sail out in front of the fire to dry, and as he sat gazing at it and smoking he felt

very much relieved in mind, for now they would at least have a covering over their heads.

It was quite natural the boys should wonder as to what had become of Tommy Tucker, and Dare proposed that they should go in search of him. But Captain Sammy put an end to any such philanthropic plan by saying,

"Let him alone, an' in the morning I'll go after him myself, an' then—"

The captain did not finish the sentence, but his face was very expressive as to what Master Tommy's fate would be when he should have him in his power.

Dare trembled for the misguided pirate until he realized that it would be one thing for Captain Sammy to go after the fugitive, and quite another matter to catch him, owing to the disparity in legs. But he thought it was cruel to leave Tommy alone on the island all night, even though he had done them so much harm.

"Don't you think we had better try and find him, so that he can sleep with us to-night?" Dare asked. "It won't do any harm, and you can punish him in the morning."

"He wouldn't have a chance to sleep very much if he should dare to show his nose around here to-night," said Captain Sammy, in such a vindictive tone that Dare concluded that perhaps it would be less painful for Tommy to

sleep alone, and anywhere he could find a place, rather than with them.

The boat-sail was far from being dry when the little man took it from the fire and spread it over the boughs of the trees as a shelter-tent. But the hour was late, and the captain anxious that the party under his charge should get to sleep as soon as possible.

But even after the boys were stretched out on the hard sand, and Captain Sammy had laid himself down between them and the fire, as if to keep them from rolling out of bed, sleep did not appear inclined to pay them a visit.

They listened anxiously to each sound, and at every rustling of the leaves they fancied they heard Tommy, coming to ask that he might be allowed to share their camp with them.

Then, when the time wore on, and each occupant of the tent, save Dare, had yielded to slumber, the boy began to grow very nervous and unhappy, because of the possible fate of the pirate. He feared lest all kinds of accidents might befall him, until his imagination had conjured up so much suffering for Tommy that he attempted to crawl cautiously out over Captain Sammy to go in search of him.

But it seemed as if the little man slept with one eye open, for no sooner did Dare make the first movement toward getting out than the captain said, much as if he had

not been asleep at all, but had been lying awake reading the boy's thoughts,

"You may put some more wood on the fire; but don't you try to find that Tucker boy, because I shall make it very uncomfortable for him if he comes around here to-night."

So all that Dare's kindly impulse resulted in was the replenishing of the fire, and then he crawled in behind Captain Sammy again, wishing he could know that Tommy was at least safe from bodily harm.

CHAPTER VII.

RESCUED.



WHEN the boys awoke on the following morning the sun had risen, and Captain Sammy had followed his example. He (meaning Captain Sammy, not the sun) had kindled the fire anew; but instead of allowing it to blaze, he was doing all he could to deaden it, by flinging green boughs wet in sea-water upon the flames.

The boys watched him for some time in silence, wondering what he was trying to do, until Charley asked him the reason for his apparently contradictory work.

“Well, you see,” and Captain Sammy assumed the tone he always used when imparting any information, “I kinder reckon that when the Jones boy finds that his partner don’t turn up this morning, he’ll tell the folks jest where we are. The chances are that no one will believe him, so I want to keep this smoke goin’, for they can see that when they couldn’t see the blaze.”

After he had thus explained the reason for his work he

made them pay for their curiosity by assigning to Charley and Bobby the duty of keeping sufficient fire going to raise a smoke, while he seated himself on the point of the ledge, to watch for the coming of the rescuing party.

The only toilet which the boys could make that morning was to wash their hands and faces in the salt-water, and dry them on their handkerchiefs—a most unsatisfactory proceeding, which caused them to understand, as they never had before, how thoroughly fresh-water, soap, and towel can refresh one.

By the division of labor according to Captain Sammy's orders, Dare had nothing to do. At first he secured more firmly the logs which they had cut and rolled into the water the day before, that there might be no chance of their getting adrift, and in order that they might be all ready for towing to the main-land. Then he helped the other boys in their task; but finding that there was no more work than two could do easily, he conceived the idea of making an effort to find Tommy Tucker, in order that he might go to Tampa on the same boat that carried the others.

Without Captain Sammy's knowledge he told Charley and Bobby what he was about to do, and asked them to call him in case any boat came to their rescue.

Then he started, keeping so near the water on his left

that he could make no mistake when he wanted to retrace his steps.

It was not until he was some distance from the others that he dared to call Tommy's name, for he was afraid that if Captain Sammy should hear him he would try to prevent him from doing good to the pirate in return for evil.

When he did call out it was in a low tone, and he peered cautiously around each root or trunk of tree that was large enough to conceal the boy he was in search of.

In this manner he had walked so far that he was beginning to think he ought to return to the camp, when he heard a rustling of the foliage, and then came a hoarse, frightened whisper:

"Where's Cap'en Sammy?"

Dare knew, of course, that this question had been asked by the boy he was in search of, and, in order that Tommy might not think he was trying to catch him, he stood perfectly quiet, as he replied,

"He's back there on the beach, watching for a boat."

There was a moment of silence, as if the boy was making up his mind whether there would be any danger in showing himself, and then Master Tucker stepped out into view.

He was certainly the most discouraged-looking pirate that ever was seen in that part of the country. The sash was

still around his waist, and the epaulettes on his shoulders, but, owing to his unceremonious plunge in the water and the night he had spent among the trees, all the glory of coloring was covered with mud and dirt. His face was at least twice as dirty as usual, while each individual hair on his head seemed to stand out in a different direction, giving him a very comical appearance, especially about the head.

He was far from being the same bold pirate chieftain he had been the day before, and that he had had quite as much of piracy as he wanted was shown by the tone of his voice, as he asked,

“What did Cap'en Sammy say about his boat?”

“He was very angry, and I don't think he would have let me come here to find you if he had known what I was going to do.”

“What is he goin' to do to me?” asked Tommy, and his knees actually trembled beneath him as he thought of the punishment he might receive.

“I don't exactly know,” replied Dare, not wanting to tell the boy all the threats made against him by the angry captain, “but I suppose he will whip you.”

“He'll half kill me,” replied Master Tucker, dolefully but emphatically.

“I suppose he will be rather hard on you,” said Dare,

inclined to be sympathetic, but feeling at the same time that Tommy deserved some severe punishment for what he had done. "But I tell you what you had better do: come right out with me, and have it over before any one comes from Tampa to take us off."

"I wouldn't go out there where he is not for—not for a dollar!" exclaimed Tommy, frightened at the simple idea of such a thing.

"But how are you going to get away from here, and what will you get to eat while you do stay?"

"I dunno, an' I don't care; I ain't goin' out there where he is."

Dare noticed that the pirate was so broken in spirit that he no longer called Captain Sammy an "old heathen," which was good proof that he was not so proud and triumphant as he had been ten hours before.

"I s'pose I shall get home some time," said Tommy, sullenly; "but he won't have a chance to get hold of me, I can tell him that, for I can run twice as fast as he can any day."

Dare used all the arguments he could think of to persuade Tommy to go with him and try to gain Captain Sammy's pardon; but his words had no effect.

Master Tucker declared that he had rather stay there and starve than to go out and meet the man whom he had

every reason to believe would punish him severely; and he flatly refused every proposition Dare made, replying to each,

"I s'pose I'll get home somehow; but he won't never catch me."

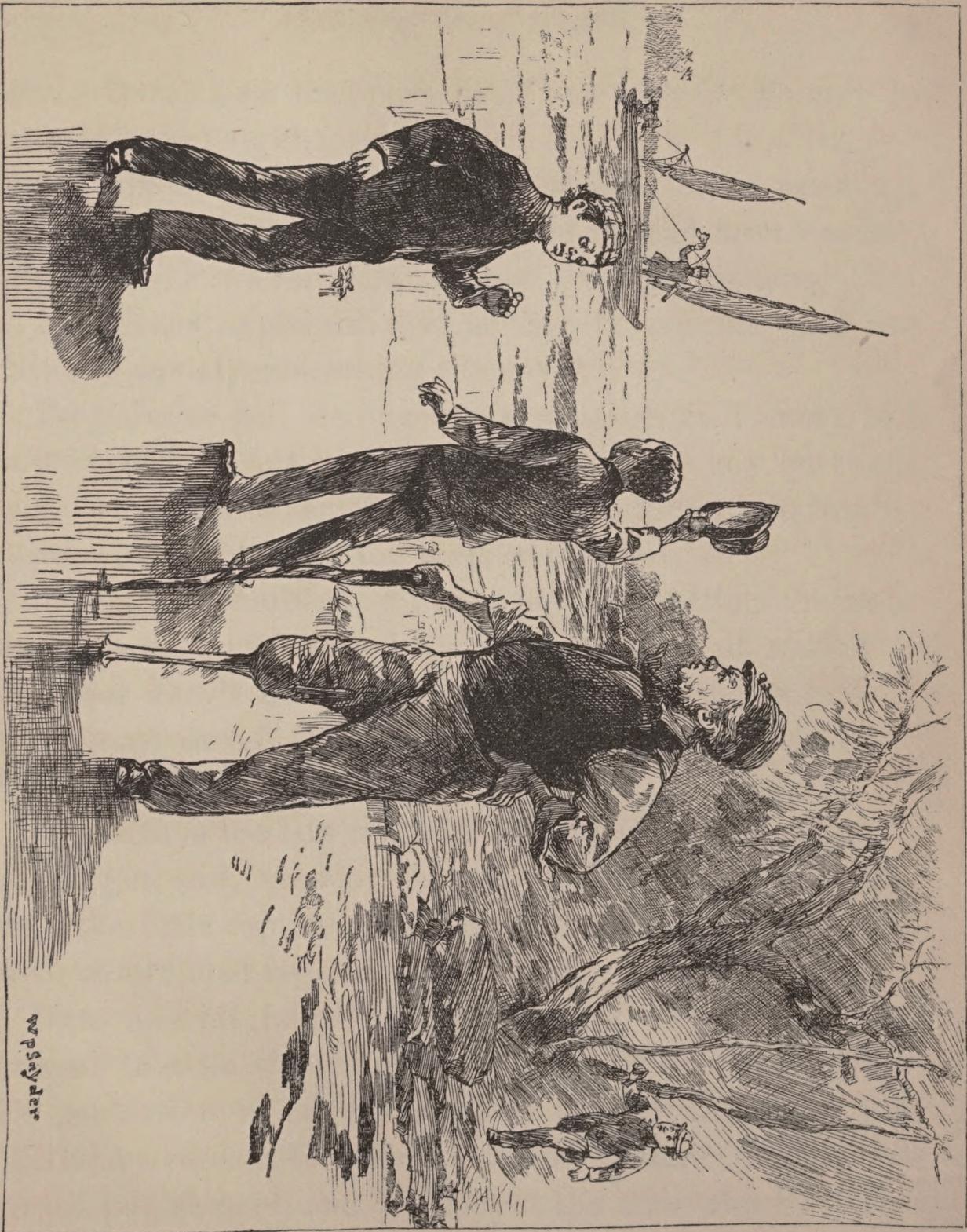
While Dare was urging him to do as he desired he heard Charley calling loudly, and he knew that some one was coming after them.

"All right; I'll be there," he replied; and then, turning to Tommy again, he said, "I suppose a boat is in sight, and I must go. Now, Tommy, if you won't come with us, what do you want me to do for you when I get back?"

"Nothin'," replied Tommy, sullenly, and then he disappeared quickly in the bushes, as if he was afraid that Captain Sammy, guided by Dare's voice, would come to catch him.

Dare's attempt to do good to the boy had resulted in nothing; but he was glad that he had made the trial. He walked back to the beach feeling that he ought to have done more, yet not knowing what else he could have done, so great was Tommy's fear of the little captain.

When Dare reached the beach his father and two men were just landing from a boat, and Captain Sammy was explaining to them his misfortunes, with many and terrible threats against the boy who had done the mischief, which



THE ARRIVAL OF THE RESCUING PARTY.

W. P. S. & Co.

made Dare think that perhaps it was best for Tommy to remain out of sight for a time.

Captain Sammy looked at him sharply as he came up, much as if he mistrusted the errand he had been on, but, greatly to Dare's relief, he did not ask any questions.

Mr. Evans explained that neither he nor his wife had felt any anxiety concerning the boys.

Ikey Jones had delivered his message, as Tommy had instructed him, but he had run home before any questions could be asked, evidently fearing he would get into trouble because of his share in the theft of the boat.

Mr. Evans, troubled by the scanty information almost as much as he would have been at no word at all, started at once for Ikey's home, and there, owing to the ex-pirate's wholesome dread of his mother's slipper, the whole story had been told.

It was then too late to think of sending for the prisoners that night, and, knowing that they would be perfectly safe with the little captain, as leader of the expedition, no fears were entertained regarding them.

Dare told his father of his interview with Tommy, and begged that he would intercede with Captain Sammy for his permission to allow the pirate to go with them. But Mr. Evans refused to interfere in the matter. Tommy deserved punishment, and he thought the man who had been

injured by the boy should be allowed to do as he chose regarding him.

The logs that had been cut on the previous day were all ready for towing, and the captain insisted that the men who had been employed by Mr. Evans should pull them to the main-land, in order that their trip to Dollar Island might not be wholly a failure.

Therefore, greatly to the delight of the boys, they were fastened to the stern of the boat. The oars, sail, and water-cask, which were all that remained of the little captain's jaunty craft, were put on board, and all the prisoners of Dollar Island, save the one who was still hiding in the thicket, were sailing toward Tampa.

Tommy had said that he should make Dollar Island his piratical head-quarters, and he now held undisputed possession of it.

CHAPTER VIII.

WORKING ON THE RAFTS.



WING to the heavy logs which were towed by the sail-boat in which Mr. Evans had come to the rescue, the trip from Dollar Island to Tampa was a long one, and during it the boys were benefited by listening to a discussion regarding the work which they had undertaken.

Mr. Evans had asked Captain Sammy some questions relative to the *Pearl*, and the little man was in exactly the right mood for conversation, so that the boys were able to gather very much useful information.

Then the question of how much work was involved in raising the sunken boat by the means of the rafts came up, and the captain inclined to the belief that the three boys could do it unaided in four or five days. He also volunteered the information that they could hire planks enough to make a double covering for the framework of logs, and by this means their work would be very much lessened.

Mr. Evans told Dare that he could order the necessary lumber hauled to the place where they would need it, and have the bill sent to him. He also bargained with Captain Sammy for the purchase of a small boat he owned, which the boys would need in building the rafts, and which would afterward be useful as a tender to the *Pearl*, in case she was successfully floated.

Therefore the boys were ready for work as soon as they should reach the shore, and it seemed to them as if Tommy's attempt to injure Captain Sammy had resulted very much in their favor.

In order not to spend the time necessary to go to the hotel for breakfast, Dare asked that he and Bobby should be allowed to go directly to Captain Sammy's dock, where they could get both the boat and the chain-cables, while Charley went to the hotel for sufficient food to serve them as breakfast and dinner.

This Mr. Evans consented to, while Captain Sammy forwarded matters very much by saying that he would attend to ordering the lumber and nails, and then the sail-boat was headed for the sunken *Pearl*.

Upon arriving there the logs were left anchored near the beach, and, since it was then ebb-tide, they would be aground ready for the boys to begin work on them by the time they should return.

Here also Mr. Evans and Charley were landed, as they were then nearer the hotel than they would be at the little captain's dock, and then the sail-boat started again.

At the dock the tender was brought out of the boat-house, in which she had been placed to protect her from the rays of the sun, and the boys were surprised to find that she was as neat and serviceable a little craft as they could have wished for. From the way in which she had been spoken of they expected to find an ordinary boat, rather the worse for wear, instead of one that hardly bore marks of usage.

The building in which Captain Sammy stored what he called "odds and ends" looked more like a regular shop than an ordinary storehouse, for in it could have been found almost everything necessary to fit out a vessel for a long cruise.

After the chain-cables, which were to be passed under the *Pearl* and fastened to the rafts, had been laid aside for transportation, Captain Sammy selected a number of smaller chains, which, he explained, could be used to fasten the ends of the logs together.

Hammers, wrenches, and a quantity of stout staples to fasten the ends of the chains, were also selected from the general stock; and when at last the little man concluded that they had enough with which to begin work, it was

found that they made altogether too much of a load for the small boat to carry.

"You can take the smaller things with you, an' I'll send the heavier stuff by the same team that takes the lumber," said Captain Sammy, and the boys started at once, only too anxious to begin operations without farther loss of time.

Although they had not spent much time at the dock, they found Charley waiting for them when they rounded the point beyond which the *Pearl* lay in her watery resting-place.

He had with him a plentiful supply of provisions and a pail of water; but the wonderfully good news which he brought received more immediate attention than the food did, hungry as they were.

The landlord of the hotel, who knew, as almost every one in Tampa did by this time, of the work which the boys had on hand, had proposed to Mr. Evans that the young workmen be saved the trouble and time of walking back and forth from the hotel to the scene of their labors. In order to avoid this he had offered to loan them a shelter-tent and some bedding; and Mr. Evans having accepted the offer, the tent would be sent down some time during the day.

It was great news, to be sure, and they felt that even if

they did not succeed in raising the *Pearl* they should have a glorious time camping out on the beach.

After their excitement had subsided sufficiently they ate their breakfast, and a very hearty one they made, too; and then, the tide having gone down so far as to leave the logs high and dry, they began their work, which they felt confident would be crowned with success.

The two timbers that were to form the sides of one of the rafts were hollowed out at each end, so that the logs which were to be placed on them would rest firmly, and the same work was performed on those that were to serve as ends. Then the four were laid together, forming very nearly a square, and around these overlapping ends were placed chains, which were made secure by driving staples through the links into the logs.

It was nearly two hours before the first frame was thus made ready for the planking, but the time was well spent, for the timbers were fastened as securely as a carpenter could have done it.

This work was hardly completed when Captain Sammy, seated on a huge load of lumber, rode slowly down the beach, and under his direction the planks were laid across the logs and nailed firmly in their places. In this way a double flooring was laid, which, although it was not water-tight, of course, would have very great buoyancy,

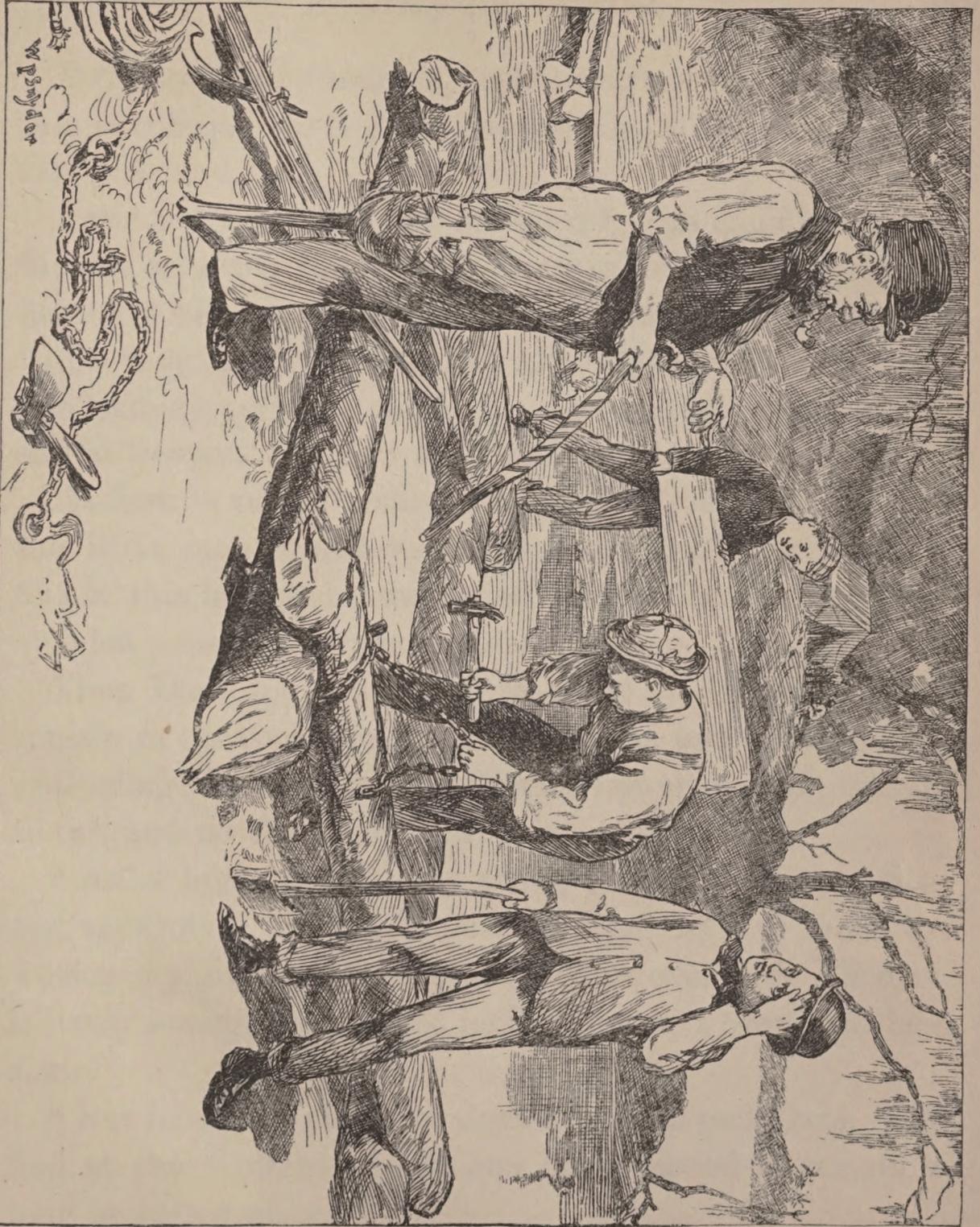
that even a larger craft than the *Pearl* could hardly overcome.

While this work was being done some of the men from the hotel brought the tent and bedding, and Captain Sammy exerted himself to give a good many more than the necessary orders for its erection, at the same time that he was issuing commands thick and fast to the builders of the rafts.

Therefore, by the time the boys were ready for their dinner they were able to eat it within the tent, through the open flaps of which they could see one of their lifting-machines all ready to be floated off to the sunken steamer, whose smoke-stack was then showing above the water.

Captain Sammy had invited himself to dinner, and, despite the manner in which he had ordered them around during the forenoon, they were glad to have him with them, for, with all his bluster and scolding, his companionship was pleasant, and he rendered them a great deal of assistance.

He scolded because he was obliged to stay there and superintend the operations, when both he and they knew that it was his own pleasure to be there. He fussed about this thing and that until the boys were more than ever convinced that his petulant ways concealed a good-natured, cheery old gentleman.



BUILDING THE RAFTS.

But during all the time, when he talked of almost everything, not one word did he speak regarding the pirate of Dollar Island.

From the time they had returned to the main-land, even though so many things had occurred to make him happy, Dare had been anxious regarding Tommy Tucker, and now, while they were enjoying an after-dinner rest, and Captain Sammy appeared to be in such excellent humor, he resolved to speak a good word for the captive.

At first he tried to bring the conversation around so that the little man would voluntarily speak of the prisoner; but in this he was unsuccessful, for the Captain studiously avoided a mention of the ex-pirate's name.

Then Dare spoke of the discomfort of being obliged to remain in such a place as Dollar Island, and concluded by reminding the Captain that Tommy was there, with nothing to eat, and no chance of making his escape.

"An' I hope he will stay there, too," said Captain Sammy, savagely. "I jest hope he'll have to stay there two weeks, anyhow; an' then when he gets over here I'll make it lively enough for him, so he'll forget he's ever been lonesome."

"But he would starve to death!" exclaimed Dare, horrified at the thought of any one being forced to remain so long in such a place.

"Starve? Not a bit of it. He knows how to find plenty to eat; an' if he does go hungry a little while it'll do him a power of good."

Surely it did seem as if, in Captain Sammy's present state of mind, he would never consent to any plan for Tommy's relief; but Dare had no idea of giving up so easily. He told the captain boldly that he was anxious to go after the boy, and asked him to consent to their going, because, in a certain sense, it was for him to say how much punishment Tommy should receive.

Captain Sammy was, or professed to be, in a towering rage when Dare concluded, and declared that they should not go to Dollar Island, if he was obliged to stand guard over them all night in order to prevent it.

Dare argued and entreated for a long time, but all to no purpose, until Captain Sammy, as if tired at being urged so strongly, said, with a growl of impatience,

"If I'll agree to your goin' after that villain will you agree to look out for him while you are here, an' be responsible for him?"

Dare hesitated; he was not quite willing to promise so much, for fear he could not carry it out, but yet he felt very anxious to release the boy.

"I'll do the best I can, sir," he replied, after some thought, "and we'll make him promise to behave himself."

"Oh, he'll promise it quick enough," sneered Captain Sammy; "he'll promise anything; but you've got to see that he keeps his word."

"We'll all do the best we can to look out for him, won't we, boys?" asked Dare, pleased at the thought that he had won Captain Sammy over after such a struggle.

Charley and Bobby nodded their heads, to show that they accepted their portion of the contract, although Bobby was not as cheerful about it as Dare would have liked to see him.

"Now, I'll give my consent to the plan if you'll promise that you won't go after him until to-morrow morning," said Captain Sammy, with a terrible frown. "One day isn't enough to give him all he needs of Dollar Island."

Dare thought it the refinement of cruelty to keep the poor fellow there so long, no matter how much wrong he had done; but Captain Sammy was firm in the stand he had taken, and no amount of persuasion could shake him.

"Not an hour sooner," he said, decidedly; "and when you land him even then you want to be sure an' keep him away from here, or I'll—" Captain Sammy tapped his wooden leg in a way that told plainly enough what he would have said.

Dare was obliged to content himself with this leniency on the part of the injured captain; but he promised him-

self that they would start at a very early hour on the next morning.

• "Now," and Captain Sammy jumped to his feet, as if he had just discovered that they had been wasting valuable time, "if you boys think you can waste your time in this way, you are mistaken. The *Pearl* will never show her bows above water if you don't go to work."

There was no need of urging the boys to exertion, and as soon as he had shown that he was ready to continue the labor they were at it with a will.

Owing to the little man's disposition to work as well as command, the second raft was built in less time than the first; and when Captain Sammy started for home it was with the promise that he would return at low-water on the following day and help them to make fast to the steamer.

Both rafts were anchored so that there could be no possibility of their drifting away during the night, and the boys felt that they had reason to be satisfied with their day's work.

Shortly after Captain Sammy had left them Mr. and Mrs. Evans paid them a visit—Mr. Evans coming for the purpose of bringing them something to eat, and his wife that she might be sure they would be safe and comfortable during the night.

It was while Dare was talking with his parents about the

difficulty he had had in persuading Captain Sammy to allow them to go for Tommy that his mother suggested that one of the boys find out where Mrs. Tucker lived, so that she might be told of her son's whereabouts.

Charley volunteered to carry the information to the pirate's mother; and when his parents returned to the hotel he accompanied them, leaving Dare and Bobby to look out for the camp, and to speculate upon their chances for lifting the steamer the next day.

When Charley returned he reported that he had found Mrs. Tucker's house without much trouble, and had told her where her son was. She had been very anxious about him, but as soon as she knew where he was she appeared to think that he would get home in some way, and seemed perfectly indifferent about the matter, save that she said she hoped Captain Sammy would whip some of Tommy's foolish ideas out of his head.

The boys were tired enough to go to bed very early that night; but before they did so they were obliged to wait until the tide had floated the rafts, so they could anchor them in the proper position for beginning the morrow's work.

When that was done, and their boat had been drawn up some distance on the beach, the boys rolled into their camp-bed, where the ripple of the water on the beach lulled them to sleep in a remarkably short time.

CHAPTER IX.

A DISCOURAGED PIRATE.



HANKS to the early hour at which the young wreckers retired, they were up almost as soon as the sun was on the day when the success or failure of their plan for raising the *Pearl* was to be determined.

The day was all that could have been asked for, with no breeze strong enough to ruffle the surface of the water, and Dare knew that if they failed it would not be because of heavy sea or bad weather.

The rafts floated securely where they had been anchored on the previous night, and as the boys looked at their stout frames, which would offer so much resistance to any weight that might be put upon them, it was easy to believe firmly that when they were made fast to the steamer the action of the tide would lift the *Pearl* very readily.

They had three hours at their disposal before the water would be low enough to admit of their beginning work,

and this time was to be employed in releasing Tommy from his imprisonment.

Breakfast was hurriedly eaten, and, without any fear that their belongings in the tent would be disturbed, even if any one from the town should pay them a visit, they started for Dollar Island and the pirate.

The pull over was not so laborious as when they had rowed Captain Sammy, for the boat they were then in was not as large as the one Tommy had wrecked, and, besides, it was earlier in the day, consequently much cooler.

But it was sufficiently hard work to make them realize just how long a distance a mile was on the water, and none of them were sorry when the bow of the boat grated upon the beach of Dollar Island.

They had supposed that Master Tucker would keep a very sharp lookout for approaching boats, and had no doubt but that he would be on the beach awaiting their arrival.

But when they landed he was nowhere to be seen. They began to think he had already been rescued, and that their labor had been in vain. But they did not propose to return until they had both made a thorough search, and taken a short rest; therefore they went to their old camping-place, as the starting-point from which to begin the search.

When they arrived there they understood why it was that the prisoner had not welcomed them to the island.

There, on the ground, on the same spot where they had encamped, lay the once brave but now thoroughly cowed pirate, sleeping quite as soundly as if he had been in his own bed at home. Around him were a number of shells, showing that Captain Sammy was right when he said the boy would find something to eat, and by his side was a club almost as large as himself, which he had probably taken to bed with him, in case it should become necessary to defend himself.

Dare leaned over and shook him several times before he awakened. Then, as soon as his eyes were opened, he leaped to his feet and looked anxiously around, as if he expected to see Captain Sammy pop out of the bushes somewhere near him.

"Where is he?" he asked, as if doubting whether he could trust the intentions of his visitors.

"He's at home, if you mean Captain Sammy," replied Dare, "and we have come to take you home too."

"Are you goin' to take me to *him*?" he asked, with very little of the piratical swagger that had frightened Bobby at the time he captured the boat.

"No; you shall go wherever you want to," and then Dare told him of the promise they had made regarding



THE BOYS DISCOVER THE PIRATE.

W. P. Snyder

him. "Now, you know that Captain Sammy will blame us if you do any more mean things, and we want you to promise us that you'll try to do right."

"Got anything to eat?" asked Tommy, as if he was disposed to get all he could before he bound himself by a promise.

"Yes," said Charley, as he produced the lunch-basket which his thoughtfulness had prompted them to bring. "Are you hungry?"

"Awful," was the pirate's reply, as he looked longingly at the basket.

Dare was not one who could see another suffer for anything when it was in his power to relieve him; and although he felt that Tommy should have given his promise first, he opened the basket and took out the food, which Master Tucker ate ravenously, as though he had been on short rations for a week instead of a day.

After he had eaten all he wanted—and the boys joined him, for their long pull had made them hungry also—Tommy seemed disposed to take up the conversation where it had been dropped.

"Now, you wouldn't get me over there, an' then let him nab me, would you?" he asked, imploringly.

"No," replied Dare, gravely. "We wouldn't tell you anything that wasn't true. If you promise us that you'll

behave yourself in the future, he won't trouble you, unless you go where he is."

"No danger of that," was the emphatic reply.

"And will you promise?" urged Dare.

"Yes," said Tommy, "I'll promise, an' I'll keep it, too. I did think I wanted to be a pirate; but somehow it ain't as much fun as I thought it would be; an' now that the flag an' my sash an' cap are gone I'll let Ikey Jones be the pirate, an' I'll look 'round for somethin' else."

Dare told him that they had heard that Ikey Jones had also reformed, so that the pirates of Tampa no longer had an existence, except in the memory of Captain Sammy, where it would be likely to remain green until he had forgotten his wrecked boat.

Tommy felt better after his breakfast, although he was still thoroughly discouraged, and he freely admitted that he was very sorry for what he had done. He made many promises that he would mend his ways in the future, and Dare felt reasonably certain that they would have no trouble in keeping their word to Captain Sammy concerning him.

They remained on Dollar Island about half an hour, and when they started on the return trip Master Tucker took one of the oars, working at it manfully until they were within about a quarter of a mile of the shore. Then he

ceased rowing, as if he began to mistrust that which had been told him, and, looking Dare full in the face, he asked,

"Now, you ain't foolin' me, are you?"

"How do you mean?"

"Captain Sammy ain't hidin' anywhere 'round here, where he can jump out an' nab me jest the minute we get on shore, is he?"

"If you are afraid, and don't believe us," said Dare, with considerable dignity, hurt because they should be doubted after all they had done, "you can land wherever you say, and then you will be sure we are not deceiving you."

"I ain't 'zactly 'fraid, an' I don't think you'd tell any lies about it," said Tommy, with some hesitation, "but, if it don't make any difference to you, I'd rather get out farther down the beach."

The boat was headed in the direction he desired, and when the land was reached Tommy first made sure that his enemy was nowhere in sight, and then jumped out quickly.

"Now, see here, fellers," he said, as he held on to the bow of the boat for a moment: "you've helped me out of a bad scrape, an' I'll keep my promise to you jest as long as Cap'en Sammy lets me alone." And, after crossing his throat with his fingers, to make his words more impressive, he ran as fast as his legs could carry him in the direction of his home.

There was not one of the boys who did not believe that Tommy would keep his word; and had they been told then that they would be sorry that they had released the prisoner, they would have laughed at the idea.

It was not a long distance from where Tommy had been landed to where the *Pearl* lay, and when they arrived at the scene of their labors Captain Sammy was just coming up in a boat rowed by two men.

The little man looked at them savagely, as if he was angry with himself for having given his permission for the release of Tommy; but he said nothing, which was quite a relief to the boys.

The tide was nearly down, and it was evident that the little man had come there to work, for, after ordering the men to row him directly to the rafts, he called out for the boys to bring him the cables.

It was quite a task to load the long chains from the beach to the boat, and while it was being done Captain Sammy and his men busied themselves in inspecting the rafts and the position of the sunken steamer.

"Now, then," said Captain Sammy, when the chains were finally placed on one of the rafts, "we are goin' to help you make fast to the *Pearl*, and after that you will have to do all the work yourselves. While we are passing the chains under the steamer you had better be stretching

a hawser from the rafts to the shore, so that you can haul them in at high-water."

Dare preferred that they should do all the work themselves, but he knew that Captain Sammy would do it much better, and, in view of all the circumstances, the boys could not say anything against any plan he might propose. Long before the task was done, however, they were very glad that they had his assistance, for it was not many moments before they saw a number of contrivances for lessening the labor which they would never have thought of.

Even the fastening of the hawsers was not such a simple task as it looked. It was necessary to attach a short one first to each raft, and then fasten the two ends on to a longer one, so that when the boys pulled the rafts and their burden in-shore they would move at the same time and under the same amount of force. Otherwise a swinging motion might be imparted to the yacht as she hung in the chains, displacing or wrenching her.

Long as it took the boys to get the hawsers arranged properly, Captain Sammy did not seem to have begun his portion of the work when they had finished; at least, that was what Dare thought at first, although he afterward changed his mind.

One end of each of the two cables had been wound several times around the log that formed one side of the raft

that floated on the port side of the *Pearl*, and then made secure by two heavy staples. The middle, or bight, of the chains hung down in the water, while the other ends were thrown over the raft lying to starboard.

"We're all ready now to hook on, and it must be full low-water," said Captain Sammy, as he consulted his watch, and the boys interpreted the remark into an order for them to be ready to assist.

They rowed out to the port raft, and there waited the little man's pleasure. The two men had gotten into their boat, which they anchored directly over the bow of the *Pearl*, and there, each holding a long boat-hook, they too waited for Captain Sammy to give the word.

The little man was on the starboard raft, and when he was satisfied that every one was ready he shouted, as he grasped the unsecured end of the cable,

"Dare, you and Charley lean over the raft and swing your end of the cable in-shore; and you," he added to his men, "stand ready."

The boys obeyed the order without understanding what they were to effect, and when the heavy chain was slowly swung toward the beach the men in the boat fastened the iron-shod end of their poles into it at its lowest point in the water, pushing it directly under the bow of the sunken steamer.

Captain Sammy quickly made his end of the cable fast with a piece of rope, and then exactly the same work was done on the other.

After the two cables were thus in position the two rafts were swung nearer together, and the two logs which the boys thought had been uselessly cut were placed across from one raft to the other, about ten feet apart.

After the cable had been hauled as taut as possible, the ends on the starboard raft were then secured as firmly as the others.

Captain Sammy then produced from his boat four stout chains, each about twenty feet in length, and having large clamps at one end.

These he hooked on to the cables a short distance below the surface of the water, one on each side, and brought them up around the two logs.

"There, my lads," said Captain Sammy, triumphantly, "when you want to take up the slack to-morrow all you have to do is to anchor the rafts as far apart as possible, drop the clamps farther down on the main cable, and belay the short chains. Besides, by this means, you see, there is no chance for the rafts to swing one way or the other, and drop the *Pearl* out just when you think you have her fast."

It was a contrivance which the boys would never have

thought of, and Dare now congratulated himself that Captain Sammy had been anxious to aid them.

All hands now turned their attention to drawing the short chains taut, and this was done by the means of a capstan-bar, a turn being taken around one end of it, and then the bar being used as a lever.

Each one had been drawn up as taut as the strength of the workmen could make them, a double hook was fastened through the links, and their portion of the work was done. It was for the water to do the remainder.

The tide had commenced to flow, and all hands went on shore to watch the effect of their labor, the boys so excited that it seemed as if the minutes had twice the usual number of seconds in them.

CHAPTER X.

THE WORK OF THE TIDE.



ANXIOUSLY the boys watched for the first sign which would tell that their plan was a success, and as the water rose higher and higher their fears lest it should prove a failure increased.

Soon it was easy to see that the rafts were settling into the water, and the chains gave forth a dull, muffled clank now and then as the strain upon them forced the links into a more perfect bearing upon each other.

"Do you think they will raise her?" asked Dare, unable to bear the suspense any longer in silence.

"Raise her!" echoed Captain Sammy; "they'll have to, unless something breaks, and I don't think it will."

Then the boys waited in fear lest something should break, starting in alarm at the slightest sound. But there was no sign but that everything was as strong as Captain Sammy's faith in the result of the experiment.

Finally the rafts settled down as if the weight of the *Pearl* was about to submerge them, and then, just as the

boys were expecting to see them covered by the water, there was a sudden rocking motion, a sort of trembling of the planking, and they rose at once several inches out of the water.

"Hurrah!" shouted the captain, and the men joined in with him as he repeated the cheer, while the boys looked up in surprise, not seeing any reason for such outburst of triumph.

"The rafts have raised her, and the *Pearl* is afloat again, even if she is under the water," said Captain Sammy, in an explanatory way. "When the rafts were nearly covered with water it was the suction of the boat as she laid on the soft bottom that held them down, more than the weight. When they kind of trembled they were overcoming the suction, and when they rose out of the water after that they took the *Pearl* with them."

Although it was a trifle late, the boys set up their cheer of triumph, and they made considerably more noise about it than the others had done.

"Well, lads," said Captain Sammy, in a cheery tone, "the work is as good as done now. If I wasn't getting so old and full of rheumatic twinges I'd stay over here with you, an' we'd take advantage of the tide to-night, for there's a good moon; but as it is we'll have to wait till morning, an' I'll toddle over to the dock now, to see how things are

coming on there. Keep a sharp lookout that nothing happens, an' I'll be here at low-tide to-morrow."

He had started off when he commenced to speak, and by the time he had finished he and his men were nearly out of sight around the point.

The boys were alone to keep watch that the tide did its duty.

"I'll tell you what we can do," said Dare, after they had remained silent for some time watching the rafts as they lifted the *Pearl* higher and higher from the place that had very nearly been her grave: "it will be low-water at ten o'clock, and bright moonlight at the same time. We can take in the slack of those cables just as well as if Captain Sammy was with us. It will be high-tide about four o'clock in the morning, and we can take turns at watching, so that we shall be sure to pull her in at high-water. Then when Captain Sammy comes to-morrow she will be almost ready to go to work on."

Of course neither Charley nor Bobby valued the loss of sleep as compared with getting their boat afloat a day sooner, and they agreed to the plan at once.

As it was necessary to remain idle until high-water, which would be five hours later, Dare proposed that Bobby should proceed to the hotel for a fresh supply of provisions, and also to inform his father of their success thus far.

Bobby had no objection to offer, since the pirate had been vanquished, and he set off at once, while Dare and Charley remained in the tent, resting from the fatigue of the morning.

Bobby returned in due time, warm, tired, and loaded down with good things, out of which all three made a hearty dinner. Then there was more lounging around and laying plans for their trip to the Everglades, until the water had crept nearly up to the line on the sand which marked the height to which the tide flowed.

Then the work began. The long hawser had been made fast to a tree which grew on the bank, and Charley and Bobby stationed themselves there, while Dare rowed out to the rafts and raised the anchors.

"All right!" he shouted as the last one was raised, and nothing prevented the rafts and their burden from being pulled in toward the shore.

As he spoke he jumped into the boat, rowed quickly to the beach, and did his share toward hauling their prize into more shallow water.

The task required all the strength which they possessed, but they were more than willing to expend it at such work, and by the time the tide was fully up the *Pearl* had struck bottom again, and their labor was over for six hours.

The rafts were anchored again, care being taken that it should be done in such a way that they would swing as far apart as possible, as Captain Sammy had ordered, and when the young wreckers were in their tent again they had the satisfaction of seeing that the *Pearl* was not more than half as far away from the shore as she had been in the morning.

"Now," said Dare, as he looked at his watch, "it is a little past four. Let's see if some of us can't bottle up some sleep before it is time to go to work again. Charley, you and Bob lay down, and I will keep watch until six; Bobby shall stand guard till eight, and you till ten. After that we will divide up an hour at a time, because it will be more lonesome in the night."

This plan was carried out, and, although there was not much sleeping done before low-water, each one felt refreshed because of the rest they had thus forced themselves to take.

The night was so light that it was possible to work quite as well as in the day, and they were cheered in their labors by seeing fully half the upper-works of the little steamer above water, when, before, only her smoke-stack was visible.

The little pilot-house and cabin glistened as white in the moonlight as if the painters had just concluded their work,

and through the open windows could be seen a portion of the machinery.

"Isn't she a beauty!" exclaimed Charley, as they stood on the rafts looking at the little craft which was to be the reward of their labors.

"Indeed she is," replied Dare, who hardly felt like doing anything else but looking at her; "but she won't do us much good if we don't go to work."

Thus reminded that they were there for labor rather than admiration, the boys commenced at once the difficult task before them. The chains were first unfastened one by one, and then made taut and fastened again, as Captain Sammy and his men had done at first.

While it was not possible for the boys to take in as much slack of the chains as the three men could have done, they had the satisfaction of reducing the length very materially.

Then the anchors were placed so that the rafts would swing closer together when the tide forced them to begin their work of lifting again, and the night-watch began.

It was fully eleven o'clock, and Dare proposed that they stand guard one hour at a time. As the first watch would be the easiest, Dare gave that to Bobby, with instructions to call Charley at twelve, he coming on at one.

During that night not one of the sentries fell asleep at his post. There were many times when each one of them

felt very much like yielding to the slumber that beset his eyelids; but a brisk walk along the beach soon rendered him wakeful.

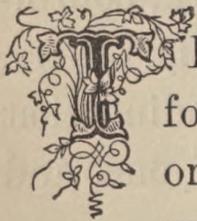
At one o'clock Dare was called, and when his hour was up he could not bring himself to awaken either of the others, who were sleeping so sweetly, and arguing that, as the leader of the party, he should do the most work, continued on guard until four o'clock, when he roused the others.

Both the boys were very much surprised at finding that Dare had been on watch three hours instead of one, and Charley insisted that in the future he should do no more than his share of the work, whatever might happen.

This time it was a sleepy party who tugged and pulled at the heavy hawser; but when the *Pearl* grounded it seemed almost certain that she would be fully uncovered at low-water, and with the idea that in the morning they would be able to see the extent of the damage done their steamer, all hands rolled into bed.

CHAPTER XI.

HIGH AND DRY.



THE boys did not awaken until a late hour on the following morning, and then, even though it was only about "half-tide," they could see above the surface of the water a considerable part of the upper-works of the steamer.

They felt lame and stiff when they came out of the tent, but this actual evidence of progress took that feeling away in a great measure, and all hands were as eager for work as if they had been taking rest for a week.

One of the boys from the hotel had brought them a can of hot coffee, and, after a hurried bath in the sea, which amounted to hardly more than a dip into the water, they ate their breakfast in quite as much haste, for they wanted to have everything in and around the tent looking in ship-shape order when Captain Sammy arrived.

Each moment that passed revealed more of the little steamer to the view of the eager watchers, and, paddling out to the rafts, they had the satisfaction of seeing

that, without a doubt, she would be high and dry at low-water.

Already was the rail of the steamer uncovered, and it was at last possible to see very plainly the little craft that was to be under their complete control.

She was a side-wheel boat, on the paddle-boxes of which was painted in black, with just a trifle of ornamentation, the words :

**THE PEARL,
OF TAMPA.**

The smoke-stack was painted red, and the remainder of the outside work pure white. The paint had suffered but little discoloration by its long bath.

About three feet of the bow was decked over flush with the rail, and evidently served as a tank for fresh-water; then came the main cabin, built straight up from the bottom flooring, and occupying fully twelve feet of the length. At the forward end of this, and rising about three feet above the top, was a tiny pilot-house, hardly more than three feet square, in which could be seen a wheel that had once been highly polished, and curiously inlaid with different colored woods and what looked to be pieces of bone or ivory.

The interior of the cabin was painted light gray, and it

occupied the full width of the craft. A door at the forward end permitted communication with the bow, and one aft led into the little hall that ran past the engine-room to the stern. Two windows on either side afforded means for the free circulation of air, and between these windows were two berths, one above the other, on each side.

The machinery—which was, of course, directly between the paddle-boxes—occupied about eight feet of space, and aft of this was a small room, about four feet deep, that was evidently intended for the engineer.

Aft of this was the standing-room, five feet deep, over which had once been an awning. Nothing was now left of this but shreds of cloth hanging in the most forlorn-looking manner.

If the boys had superintended the construction of the boat they could hardly have had one that pleased them better, or which was more suited to the work to which they intended to put her.

Now that they had seen the interior of the *Pearl*, they were doubly anxious to ascertain just how much damage had been done to her, so that they might know how much labor would have to be performed before she could be floated.

Already they could see a jagged hole on the port side of her bow, through which Bobby could have crawled, but

whether any of her bottom planking had been torn out it was impossible to tell.

They were so busily engaged in trying to ascertain the extent of her injuries that they did not hear the approach of Captain Sammy, who was stumping along the beach, evidently in a state of the greatest surprise because the work had progressed so rapidly, and it was not until he spoke that they were aware of his presence.

"Now, that's what I call business," he said, approvingly. "You couldn't wait for daylight, but had to sit up all night, so you could see the craft to-day, eh?"

"We thought it was a pity to waste so much time, when it wasn't a great deal of work to take advantage of last night's tide," replied Dare.

"Well, if I had known what you had been doing I should have brought some stuff to work with this morning. Say, you, Charley and Bobby, come in-shore here and put me on to the raft, and then row over to the dock. Tell one of the men there to give you some canvas, pump-tacks, and cold tar; then get back here as quick as you can."

The boys obeyed the little captain's orders very readily, and while they were at the dock Captain Sammy and Dare unfastened the cables from one of the rafts and poled it ashore.

The planks which had formed the top were now to do

service as ways for the boat to rest on while she was being repaired, and these were nailed together and weighted down by the chains and rocks, so they could not float when the tide came up again.

By the time the boys returned from the dock the entire bow of the steamer was out of water.

The injury she had received was now found to be far less than had been supposed. She had been badly stove in at the bow, but the bottom planking was found to be intact, and she had sustained no damage save in that one place.

The water had run out of the deep hole in the bows as the tide receded until all that was left in her remained at the stern.

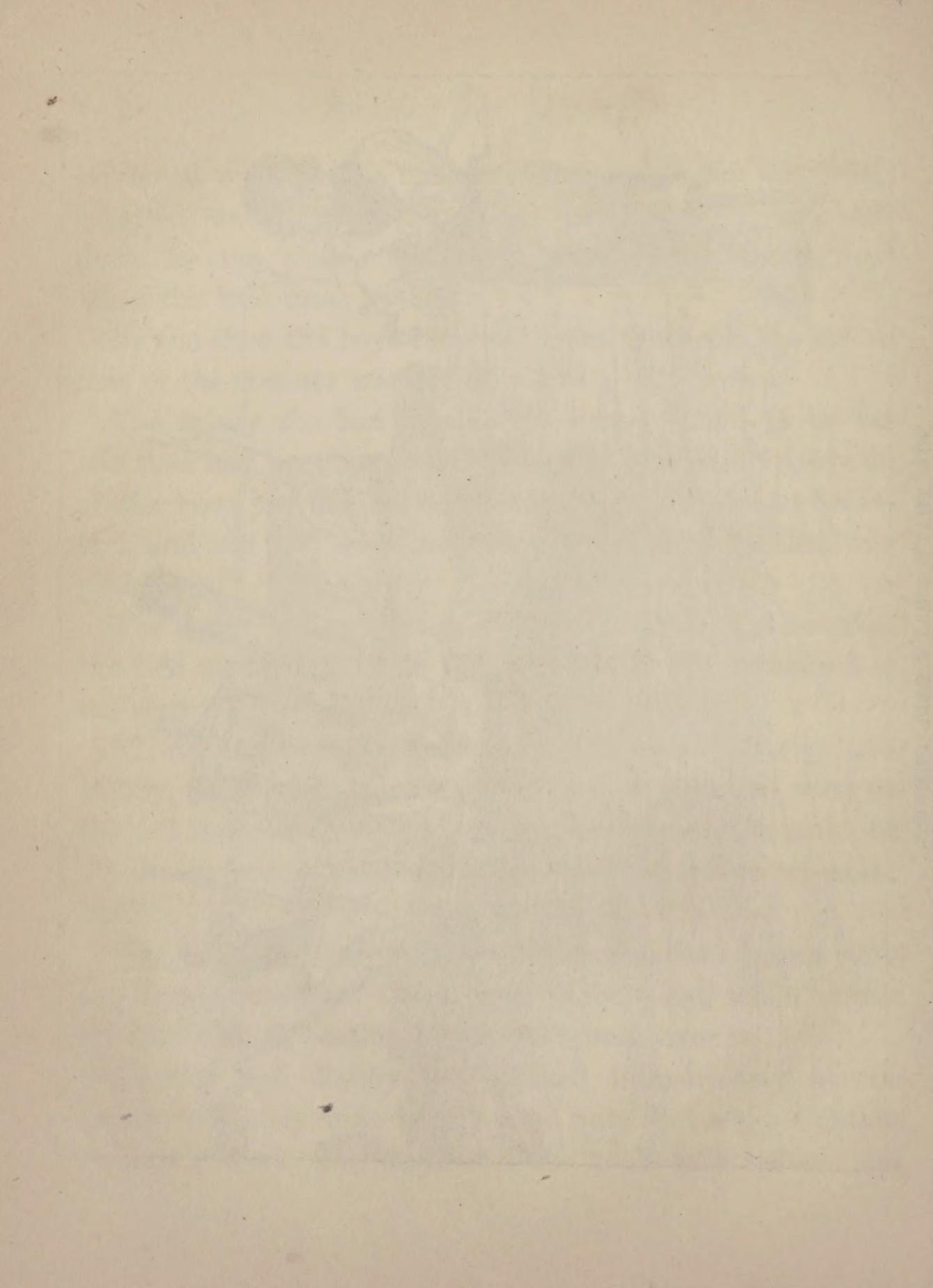
"Now, you boys," said Captain Sammy to Charley and Bobby, "get on board and go to pumping just as soon as the rail is above water, and when the tide comes in to-night I promise you it shall float the *Pearl* wherever we want her."

The little man, with Dare's assistance, then began nailing the canvas over the broken timbers, and when it was all done a thick coating of tar was spread over it.

Charley and Bobby had worked industriously at the pump until they were nearly tired out; and when Captain Sammy's work was finished Dare took their place, and



“NOW THAT’S WHAT I CALL BUSINESS.”



remained there till the sucking sound of the pump-boxes told that the *Pearl* was freed from the burden of water that had held her captive.

She was high and dry on the beach, and while they were waiting for the in-coming tide Captain Sammy ordered the boys to clean out the sand and other dirt which had accumulated in the cabins and engine-room.

Then her anchors and cables, as well as every other movable thing on board, and some of the chains used for raising her, were piled up in the stern, in order to raise her bow as high as possible above the water when she should float.

That done, the tired party went to the tent for the dinner, which had been delayed until the work was finished, and again they waited for the tide, though this time it was with the certainty that the little steamer would float upon it unaided.

Their waiting was of short duration, for so much time had been employed in getting the craft ready for the last portion of the labor of raising her that the tide was flowing in before they began to eat their dinner.

As soon as the water began to ripple around the stern of the *Pearl* Charley and Bobby were ordered on board with long poles. They were to force her along when she began to float, while Captain Sammy and Dare stood by the

hawser that had been made fast to the bow, in order to pull her on to the ways that had been laid as high up on the beach as it was thought the steamer would float.

When in sailing trim the *Pearl* drew but fourteen inches of water; but now, owing to the heavy load in the stern, the tide had risen nearly three feet around her before she began to swing slowly around.

"Hold her there!" shouted Captain Sammy to those on board. "Don't let her swing one way or the other," and then he and Dare pulled her a few inches ahead until she grounded again.

The yacht floated with her bows high out of the water; and even if the precaution of patching her up with canvas had not been taken, she could hardly have shipped any water after she was once afloat.

In this slow way she was forced up the beach until, when the tide began to ebb again, she had settled firmly down on to the plank ways, and so high up that the workmen would not be disturbed by the water more than two hours each day.

"There!" said Captain Sammy, as he lighted his pipe, seated himself on the sand, and unbuckled his leg for a more complete rest while enjoying his triumphal smoke, "the *Pearl* has been raised, an' all you boys have got to do is to patch up the hole in her bows. You want to find

some well-seasoned cedar lumber, and you'll have the work done in no time."

Now, after what looked to be the most difficult of the task had been performed, Dare began to doubt his ability to repair the steamer in a workmanlike manner, and his face told quite plainly just what was troubling him.

"I s'pose you begin to think the worst part of the work has yet to come?" said the little man, as he tapped with his wooden leg on the tarred canvas.

"I'm afraid we sha'n't be able to make it look as nice as it did before, although I think we could make it watertight," said Dare, frankly.

"Well, I'll tell you what can be done. I'll see to getting the lumber, and I'll come over here and boss the job, providing you'll take me out as a passenger when you start on your cruise, in case I should want to go."

There could be but one answer to such a proposition, for the boys had come to like the little man so much during their acquaintance with him that they would be only too well pleased to have him with them, and Dare told him as much.

"Then," said Captain Sammy, apparently delighted at the boys' liking for him, "we'll have the *Pearl* ready in two days, and on Monday you can start."

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAUNCH.



HE boys were, naturally, very anxious to start on their cruise to the Everglades as soon as possible, but yet they felt that Captain Sammy was making a very rash promise when he said the *Pearl* would be repaired in two days.

Eager as they were to have the work done, they did not think it could be accomplished so quickly; but they resolved to waste no time, in order that they might do their full share.

Therefore, while Captain Sammy was smoking contentedly on the beach, they set about a thorough cleaning of the interior, which promised to be a long task.

Then a new difficulty presented itself: the engine needed prompt and skilled attention, and neither of the boys had the slightest knowledge of machinery. The more Dare thought about the matter the more firmly was he convinced that they were utterly powerless to act in that department, and in his perplexity he appealed to Captain Sammy.

"Of course you don't know anything about the engine, and no more do I," replied the little man, quietly. "What you've got to do is to hire Tom Rogers for two or three days, let him put the engine in good condition, and then teach you how to run it. I'll send him over here in the morning, and you can make a trade with him."

Thus the trouble which at first looked so serious to the boys was easily settled, and they continued their work of cleaning and scrubbing until long after the little captain had hobbled home.

It was sunset when they ate their supper, and during that pleasing and important duty Mr. and Mrs. Evans paid them a visit.

They were both very much surprised at the progress which had been made, and Mr. Evans, old as he was, could hardly conceal the pleasure of a boy at the sight of the trim little craft.

If Mrs. Evans had had any doubts about the wisdom of allowing the boys to take such a long trip as that to the Everglades was, those doubts were all dispelled, and her mind set perfectly at rest, when she heard what Captain Sammy had said about going with them.

Mr. Evans told Dare that he might engage the machinist whom Captain Sammy was to send to remain with them until both he and Charley could manage the engine; and

then he and his wife returned to the hotel, taking Charley with them, that he might bring a supply of clean clothes and more provisions to the tent.

There was very little time lost in trying to get to sleep that night after Charley returned. The hard work during the day and the wakefulness of the preceding night had the effect of closing their eyes in slumber almost as soon as they were stretched out on the camp-bed.

They slept the next morning until after Captain Sammy arrived and shouted, "Shipmates, ahoy!" in his gruffest tones, and then they scrambled out, feeling decidedly ashamed at being found in bed when the little man was there and ready for work.

It was a very hurried toilet and a still more hasty breakfast they made that morning, and while they were thus engaged Captain Sammy had ordered two men whom he had brought with him to go to work.

One was the machinist, and he agreed to put the engine in thorough working order in two days, while he thought that in that time, if one of the boys would help him, he could give him such instruction as would enable him to run the engine as much as would be needed on the proposed trip.

The man said his charges would be three dollars per day, and Dare engaged him to remain with them as long as was

necessary, provided he did not get through as quickly as he had thought he could.

"You'd better keep him with you until you get down to San Carlos harbor," said Captain Sammy, and Dare concluded the bargain, subject to his father's approval.

When the question came up as to which boy should turn engineer Dare thought he ought to take that post, since there was likely to be more work involved; but Captain Sammy settled the matter by saying,

"Let Charley attend to the engine, and Bobby can help him. You are the oldest, and should be the skipper, for that is really the hardest position, and one which requires the longest head. You must remember that you are going into waters about which you know nothing, and an error of judgment may wreck the *Pearl* where she can't be raised, as she was here."

Since Captain Sammy's words amounted virtually to a decision, Charley and Bobby went into the engine-room with Tom Rogers, while Captain Sammy, the man he had brought with him, and Dare set to work closing up the hole in the bows.

When done by one who understood the work as thoroughly as Captain Sammy did, it was neither a long nor a difficult task to make the little steamer water-tight again.

The plan was to seal up her hull with a single covering

of cedar boards about an inch thick, and when those which had been shattered were removed it was a simple matter to replace them with the ones Captain Sammy had brought with him.

So simple was the work to Captain Sammy and his man that by six o'clock the hull of the *Pearl* had been made as good as ever, and the new timbers had received the first coat of white-lead, over which was to be put two coats of paint.

Rogers had progressed much more slowly in the engine-room, because it was necessary to take the machinery entirely apart and free it from the rust that had, under the action of the salt-water, begun to gather.

The hired men stopped work promptly at six o'clock, and Captain Sammy went away with them; but the boys continued their work of "cleaning up" as long after supper as it was possible for them to see what they were about.

On the following morning they took very good care that Captain Sammy should not find them asleep when he came, and when the day was done the work on the *Pearl* was finished. Nothing remained but to launch her.

But it was now Saturday night, and as it was necessary that the paint should dry as much as possible, Captain Sammy decided that they would not launch her until Mon-

day, which plan would enable them to start on their cruise Tuesday morning, if they were so disposed.

That night the boys went to the hotel, to remain over Sunday. It was not necessary for any one to keep watch over the *Pearl*, and they had had enough of camp life to make them willing to sleep in a comfortable bed, as well as to eat their food at a table.

Captain Sammy had agreed to furnish the necessary bedding, cooking utensils, and coal, while upon the boys was to rest the duty of victualling of the craft.

Therefore Dare and his father had considerable business to attend to that evening, for the question had to be settled whether Mr. Evans would be willing to buy for them provisions sufficient to last on the long voyage they proposed to take.

Dare was very much afraid that his father would not consent, and therefore it was with anxious hearts that Charley and Bobby accompanied him when he went into the room to ask the important question.

In order that there might be no mistake about it Dare first told his father that, now that the raising of the *Pearl* was an accomplished fact, they had come for his permission to make a long trip through the Everglades, or as far in as they could go in the yacht. Dare also told him what portion of the outfit of the steamer Captain Sammy would fur-

nish, and concluded by asking if he would buy the provisions for them.

Mr. Evans's answer was as satisfactory as it was prompt:

"I already have to pay for the use of the lumber you hired, and shall be obliged to pay the machinist. Now, I am willing to purchase the things necessary for the cruise, provided you all give up your allowance of spending-money, and provided you learn all that is possible of the State which you are in, and the peculiar formation of the lower portion of it."

There was no question as to whether the boys would accept such a generous offer, and it would have been impossible to find three more happy boys in the entire State of Florida than Dare, Charley, and Bobby.

The Monday on which the *Pearl* was to be launched came at last, as all days will, however the time may drag, and the boys were up and on the beach at an early hour in the morning, even though the tide would not serve for the important ceremony until nearly evening.

With the exception of Rogers's work on the machinery, there was nothing more that could be done until the little steamer was afloat; but Charley had enough to occupy his attention in receiving his lesson on steam-engines in general and that belonging to the *Pearl* in particular. Bobby had been present in the capacity of general assistant during

the two previous days, and on the day of the launch he was still there, seeming to think his presence was absolutely necessary.

Thus Dare was left alone, as it were, until such time as Captain Sammy should come, for the engine-room of the *Pearl* was so small that it was impossible for more than three to get into it and have an opportunity to work.

He had left the boat to go to the tent while he was still waiting for Captain Sammy, when he saw a movement among the bushes that skirted the shore, and then a small, familiar-looking head was protruded on a short voyage of discovery.

There could be no mistake as to the ownership of that head, for it belonged to the former pirate of Tampa, and the stealthy manner in which it had been shown betokened mischief.

"Where's the old heathen?" whispered Tommy, as soon as Dare had approached him.

"I'm expecting him every minute now, and you must be careful not to let him see you, or I'm afraid he might punish you for wrecking the boat."

"He'll see me more'n he wants to before long," said Master Tucker, with a tinge of the old swagger in his tones. "I was goin' past his dock last night, an' he started after me, an' when he found he couldn't catch me he shied

a stick an' hit me on the arm. Now I'm goin' to serve him out, promise or no promise, an' I've come to warn you. That's his steamer, an' even if he has lent it to you I'm—"

The sentence was not finished, owing to the fact that the head was suddenly withdrawn, and a quick rustling of the bushes told that its owner was carrying it away at full speed, while the sight of Captain Sammy on the beach told the reason of the haste.

Dare was alarmed lest Tommy meditated "serving Captain Sammy out" by doing some injury to the *Pearl*, and he resolved to speak with the little man regarding it before he left him that night.

There was no chance for conversation then, for the Captain bustled and fussed around with his preparations for the launch, ordering Dare here and there until he got so confused that he hardly knew what he was about.

When he was ready to put the finishing touches to his work those in the engine-room were called out on to the beach, and Dare ordered to go on board. He was to stand in the bows, to throw over the anchors as soon as the launch had been accomplished, and both the other boys envied him the position.

Mr. and Mrs. Evans, who had promised to be present at the ceremony, arrived about fifteen minutes before the appointed time, and Captain Sammy was kept remarkably

busy in trying to do his work and explain everything to the visitors at the same time.

Finally all was ready, the last block was laid, and the captain and Rogers began knocking away the timbers that held the *Pearl* prisoner.

Then she started, slowly at first, her speed increasing each second, until she struck the water with a force that dashed the spray up around her in great volumes, and once more the *Pearl* was afloat.

Those on shore set up a loud shout of triumph, to which Dare responded by waving his hat, and then he let go both anchors.

Just as this was done, and he was thinking with pride that the beautiful little craft was at his disposal for some time at least, he caught a glimpse of Tommy Tucker, who was standing among the trees, peering out, as if plotting some mischief against the little steamer; and that sight destroyed all Dare's pleasure for the time being.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VOYAGE BEGUN.



HOWEVER much the sight of Tommy Tucker standing near the beach, as if meditating some mischief, might have troubled Dare, he was not allowed to spend much time dwelling on his fears.

The speed of the steamer had hardly been checked by the anchors before those on the beach, including Mr. and Mrs. Evans, got into the small boats and rowed out to the *Pearl*.

"Now," said Captain Sammy, in his old commanding way, after all were on board, "we have got to get the craft around to the dock, so that we can get the supplies on board. Dare, you go into the pilot-house and steer as snug along the shore, toward the dock, as possible, while the rest of us pull her. Charley and Bobby will take one boat, and Rogers and I the other, and if we can't walk her along over the water, no one can."

The anchors were raised, the towing-lines made fast, and, under the influence of four oars, the jaunty little steamer

glided over the water at a respectable rate of speed, while Dare, in the pilot-house, was as proud and happy as any boy could be who had so unexpectedly become captain of so fine a steamer as the *Pearl*.

Mr. and Mrs. Evans, as the passengers, examined every part of the boat, and, judging from the admiration on their faces when they finished the inspection, it would not have been a difficult matter to have persuaded them to take a short cruise.

In less than half an hour the steamer was made fast to Captain Sammy's wharf, just opposite a large pile of articles which he had laid out in the morning, and which were put on board of her at once.

There was bedding for the four berths, tables, chairs, and all sorts of cooking utensils, the last mentioned of which Captain Sammy was very careful about, he stating, as the reason of his excessive precaution, that he had shipped as cook, and wanted to know where all his implements were.

Then came water-casks, spare ropes, spars, and cables, and some of the workmen about the deck were set at work filling the tank with water and putting the coal on board.

It was a scene of pleasurable excitement to the boys, for all this hurried preparation told that the time for their departure was very near at hand.

Captain Sammy had taken very good care that there should be no delay about the start, and to that end had done a great deal of work during the morning, as was shown when he handed Mr. Evans a list of eatables which he had ordered, and which had already been brought on to the dock.

By the time the visitors were ready to depart there was absolutely nothing left to be done. The steamer was ready for her voyage. Rogers had announced that the engine was in perfect running order; the boys were sure that everything that was needed was in the cabins; and when the last bushel of coal was put on board Captain Sammy said that his portion of the work was done.

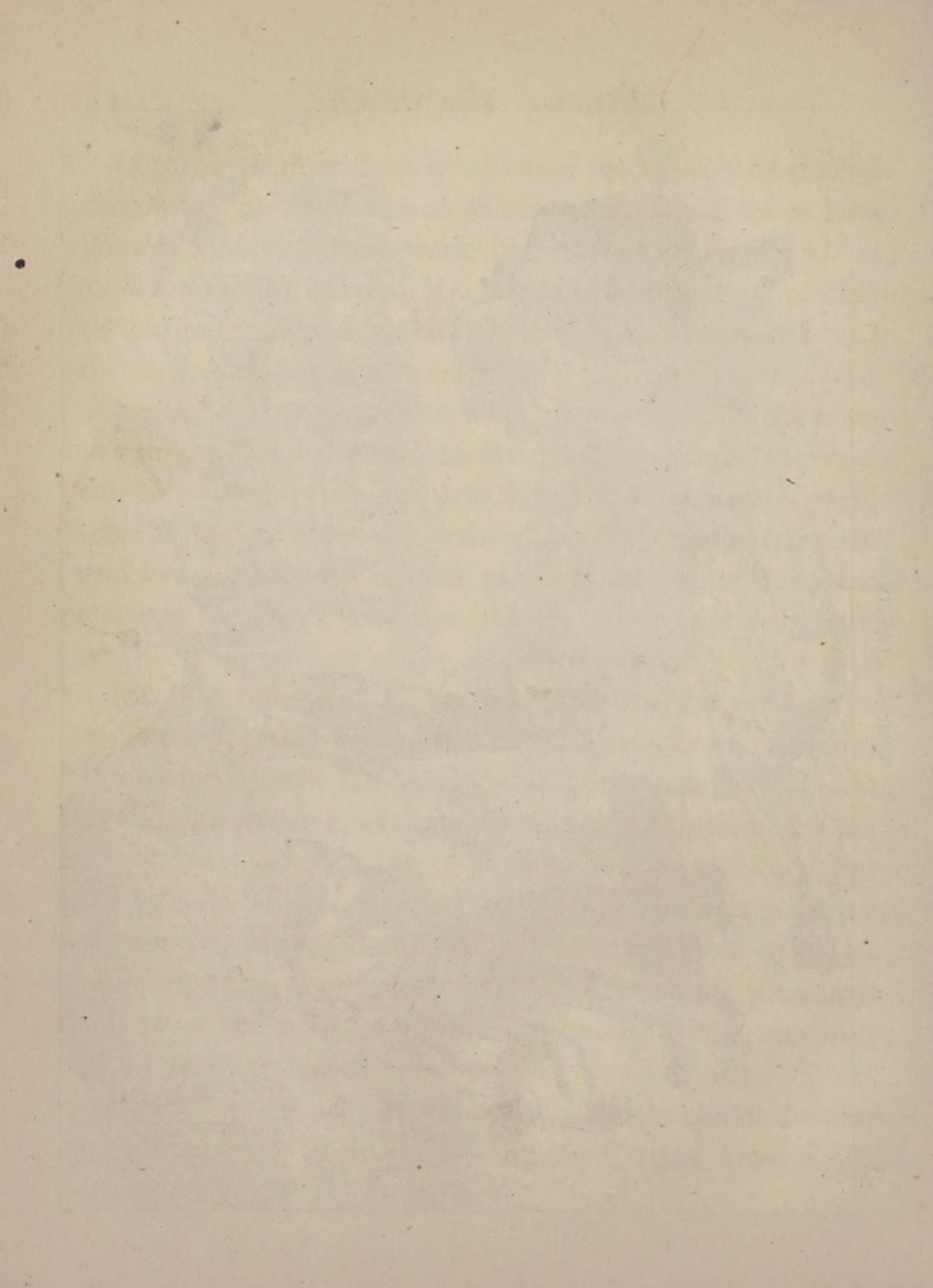
All that remained to be done was for the crew to get their baggage on board, and Mrs. Evans thought the boys had better sleep at the hotel that night, so they could pack, during the evening, everything which they wanted to take with them.

But now, as the question of leaving the steamer alone came up, Dare remembered Tommy's half-uttered threat, and he begged that at least two of them might remain on board, to keep watch against any mischief the ex-pirate might attempt to do.

Captain Sammy growled out something about the foolishness of ever having taken Master Tucker from Dollar

TAKING IN STORES.





Island, and it was plain to be seen that he was not at all easy in his mind regarding Tommy's ability to do harm.

Mr. Evans seemed to understand that it was not exactly safe to leave the steamer alone, and the question of how the difficulty should be avoided had just come up for discussion, when Captain Sammy settled the matter by saying,

"You boys go to the hotel and get what things you want to take with you. You can bring them here and sleep aboard to-night. I'll stay here till you come back, an' if that Tucker boy so much as shows his head around here, there won't be enough of him left to get back, or my name isn't Sammy Basset."

This plan was carried out, as, in fact, any proposed by the captain usually was, and the boys left the hotel two hours after, promising to see Mr. and Mrs. Evans on the next morning, when they would come down to the pier nearly opposite the hotel, in the *Pearl*, on their way to the Everglades.

When they reached the steamer Captain Sammy was stumping around at a furious rate in the standing-room aft, muttering all sorts of uncomplimentary and threatening things against Tommy Tucker, whom he believed he had seen skulking around the head of the dock.

"Keep a sharp lookout," he said as he went on shore,

after the boys had come on board, "and if that villain comes around here don't stop to have any talk with him, but hang him right up."

Then he stumped along up the pier, looking behind and around everything large enough to afford shelter to a boy of Tommy's size.

Dare lighted the swinging lamp that hung in the centre of the little cabin, and after they had arranged their belongings in such a way as to make the place look home-like, and with their guns where they could get at them readily, the boys went on deck to watch for the approach of the pirate.

But Captain Sammy was either mistaken as to having seen Tommy, or the boy had been frightened away when the little man made the search of the dock, for no signs were seen of him up to ten o'clock, and then the captain and crew of the *Pearl* "turned in."

The novelty of the situation, and the thought that they were actually on the steamer which was to take them on their famous trip, served to keep them in a state of wakefulness that almost amounted to remaining on watch, and it was nearly morning when the last one of them sank into a slumber that was disturbed by dreams of all kinds of possible and impossible adventures.

It was hardly daylight when Dare awoke on the follow-

ing morning; but he roused up his crew, so that everything might be put in the neatest trim before the cook and engineer arrived.

The beds were made, the cabins swept again, and everything on deck disposed of in such a way as to make the best show, and by sunrise Captain Sammy made his appearance at the head of the dock.

He had evidently counted on finding the boys asleep, and had probably enjoyed the anticipation of scolding them, as sleepy-heads, for his face showed plainest signs of disappointment when he found them up and at work.

He had brought what he called his "dunnage," in a canvas bag, and, after throwing it carelessly into one of the berths, began his official duties by getting the breakfast on the stove that stood in one corner of the engine-room.

By the time Tom Rogers arrived the breakfast had been eaten, and he and Charley went at once into the engine-room. The smoke that soon began to pour out of the smoke-stack told that they were getting ready for the start as quickly as possible.

Soon the noise of escaping steam was heard, and no unmusical sound ever rang in Dare's ears so pleasantly as did that.

He took his station in the pilot-house some time before

it was possible to start, and swung the wheel around in anxious expectancy, while Bobby rushed from one end of the boat to the other as if he thought the entire business devolved on him.

"Now, keep your eye peeled," said Captain Sammy to Dare, after what had seemed to be a long time of waiting; "ring the bell once when you are ready. I'll cast off the lines now."

Dare sounded the whistle just once, for the sake of hearing it, Bobby seemed to be lifted right off his feet by the music, Captain Sammy cast off the hawsers, and Dare pulled the engine-room bell with a vigor that promised to snap the wire if repeated.

Slowly the wheels commenced to revolve, and the *Pearl* began to glide away from the dock, while from the pilot-house, the bow, and the engine-room sounded a shout of joy and triumph.

Dare's head almost swam with delight as the little steamer went ahead at full speed, and Captain Sammy took up his station just in front of the pilot-house to assure himself that the young captain was not entirely incapacitated for duty by excitement.

On approaching the pier, at which he was to say adieu to his parents, Dare sounded the whistle until he saw his father and mother come out of the house,

and then he turned his attention to making a creditable landing.

Captain Sammy contented himself by simply watching Dare's proceedings, ready to take command if necessary, but allowing the boy to act on his own responsibility so long as he was managing the craft properly.

Mr. and Mrs. Evans were already on the pier when Dare rang the first bell to "slow down," and when the *Pearl* was taken along-side the wharf almost as skilfully as an experienced captain would have done it, both his father and Captain Sammy expressed to Dare their appreciation of his skill in managing the steamer.

The stay here was not a long one, for all hands were anxious to be as far on their journey as possible before night, since it had been decided that, unless it was absolutely necessary, the *Pearl* should not be run after dark, thereby lessening the risks and labor.

Dare proposed to take his father and mother out for a short sail, but Mr. Evans refused, adding, however, that if the invitation was given after the return from the Everglades it might be accepted.

Then the "good-byes" were spoken, the boys were cautioned to obey Captain Sammy implicitly, Dare went into the pilot-house again, and everything was ready for the actual beginning of the voyage.

The bell was rung for the engine to be started, the whistle sounded as a parting salute, and when the wheels began to revolve, and the *Pearl* sailed swiftly away, the trip to the Everglades had begun.

CHAPTER XIV.

CORAL REEFS.

A decorative initial letter 'T' with intricate floral and vine patterns, serving as the first letter of the first paragraph.

IT was all plain sailing before the *Pearl*, and only necessary for her captain to keep her headed straight down the bay. When they were well clear of the land Tom Rogers tested the speed of the little craft by putting on all steam, until it seemed as if she flew along the top of the water, rather than in it, and Charley and Bobby in the bow, where they could have a full view during this trial of speed, could hardly control their joy.

Dare was quite as much excited as they were, but he concealed it in his desire to appear as grave and dignified as he thought the captain of a steamboat ought to appear.

Down Hillsboro' Bay the *Pearl* raced, and after about two hours of the exciting sport Captain Sammy explained that they had reached Tampa Bay, which accounted for the increased roughness of the water.

Mangrove Point, at the mouth of Little Manatee River, was passed, and then Dare steered the *Pearl* as near to the

little chain of reefs as he dared to go, heading her directly for Mullet Key as he began to leave them astern.

Captain Sammy left his position of lookout to resume the duties of cook, and when the yacht was nearly opposite Seminole, Charley, Bobby, and the cook had a nicely served dinner of fried fresh fish and plenty of vegetables.

Then the little captain, with the aid of the boys, spread the table again, and sent Charley to relieve Rogers while he took Dare's place in the pilot-house, so the captain and engineer had their dinner.

Bobby had been appointed dish-washer, and he waited upon this second table with very little skill and at the expense of two plates, which he broke through attempting to take them from the stove when they were so hot as to burn his fingers.

When Dare went into the pilot-house again the course of the yacht had been changed, and she was running down between Ana Maria or Palm Key and the main-land.

"I guess we'll lay up in Sarasota Bay to-night," said Captain Sammy. "It's about the half-way place to the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River, and there isn't any need of rushing any."

Dare was perfectly willing to come to an anchor anywhere the little man thought proper, and Captain Sammy took up his position in the bow again, in order that he

might direct the course of the yacht through the network of small keys and reefs that marked the entrance to Sarasota Bay.

The sun was still quite high in the heavens when the *Pearl* dashed along merrily into the waters of the bay, and came to anchor just inside a jutting point of land that formed a snug harbor, and not more than a quarter of a mile from the shore.

Outside, seeming to shut out the waters of the Gulf from the bay, could be seen Long Boat, Sarasota, and Long Keys, as if standing sentinel over the beautiful body of water that formed the bay.

All hands "turned to" under the little captain's orders to make everything snug for the night, and when that was done he said, in his gruffest and most commanding tones,

"Now, then, if you boys are goin' ashore, you want to do it now, for your father told me that you was goin' to find out all about how the reefs was made before you got back, an' I want you to tell me the whole story to-night."

The boys were greatly surprised at this command, for as yet they had had no time to learn anything of the formation of the reefs, and, of course, were unable to give Captain Sammy the slightest information.

Dare managed to say, however, that they would go ashore for a short time, but that they could hardly tell anything about reefs.

Captain Sammy made no reply, but busied himself with his canvas bag, and the boys started for the shore in the little tender.

There was very little that was interesting to be seen on the shores of Sarasoto Bay, and the boys returned to the yacht before the hour had passed; but, quickly as they had returned, they found supper waiting for them, Captain Sammy and Rogers having already had theirs.

When they had finished eating, and helped Bobby in his work of clearing up, they filed into the forward cabin, looking rather mournful, because they were apparently expected to recite a lesson they had never learned.

It was quite evident that some considerable preparation had been made for their reception, for the cabin table was covered with books, and, seated behind it, with his longest pipe in his mouth, and a pair of cracked spectacles on his nose, was Captain Sammy, assuming all the airs and graces of a country school-teacher of the olden days.

"Sit down and be quiet," said Captain Sammy, glaring at them as if he suspected they intended to disobey him.

The boys did as they were commanded, although Bobby was so awed that he only occupied a very small portion of

his chair, and that directly on the edge, as if he believed it might be necessary for him to run away at any moment.

"Now, then," said Captain Sammy, sternly, "what are we come together here for?"

The boys were almost too much surprised to speak. They had come there because the little captain had ordered them to come, and surely he knew that.

"Don't know, do ye? Of course you don't, so there's no need of my askin' the question. Did I say you was to tell me what caused the Florida reefs, the like of which can't be found anywhere else in the country?"

"Yes, sir," replied Dare; "but we don't know, and it is just what we would like you to tell us."

"Why didn't you look at them an' find out as we was comin' along?" asked the little man, with a suppressed chuckle, as if he was having a great joke all by himself.

"I don't think the keys look different from any island," said Dare, who now almost began to think that Captain Sammy knew no more about the matter than they did.

"That's just because you don't know anything about it," said the little man, triumphantly.

Inasmuch as the boys quite agreed with him in this assertion, they said nothing, and he was disappointed, if he had thought he was going to provoke any argument.

"Now listen to me;" and Captain Sammy straightened

himself up, in order that his words might be more impressive. "I know all about it without any book, but I'll just keep one in my hand as I go along, for since my eyesight's got so bad I can't hold on to some of these names as I used to. In the first place, the Florida reefs don't run up the coast this way, though some folks hold that all the keys and reefs along the coast should be reckoned in with 'em; but in that I have my opinion, and you can have yours. The Florida reef, the way we call it down here, starts from a leetle north of Cape Florida, an' runs some miles beyond Key West. All that is one big bank of coral, with here an' there spots where it's been built high enough to come atop of the water, an' then the sand washes up on it, the mangrove-trees grow, an' then they're keys, like them you can see out there in the offing."

Captain Sammy stopped long enough to assure himself that the boys were paying strict attention, and then continued:

"The reef runs in a regular curve, croppin' out just a little here an' there, from Virginia Key, which is next to Cape Florida—an' everybody knows the cape is on Key Biscayne—to a leetle west of the Marquesas, where it opens up in Reef Channel an' Key West harbor. Then it runs nigh on to sixty miles sou'-sou'-west, an' then about a hundred an' forty miles west-sou'-west—perhaps a leetle more

westerly; but that's neither here nor there. Then for about thirty miles it runs west-nor'-west, taking in the Tortugas. Now, you keep them pints of the compass in your mind, in case you should ever want to coast around that way, an' you an' I won't have any trouble."

Captain Sammy glared over his glasses, in order to learn if there was any chance of trouble then; and finding that there was none, he said, solemnly,

"Now, of course, these reefs are bein' built all the time, an' what you wants to know is how that's done. Here goes for the way these scholars put it, an' you can have your 'pinion 'bout it, an' I can have mine. A reef is a regular limestone wall that a little animal they call a polyp builds, by sucking in the water that has got lime in it, and throwing the lime out on to the places where they want to build. These leetle animals can't work where the water's more'n fifteen fathom deep, so, you see, they have to curve around just as the land curves. Now, they go to work an' build great knobs—coral-heads, we sailors call 'em—all the way around in this fifteen fathom of water, an' they keep piling' 'em up till they are about six fathom from the surface. Then they stop, for they're sharp, these little polyps are, and they know that they can't work when they come just so near the surface. Then another kind, pretty near like them, that can't work except in shallow water, come

along an' build on top the coral-heads another kind of stone. Then the third sort of little fellows come an' put on the finishing touches just at the top of the water, making the coral that fine and delicate that it looks like leaves an' grass."

The little man stopped only long enough to wipe his glasses, and then continued:

"Now, you see, this reef is a regular limestone wall, straight up an' down to seaward, an' slopin' toward the land. Well, in time the waves grind the coral that's on the top into sand; then the mud that's in the water washes up, and, take everything together, it makes tolerable good soil. All the mangrove-trees around about shed the most part of their seeds in the water, because, you see, growing over it, they can't help themselves, and the seeds float around till some of them get washed up on to these reefs. Once they get into that sand they grow, and that settles it so far as the reefs go, for then folks or turtles can live on 'em, and they're keys. Now, that's the way the books have it that the reefs and keys are made; and if I should happen to have a different opinion to that, you see, you ain't bound to take it that I'm right, because you an' I never had a reg'lar introduction to each other."

The boys were at a loss to understand how the want of an introduction could affect a fact, and they urged Cap-

tain Sammy to give them his idea of the formation of the reefs, or, at least, to tell them how it differed from that which he had stated as coming from "books."

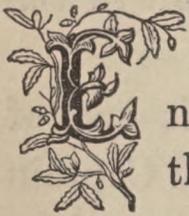
But the little man was so decided in his refusals, and so guarded in his replies to any of the questions intended to draw him out, that they soon came to the conclusion that his opinions did not differ in any way from those of the authorities he had quoted.

"You see, there's a good deal more about this end of this snug little State that you ought to know," said Captain Sammy, as he laid aside his pipe, which had long since "gone out," took off his glasses, and closed his book with a bang that caused the boys to jump; "but I sha'n't tell you about it now, for it will keep until we run on to it; and, besides, I want you to go to bed now, so we can make an early start in the morning."

By the way Captain Sammy spoke the boys knew that there was no use in trying to prolong the conversation, and they crept into their berths, feeling that an hour after sunset was altogether too early to go to bed on the first day of the cruise.

CHAPTER XV.

THE NIGHT ALARM.



VEN though the boys did think that there was no need of their going to bed so soon, just because they were to start at an early hour in the morning, every one of them was asleep in less than ten minutes after they had rolled into their berths.

Tom Rogers slept in the engine-room, and he had retired before Captain Sammy finished his rather long-winded lecture on coral reefs; therefore, as soon as the boys were asleep the little man was left entirely without companionship.

He tried to read, but, owing to the crack in the glasses of his spectacles and the rather dim light in the cabin, he was forced to give up the attempt. Then he went on deck, examined the anchor cable, to see that it did not chafe the wood-work; took a squint at the lantern, to make sure it was in the proper position; and, having nothing else to do, went to bed also.

The *Pearl* lay as motionless as if she were still high and

dry on the beach at Tampa, and there appeared to be no reason whatever why all hands should not have a pleasant and quiet night's rest. The night was cold enough to make the warmth of the bedclothes feel comfortable to the occupants of the cabin, but not so cold as to prevent the cabin-door from being left open, to admit a free circulation of air.

It seemed to Dare that it must have been midnight, when he was awakened by hearing Captain Sammy shout, angrily,

"Now, what are you about? Why don't you lie still and give other folks a chance to sleep?"

Of course Dare supposed that Charley or Bobby had got out of his berth; so, without seeing any one, he asked,

"Who is it? What are you up for?"

"I'm not up. What are you doing?" replied Captain Sammy; and it was easy to tell by the tones of his voice that he was irritated by Dare's question.

"I'm not doing anything. You awakened me when you spoke," replied Dare, in an injured tone.

"Then it's one of the other boys, and I do wish they knew enough to let other people sleep."

Bobby had the berth directly above Captain Sammy, and Charley slept in the one above Dare; therefore the latter put his hand up to his brother's berth, in order

to learn if it was he who had disturbed the little man's repose.

But Charley was not the one who had broken the quiet of the cabin, for as Dare touched his face he cried out, loudly,

"Don't fool; let a fellow alone, can't you?"

"Don't fool!" echoed Captain Sammy, unable to see what was going on, and supposing Charley was the culprit who had awakened him. "It's no foolin' matter to kick up such a row in the night, and I'll let you know that I'm not foolin'."

"What—what—what's the matter?" asked Charley, in surprise.

"What's the matter?" roared Captain Sammy, growing so angry that he tried to sit upright in his berth, and hit his head against the boards above him with a thump that startled Bobby. "I want to know what you're skylarkin' round for at this time of night?"

"I ain't skylarking," said Bobby, roused from his sleep by the thumping of the little man's head against the berth, and thinking, of course, that he was spoken to. "Was I snoring, sir?"

"Hold your tongue until you are spoken to. Now answer my question."

Of course he intended the latter portion of his remark

for one of the other boys; but how could Bobby know this, having just awakened? and he asked, innocently,

"What question, sir?"

"*Will* you hold your tongue?" shrieked the little captain; and Bobby answered, meekly,

"Yes, sir."

All three of the boys now began to think that some dreadful thing had happened, and that one of the others was responsible for it, while Captain Sammy, in such a towering rage that he could not explain himself, made matters worse by asking the question, without calling any one by name.

"Now, see if you have got sense enough left to tell me what you were parading around the cabin for at this time of night."

Fearing to offend by answering when they were not spoken to, and each knowing that he was and had been quietly remaining in his berth, no one replied.

"Why don't you answer me?" shouted Captain Sammy, as he sprang out of his berth, with a great deal of unnecessary noise, and proceeded to light the lamp.

"Who are you speaking to?" asked Dare, almost beginning to think the captain had lost his senses.

"Why, you, of course; who else should I speak to?" cried the little man, as he tried in vain to ignite the match.

"I haven't been out of bed since I got into it," replied Dare, gravely.

There was perfect silence in the cabin for a moment, during which Captain Sammy succeeded in lighting the lamp, and then he angrily surveyed the cabin.

Each one of the boys was in bed, and there were no evidences of their having been up since they first went to sleep.

Captain Sammy had hopped out of bed on one leg; and now, after seeing what seemed to be proof that the boys had been doing nothing worse than sleeping soundly, he hopped back to his berth, strapped on his wooden stick, and stumped out to the engine-room, where the boys could hear him accusing Rogers of having come in to disturb the sleep of the occupants of the cabin.

Rogers stoutly denied having done anything of the kind, but scolded at the little man for having awakened him, when he had probably been dreaming of a disturbance.

Captain Sammy growled out some inaudible reply, and came back into the cabin looking less angry and more mystified than when he left it.

"I may have been dreaming," he said, in a half explanatory way; "but it don't seem as if a dream could be so real. I was certain that one of you boys was creeping

“IT’S ME—TOMMY TUCKER—AN’ I’M AWFUL HUNGRY.”



along by the side of my berth, and I made sure you was up to some mischief."

Each of the boys insisted that they had been awakened by Captain Sammy, and had had no idea of anything but sleeping, which assertion the little man was forced to believe.

He extinguished the lamp and got into bed, insisting that he did hear some one, although the proof he had should have convinced him that he was mistaken.

It was some time after this before any of the occupants of the cabin could get to sleep; but after a while they dropped off into slumber, until Dare was the only one awake. He could hear the regular breathing of the boys, and Captain Sammy's vigorous snoring, all of which caused him to feel like joining them in their slumber.

Just as his eyes were closing, and he had nearly yielded to the influence, he was conscious of a rustling sound, as if some one was moving near him.

He turned over quickly in alarm, and was about to cry out, when a hand was laid over his mouth, and the intruder whispered softly in his ear,

"It's me—Tommy Tucker—an' I'm awful hungry."

Dare was so surprised that he could not have spoken even if Tommy's hand had not been over his mouth. He

understood now that Captain Sammy had really heard some one in the cabin, but how it could possibly be Tommy Tucker was more than he could make out. He was trying to understand it all, when the boy whispered again,

"I'm awful hungry."

"But how did you get here?" Dare asked, in a cautious whisper, as soon as he could remove Tommy's hand from his mouth.

"I hid under Captain Sammy's berth this morning when you was all eatin' your breakfast. I didn't know he was comin' with you, an' I knew he wouldn't let me come if he knew it, so I thought I'd hide there till you started. I've been in that little mite of a place since mornin', an' I'm most dead."

Even in his whispered conversation it was easy to tell that Master Tucker was thoroughly disheartened; but how to aid him was an entirely different matter.

"We shall have to tell him you are here," said Dare, after a long pause.

"No, no, don't do that; he'd just about kill me. I'd rather starve than have him know it. Can't you get me a cracker or something, and shove it under the berth?"

"I don't dare to now; but I will the first thing in the morning."

"Be as early as you can," whispered the hungry pirate, and then he crept cautiously back to his hiding-place; while Dare lay and wondered how it would be possible to keep Tommy's presence a secret until he could be landed.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNSUCCESSFUL PLOTTING.



S might be expected, Dare was in a very unenviable frame of mind regarding Tommy's presence on the *Pearl*. He knew that the proper thing for him to do was to tell the little man the exact state of the case, and not attempt to deceive him in any way. But he feared to do this, because of the consequences to the pirate.

Captain Sammy was justly angry with Tommy for having wrecked the boat, and there was no doubt but that he would inflict some terrible punishment upon him because of it in case he should meet him. If he should know that Tommy had secreted himself on board the *Pearl*, thinking to take a pleasant trip in the steamer without the knowledge of its owner, the little man would be still more incensed, and thoughts of the revenge he might take made Dare shudder.

To his mind it would have been the very extreme of cruelty to expose Tommy's presence to the man whom he

had wronged, and yet he was unable to form any plan which he thought would be likely to succeed for secretly putting the boy on shore.

It was a long time before he could get to sleep that night, and even then he awoke at short intervals, his fears being so great that sleep could not overcome them.

It could not be possible that Tommy, the boy who had voluntarily brought Captain Sammy's wrath upon his head, and who had for the second time placed himself in his enemy's power, suffered nearly as much that night as did Dare, who was perfectly innocent.

When daylight came Dare was the first to respond to the little man's call, but he could not look him fully in the face, because of the knowledge that he was deceiving him, and the fear that his secret could be read in his countenance.

Dare was anxious to tell the other boys of Tommy's presence there; but it seemed as if Captain Sammy was trying to prevent him from getting an opportunity to speak with them, for at no time, during the work of getting under way, could he find a chance to speak with either one of his companions alone.

He did succeed, however, in throwing some bread and cold meat under the berth where Tommy lay concealed, but he had no chance to speak to the self-made prisoner.

The fire in the furnace had been banked on the night

before, and the work of getting up steam occupied but a short time; in fact, so quickly was it done, that the little craft was ploughing her way through the waters of Sarasota Bay before Captain Sammy had breakfast ready.

That meal was eaten, as was the dinner the day before, first by the little captain, Charley, and Bobby, and then by Rogers and Dare.

It was during this meal, and while the little man was in the pilot-house, that Dare hoped to be able to tell one or both of his companions of what he had learned; but he did not dare to trust Rogers with the secret, and he could not speak to either of the boys without danger that the engineer would overhear him.

After Dare took up his position in the pilot-house again Captain Sammy remained in the bow, even though the channel was so deep and wide that there was no necessity for his directing the helmsman, and it seemed to the anxious Dare that he was on the lookout for something.

Through the bay, past Sarasota Key to Chaise's Key, the little steamer continued her course in what might have been called an inside channel; but here the water-way, protected by keys, came to an end, and the yacht was run through Casey Pass to the clear waters of the Gulf.

Then the course was down past the coast, within about a mile of the shore; and when they had run for a few

miles Captain Sammy surprised Dare greatly by telling him to give the signal to stop the engine.

Wonderingly Dare obeyed. Then, when the little steamer lay almost motionless on the water, the little man explained to Dare and the other boys, who had come rushing out in the greatest excitement to learn the meaning of the sudden stop:

"I want to try and get a turtle or two, so that we can change our bill of fare a little, and I reckon we sha'n't have to row around here very long without finding one."

Then he ordered the tender made ready, while he went below and took, from right in front of where Tommy was lying in fear and trembling, a single-pronged harpoon that he had stowed away there.

While he was below Dare had an opportunity of telling Charley and Bobby, in a very hurried way, of the cause of the previous night's disturbance.

Their surprise—and, in Bobby's case, fear—was written so plainly on their faces when Captain Sammy came on deck, that it was a wonder he did not suspect something was wrong. He probably would have done so had he not been so deeply engaged in the business of getting a turtle for dinner.

It was while Captain Sammy was making the boat ready that a sudden thought occurred to Dare. If he could

arrange matters so that Rogers and Bobby should go in the boat with Captain Sammy, there would be a possibility that he might, in case the chase led the party any distance from the steamer, run the *Pearl* in close to land, and set Tommy ashore.

Of course he had no idea what the boy would do there, so far from home; his only thought was to get him out of the dangerous position in which he had placed himself.

"Now, who's going with me? I can't take but two;" and Captain Sammy looked around, as if he expected that each one would be eager to accompany him.

Dare had no idea of going if he could avoid it, and Charley and Bobby were so dazed by the strange news they had heard, that they paid no attention to the question.

It was while all three stood silent that Rogers said,

"I should like to go, if the boys don't care to, for it has been some time since I have been on that kind of a lark."

"You can, of course; but I thought the boys would be just crazy for it," said Captain Sammy, in surprise at the indifference displayed by the crew.

Dare realized that it was necessary for him to say something, in order that their singular behavior might not excite suspicion, and he said, in a hesitating way,

"If you would take Mr. Rogers and Bobby with you it would give Charley and me a chance to see how we could

handle the steamer alone, and we could come after you whenever you were ready to come on board."

"All right," said the little man, as he motioned the others to get into the boat; but it was quite plainly to be seen that he thought the affair very strange, despite this apparently plausible excuse.

As soon as the boat left the steamer Dare and Charley went below, where they found the pirate had already emerged from his concealment, and was in the engine-room, eating at a rapid rate. From his hiding-place he had heard the conversation on deck, and, as soon as the sounds told that the small boat had started, he made a frantic rush for the eatables.

In a brief, hurried way Dare told Tommy what he proposed to do, and asked him if he would be willing to go on shore at any point where it would be possible to land him.

"I'll go anywhere, no matter what kind of a place it is, jest so's I'm clear of him," said Tommy, speaking rather indistinctly, because of the quantity of food in his mouth.

Thus assured that the party whom they wanted to aid was willing to be helped, the boys went on deck, in order that they might keep watch of the boat, so as to take the first opportunity of landing the fugitive.

They could see Captain Sammy standing in the bow of the tender, with his harpoon raised ready for throwing, as

if he already saw his prey, while Bobby and Rogers were steadily pulling away from the *Pearl*.

"If they keep on at that rate it won't be long before we can get Tommy ashore," said Dare, with a feeling of relief. "You go into the engine-room, so as to be all ready, and I will give the signal the moment it is safe."

Charley did as he was requested, and Dare went into the pilot-house. Five minutes later he rang the bell to go ahead.

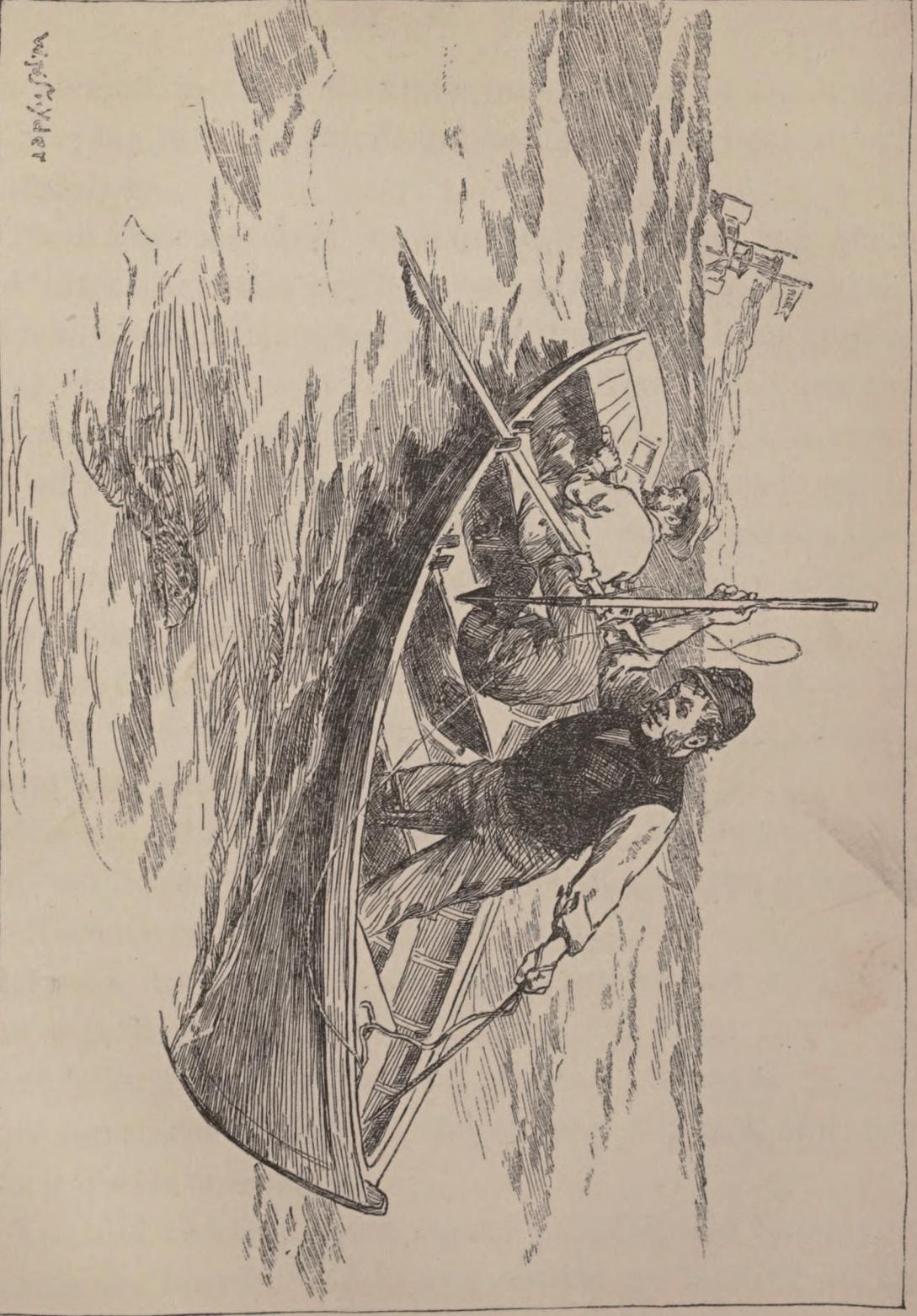
The little boat was fully a mile and a half in advance of the steamer, and it seemed certain that they could reach the shore without their intentions being discovered until after it was too late to capture Tommy.

"Don't run too fast at first," shouted Dare through the speaking-tube. "I'll follow them a little way, and when I head her for the shore you put all steam on."

"Ay, ay!" shouted Charley in return, and Dare devoted all his attention to steering the *Pearl* in such a way as to make it appear that he was only sailing for the pleasure of the thing.

Suddenly he saw Captain Sammy throw the harpoon, and in another moment the boat dashed ahead with increased speed, showing that the iron was fast in a turtle, which was dragging the boat along at a rapid rate.

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SUDDENLY HE SAW CAPTAIN SAMMY THROW THE HARPOON.

It seemed to Dare that the time had come for him to put his plan into execution, and he headed the boat directly for the shore.

"Now start her up!" he shouted to Charley, and an instant after the little craft leaped through the water at a rate which told that every ounce of steam had been applied.

For just one moment, and only one, Dare felt sure that he would be successful. Then Captain Sammy's boat was whirled suddenly around, as if the turtle had made up his mind to travel in another direction, and dashed along within fifty yards of the shore at right angles with the course of the *Pearl*.

"Slow down!" Dare shouted to Charley; and as the steamer's speed was slackened he saw Captain Sammy waving his hand for him to approach.

"It's all up now!" shouted Dare to the engine-room, "Captain Sammy's coming right for us, and you'll have to hide Tommy again."

Between turtle-power and steam-power the two boats came together very rapidly, and by the time they were within hailing distance Captain Sammy succeeded in passing a rope around one of the turtle's flippers, and thus making him a prisoner.

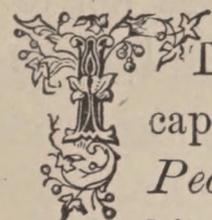
"You did the thing just right," said Captain Sammy, as he came on board, "and if you should go turtling all the

rest of your life you never could handle a boat as near right as you have this one."

But Dare thought that he had done anything else but handle the boat correctly, and again his fears beset him lest Captain Sammy should take it into his head to look under his berth.

CHAPTER XVII.

ABOUT TURTLES.



It was a huge turtle which Captain Sammy had captured, and when it was pulled in aboard of the *Pearl* its jaws opened and shut with a snap as it bit furiously at everything near it. Bobby was sure it weighed three or four hundred pounds, but Captain Sammy insisted that one-half of that sum would be about the correct figure, and as the weight was being discussed it occurred to him that the boys deserved a bit of a lecture on turtles.

"Now," said Captain Sammy, assuming the same learned air he had worn during the talk about reefs, "what I want you to tell me is, what kind of a turtle that is."

Up to this time the boys hardly knew that there was more than one species of turtles, and, with some hesitation, Dare confessed as much.

"Why, you boys don't know nothin' at all—nothin' at all!" cried Captain Sammy, in tones of disdain. "Thought there wasn't but one kind of turtle, eh? an' you claim to

have been brought up among civilized creeters! What was your father thinkin' of, and how did he expect you was goin' to earn your own livin', if you didn't know anythin' about turtles?"

Dare was on the point of saying that, inasmuch as they did not intend to become turtle-fishers, save for the few months they were in Florida, such knowledge was not of vital importance, although it might be useful. But he checked himself, and said instead,

"How many kinds are there, sir?"

"There's a good many kinds, and you ought to have known it," replied Captain Sammy, solemnly. "There's the hawkbill, for instance, that what is called the tortoise-shell comes from, an' there used to be a good many of them around here. They are the ones that only lay two sets of eggs—one in July, and one in August; and then they lay about one hundred and fifty at a time, or three hundred in all. Then there is the green turtle, and I've seen one that weighed over five hundred pounds; some folks say they do go as high as seven hundred, but about that you can have your opinion and I'll have mine. Green turtles commence with the egg business in May, spawning in that month and in June, and averaging about eighty eggs each time. That's the kind of turtles that make the best eating. Then there's a kind called the loggerhead—that's

great on eggs; she lays three sets, at about the same time the green turtle does, and when she gets through with her work she's laid five hundred. The trunk turtle ain't so far behind, although she only lays about three hundred and fifty eggs in the season."

The boys almost forgot their pirate under the berth in their surprise at the great number of eggs one turtle could lay, and they were about to ask some questions regarding the manner in which the eggs were deposited, when the little man continued:

"The loggerhead and trunk turtles are mighty savage creeters, and run a good deal larger in size than the others do; they lay their eggs anywhere around here. The green turtle is more shy, and she gets off where there isn't so much of a chance that any one will find her eggs; but I have known her to come right up on the coast here to make her nest. The hawkbill is the one that takes good care no one shall find her out, and when she wants to lay eggs she gets 'way off on the smallest keys. It's my opinion," and now Captain Sammy looked very wise, "that turtles are mighty knowing animals. I don't go so far as to say that they know jest what you are talking about, but they come pretty near it."

"How do they make their nests, sir?" asked Dare.

"Now, that's where their cunning comes in," said the

little man, earnestly. "They don't come out till high-water on a moonlight night, and they know when it's high-water as well as I do. They go up just above the highest point of the tide, and scoop out a nest with their flippers in the sand. Then they commence to lay their eggs, doing it very quickly, and when they've done they cover them over with sand and go back into the water again. The sun hatches the eggs, you know, and when the little turtles come out they make a bee-line for the water. They ain't more than an inch long, and the birds gobble up as many of them as they can before they get into the sea."

"How deep are the nests?" asked Charley, wondering whether they might not remain there until it was time to hunt for such nests full of eggs as the captain had described.

"About a foot and a half deep, and it only takes the old turtle about ten minutes to fill it."

"Now, what kind of a turtle is this one?" asked Dare, pointing to the enormous fellow who was snapping savagely at everything near him.

"That? Why, that's a loggerhead, of course, and you ought to know it after all this talk," cried Captain Sammy, impatiently; and then, as if he had just noticed that the steamer had not started again, he shouted, "What do you mean by loafing around here? Get on at once, for, if

nothing happens, we must anchor off Punta Rassa to-night."

Dare rushed to the pilot-house, Rogers and Charley went to the engine-room, and Bobby was forced to help Captain Sammy in the preparation of turtle-soup for dinner.

Then the little craft dashed on through the water again, the captain coming out to give some directions as to the course when they were off Gasparilla Pass, and disappearing again until Gasparilla Island was left astern and the *Pearl* was off Boca Grande.

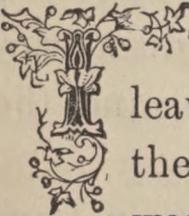
When he came on deck this time it was to summon Dare to dinner; and while the crew of the *Pearl* had turtle-soup the imprisoned pirate was forced to eat crackers, since soup could hardly be thrown to him under the berth.

When Dare went on deck they were just passing Lacosta Island, and Captain Sammy seated himself in the bow again.

Then Boca Captiva and Captiva Island were left astern, until, quite late in the afternoon, Sanibel Island was reached. The yacht swung gracefully around Point Ybel, up past Fort Dulany, and into San Carlos Harbor, anchoring off Punta Rassa a short time after nightfall.

CHAPTER XVIII.

UP THE CALOOSAHATCHEE.

T was at Punta Rassa that Tom Rogers was to leave the *Pearl*, and Charley to take his place at the engine; and that night, while Captain Sammy was on deck, making everything fast and snug, Dare found an opportunity of whispering to Tommy that he hoped to get him ashore in the morning.

A mail-steamer made weekly trips between Punta Rassa, Tampa, and Cedar Keys, and it was very probable that Tommy could beg a passage upon her, if he could not induce Rogers to take him; therefore it seemed to be of the highest importance that the pirate should leave the *Pearl* at that point.

Under pretence of wanting to remain on deck awhile after Captain Sammy had finished his work there, the three boys secured an opportunity of discussing the matter; and many and varied were the plans offered and rejected by which it would be possible to steal Tommy Tucker from under the very nose of his enemy.

Of course, if Captain Sammy should take it into his head to go on shore the next morning, then everything would be as simple as a bow on a hat-band; but the boys had every reason to believe, from what they had heard him say, that it was his intention to land Rogers at a very early hour in the morning, and then push directly up the river, in order to reach Fort Simmons by sunset.

"Can't he swim ashore?" asked Bobby, after almost every other way had been discussed.

"Of course not," replied Dare. "There are sharks and alligators both around here, as thick as the mosquitoes, and he would go where Captain Sammy's leg went before you could count five."

"Well," said Charley, with a sigh of resignation, "it won't do any good to sit here all night talking about it. We'd better go to bed now, so as to be up as early as any one else in the morning."

Charley's advice was good, and all hands followed it, so far as going to bed went; but the mosquitoes interfered sadly with their attempts to sleep. It seemed as if there were perfect swarms of those musical little insects in the cabin, and Dare thought the pirate was being punished severely by being obliged to remain in the small space under the berth and refrain from making a noise.

It would have been impossible for the prisoner to have

moved around the cabin any that night, for Captain Sammy was up and down like a Jack-in-a-box, and the first move would have been sure to result in detection.

At last the boys dropped off to sleep one by one; and when they awakened again Captain Sammy was in the engine-room preparing Rogers's breakfast, so that he could get on shore very early.

If Dare had counted on Charley's assistance in getting rid of their troublesome passenger, he was disappointed, for Rogers called him into the engine-room as soon as he was up, and kept him there, giving additional orders and instructions relative to the working of the engine.

While Dare was in the cabin, on the alert to every move Captain Sammy made, he saw Tommy's head cautiously protruded from under the berth, and heard the unhappy pirate-whisper,

"You'll be certain to get me out of this to-day, won't you?"

"I'll do the best I can," replied Dare, bending low over the berth, that no one should hear his whisper; "but I don't see how it's to be done."

"I shall die if I have to stay here any longer, I know I shall, for it's just awful," and the two tears that rolled down the pirate's cheeks attested to the fact of his suffering.

There was no time for Dare to express his sympathy, for Captain Sammy entered the cabin just then, and Tommy withdrew his head so quickly that he hit it a terrible thump on the berth above, which must have taken his mind, for a few moments at least, from the fact of his imprisonment.

"Do any of the boys want to see the town?" the little man asked.

"I don't think they do, sir. Of course, if you want to send there for anything, any of us will go."

"No, I don't want to send, for I am going on shore myself to carry Rogers. I thought, if any of you wanted to go, you'd better be getting ready. But it's just as well you don't, for there ain't more than twenty houses there, and really nothing to see."

Dare's heart seemed to come up into his throat, so great was his delight that Captain Sammy was going ashore, for it seemed almost certain that, once left alone, they could dispose of Tommy in some way.

He found an opportunity of warning Charley not to express any desire to see Punta Rassa, and then went on deck to say "good-bye" to Rogers.

"Have everything ready so that we can leave the moment I get back," shouted Captain Sammy, as the little tender left the *Pearl*; and even as he shouted the boys

could hear Tommy scurrying around below, probably engaged in stretching his legs.

Strange as it may seem, the boys had not once thought that they should be without the means of reaching the shore after Captain Sammy left in the tender, and Dare's joy at his going was very short-lived, for he realized when the little craft left the *Pearl* that he and his crew were quite as much prisoners as was Tommy.

"There's only one chance," he said, mournfully, to Charley, "and that is in a boat coming along-side, or near us, while he is gone. Let's, all hands, keep a bright look-out, and if we see any kind of a craft hail her."

Tommy was perfectly quiet below, and there was no doubt but that he was making rapid inroads on the larder.

The watch on the bow of the *Pearl* was not continued very long, for in five minutes after Captain Sammy stepped ashore he was seen returning, with some bundles in his hands, and he started directly for the steamer.

"It's all up now," said Dare, with a groan. "Our trip is spoiled, all because of Tommy; for I know something dreadful will happen when Captain Sammy sees him, and there isn't much chance that we can keep him hidden very long."

Then he went down to tell the prisoner that he must get into his dungeon again, or, what would be altogether for

the best, show himself, and be set ashore as soon afterward as the little captain would permit.

As to the last proposal Tommy showed such signs of fear that it was useless to urge it. He declared that he had rather jump overboard and run the risk of being eaten by the sharks, which death he thought would be far easier than the one the captain would mete out to him. He insisted that there would be plenty of opportunities for him to get on shore after they were farther up the river, and that he would gladly take the chances of the walk through the woods to Punta Rassa, rather than face his enemy.

Then Charley proposed that he should hide under the little berth off the engine-room, rather than in the forward cabin, since in that place they would have a better chance to give him his food, and he could go into the standing-room after all the others were in bed.

This change was gladly accepted by the disconsolate pirate, and he hastened to stow himself away there as quickly as possible.

"You'll certain let me know when there's the littlest chance for me to get ashore, won't you?" he asked, imploringly, and Dare assured him with decided emphasis that he was quite as anxious to land him as he was to be landed.

When Captain Sammy stepped on board he looked around him for some evidences that preparations had been

made for getting the steamer under way, but everything was as he had left it. The crew bustled around lively enough as soon as he was there; but their idleness during his absence was something he could not understand, and Dare believed the little man had grown suspicious. He well knew that if the captain should seriously suspect that something was taking place on the steamer which was kept a secret from him, it would not take him long to discover everything, and then would come the tragedy he had been fearing.

It was not many minutes after this before Charley announced that he was ready, the anchor was weighed, and the *Pearl* steamed swiftly up the sluggish waters of the Caloosahatchee River.

Had the boys not been so troubled in their minds concerning Tommy, they would have enjoyed to the utmost the morning sail up the river, where the scenery was so beautiful and the animal life so abundant.

Alligators of all sizes were to be seen as far as the eye could reach; some floating on the surface of the water, more like logs of wood than living things; others lying on the banks, with their wicked-looking eyes bright and shining; and others in pursuit of game. Snake-birds, with their shrill cries, seemed everywhere among the mangrove, oak, mulberry, or gum trees; bitterns darted from branch to

branch; kingfishers flew before the steamer, or sat watchful near the water; and the banks of the river seemed teeming with birds of varied descriptions.

Tall plants, with large white, crimson, or purple blossoms, and beautiful flowers of many kinds, fringed the water's edge, while the banks were overhung with tangled masses of the densest tropical vegetation, beyond which rose forests of cabbage-palm, backed on the higher ground by tall pine-trees.

The water was so clear that the bottom of the river could be distinctly seen, and Captain Sammy, from his perch on the bow, pointed out sharks, devil-fish, saw-fish, jew-fish, sting-rays, whip-rays, and innumerable other specimens, of which the boys had never heard.

The scene was strangely beautiful; but when Dare would grow interested in anything he saw, the thought of Tommy, and what the result of his stowing himself away on the *Pearl* might be, would come to him, and all else would be forgotten or unnoticed.

It was after they had been about two hours on their journey that Bobby crept into the pilot-house, and, in a way intended to be secret, but which would instantly attract attention, whispered to Dare that Charley and Tommy had formed a plan which they wanted him to consent to.

It was that one of the boys should call Captain Sammy into the cabin, and there engage his attention until the pirate could creep out on deck, jump into the tender, and row ashore. After he had made his escape into the woods some one could discover that the boat had gone adrift, and the steamer be put back for it.

In case Captain Sammy should discover the plot after Tommy had cast the boat loose from the steamer, and while he was yet in sight, Charley was to pretend to misunderstand the signals given, and thus the pirate would escape before the steamer could be stopped.

Dare did not like the plan, because of the deception that must be practised on the little man; but something must be done, even if it was desperate, and he told Bobby to go away for a while until he could think the matter over.

All this time Captain Sammy was leaning over the rail in a careless sort of way, as if he was paying no attention to what was taking place behind him; but, had any of the boys watched him carefully, they would have seen that he was on the alert for everything around him.

Dare realized that if they did not part company with the pirate very soon, they would be so far from any settlement as to make it impossible that he could ever reach home; therefore, much as he disliked Charley's plan, he concluded that it should be tried.

He made motions to Bobby to come into the pilot-house again, and there another whispered consultation was held as to how Bobby should contrive to get the little man into the cabin and keep him there.

Then Bobby returned to Charley, telling him what Dare had said, and warning him to have Tommy all ready when Dare should give the signal by whistling through the speaking-tube.

Dare proposed to wait until they should come to a bend in the river before the plan was carried into execution, so that Tommy could be more sure of getting out of sight quickly, and in less than half an hour the *Pearl* approached what seemed to be the very place of all others in which to try the experiment.

Dare whistled to Charley, and was about to motion to Bobby to do his portion of the work, when Captain Sammy started to his feet as if he had received an electric shock.

"I don't like this!" he shouted, in what, to Dare, seemed a stern voice. "Tell Charley to stop her!"

It was with a sinking heart that Dare rang the bell, for he felt that the critical moment had come, and that in a very short time Captain Sammy would know all.

CHAPTER XIX.

CAPTAIN SAMMY'S PERIL.



WHEN the little man gave the order to stop the *Pearl* he spoke in such a loud voice that every one on board heard him, and for a few moments confusion reigned in the engine-room. Of course, each one thought, as Dare had, that the pirate's presence was discovered, or would be in a very short time, and Tommy's knees trembled so that he could hardly manage to creep into his new hiding-place in the after-cabin.

It would have been a far less observing man than Captain Sammy who would not have seen the consternation and fear which was plainly written on the boys' faces when they came on deck after he had given the order for the steamer to be stopped, and it did not escape his watchful gaze.

But the cause of Captain Sammy's apparently singular action arose from a more innocent reason than the guilty boys believed. It is possible, however, that his suspicions that some mischief was on foot had been aroused, and he

spoke in this stern way to satisfy himself if he was correct in his surmises.

"I don't like this idea of rushing ahead as if everything depended on our getting to Lake Okechobee at a certain time," he said, when the boys stood before him, "and it is too bad not to take our share of these fish before we go any farther."

The faces of his listeners lightened up at once when they found that they had no cause for fear on Tommy's account, and if Captain Sammy was making an experiment, he must have been convinced that his suspicions were correct.

As soon as they learned that he wanted some fish the boys produced their lines and hooks with an alacrity which caused the little man to smile, for their haste to obey him was a proof that they had feared something from him.

It did not take the three boys—Captain Sammy not caring to try his luck—very long to catch all the fish, and even more, than they could possibly use, and when they drew in their lines they had as many black bass, bream, catfish, and perch as it was possible the hungriest crew could dispose of before they spoiled.

Captain Sammy surveyed the catch with a grim satisfaction, and while the boys were winding up their lines preparatory to starting on their journey again, he pointed out to them four quite large sharks which were lying motion-

less near the surface of the water, as if they expected a portion of the spoils.

"Look at 'em," cried the little man, as he shook his fist in impotent wrath toward the members of the same family who had dined off of his leg. "You'll find folks so ignorant as to tell you that sharks won't come up a river, and here we are fully twelve miles from the bay. I tell you a shark will follow a boat for days, in hopes that somebody will be foolish enough to tumble overboard, and just as likely as not those fellows have followed us all the way from Tampa."

The boys could not repress a shudder as they gazed at the sinister-looking fish, and it was not difficult to believe that Captain Sammy had told the truth, and that they were following the steamer in the hope of making a meal of human flesh.

The view of the sharks was not a pleasant one, and when Captain Sammy called Bobby into the standing-room with him, to help clean the fish, Dare and Charley started the *Pearl* on again.

The farther up the river they proceeded the more numerous had the alligators become, until now it required no small amount of skill on the part of the helmsman to prevent the little craft from running into the unwieldy creatures.

Once or twice the *Pearl* went so near to them as to rub against their scaly backs, and Captain Sammy, perched up on the rail at the extreme stern of the boat, ordered Charley to tell Dare to "keep his eye peeled, or the steamer might get another hole knocked in her bow."

When the little man asked Bobby to come into the standing-room he stated that it was to *help* him clean the fish; but when the work began Bobby was the one who was obliged to do the greater portion of it, while Captain Sammy, from his elevated seat on the rail, gave his youthful assistant scientific lectures as to how the work should be done.

Dare now had little time for any thought of the incubus they had on board in the shape of the pirate, for it seemed almost as if the alligators were doing their best to strike the *Pearl* with their long, ugly snouts.

One seemed to have risen from the bottom of the river not a dozen feet from the bow of the steamer, and Dare was obliged to swing his wheel hard down to avoid him. As it was the little craft struck him about half-way from bow to midship, riding up on his scaly back in a way that caused her to careen until the starboard guard was even with the water.

Dare had tried to escape one danger without noticing whether he might not be running into another, and the

consequence was that the steamer struck full upon one of the largest of the saurian monsters at the same time she careened so badly.

Dare had no thought for anything save the possible damage that might have been done to the boat, and therefore gave no heed to the cry which came from the stern. In fact, so alarmed was he lest they were in a sinking condition, that he could not tell afterward whether or no he heard any cry whatever.

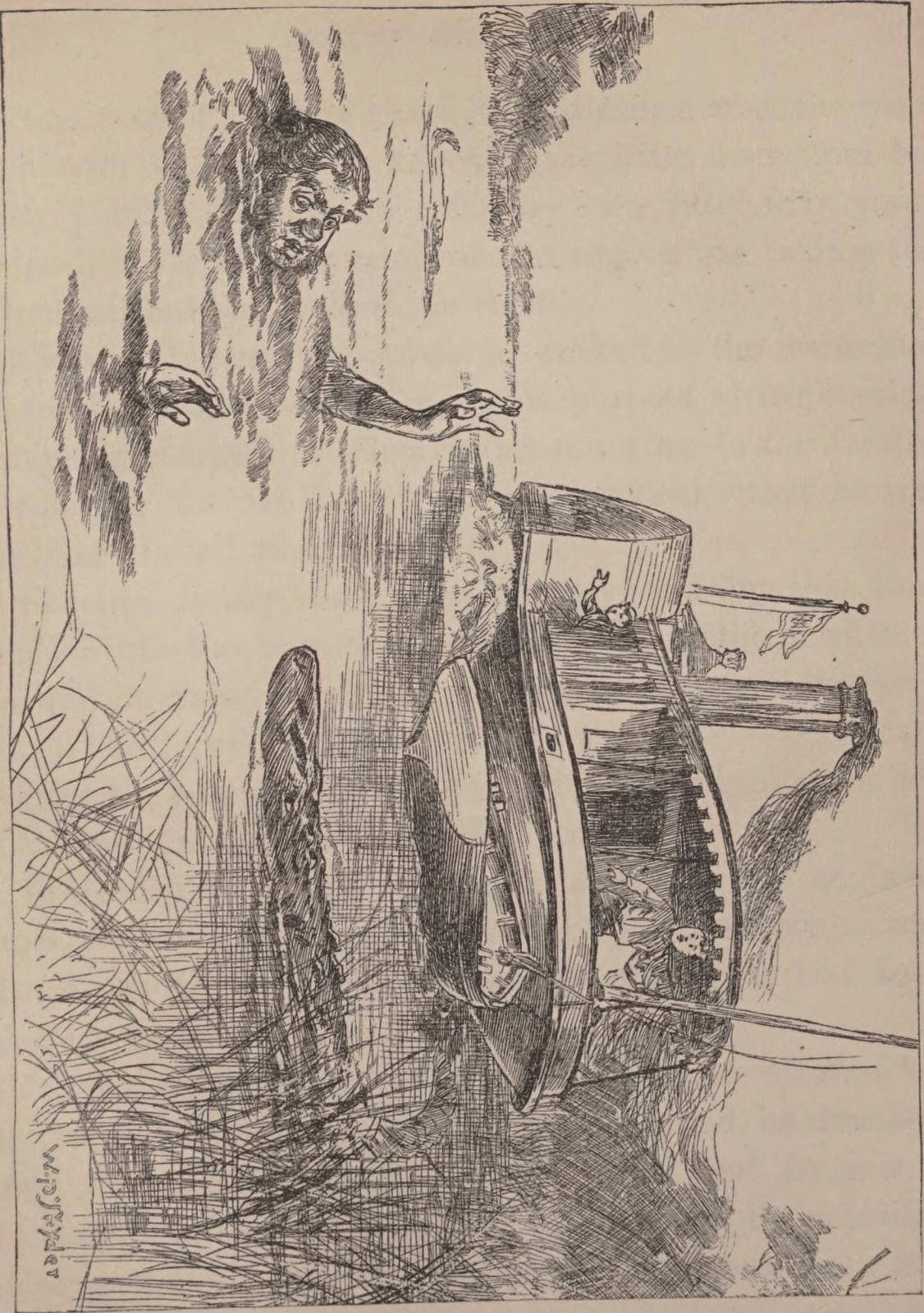
But in a very few seconds he saw that the engine had been suddenly reversed, and then came the startling cry, both from Bobby and Charley,

"Captain Sammy's overboard! Captain Sammy's overboard!"

For an instant Dare let go the helm and rushed out of the pilot-house to see what could be done; but before he could get aft he realized that, with the engine still in motion, he, by deserting his post, was not doing anything toward saving Captain Sammy, but was actually retarding operations, by allowing the steamer to back around where she might ground, or work herself worse injury.

Grasping the spokes of the wheel firmly, as if by his strong hold he could also retain all his presence of mind, he looked astern for some signs of the man who was in such deadly peril.

“CAPTAIN SAMMY’S OVERBOARD!”



The steamer had run ahead some distance after the blow had been struck which knocked the little man from his lofty perch, and now he could be seen fully fifty yards behind, while the reversing of the engine was taking the *Pearl* toward the bank of the river.

Captain Sammy was splashing around in the water and screaming loudly, evidently for the purpose of frightening away the sharks and alligators; but, owing to the fact of his having but one leg, it was with difficulty that he was keeping himself afloat.

Charley, Bobby, and even Tommy had by this time rushed into the bow, as if for Dare to tell them what to do, and he knew only too well that the saving of the little man's life depended almost wholly on him.

"Go back to your post," he shouted, sternly, to Charley, "and put on all steam ahead!"

It needed the stern command to arouse the engineer from his panic, and as Dare swung the wheel way around the laboring of the boat told that the order had been obeyed.

It was necessary to traverse nearly half of a circle before the apparently drowning man could be reached, and when Dare rang the bell to "stop her" he saw at a glance that Captain Sammy could do very little toward helping himself, lest, if he cease his exertions for a mo-

ment, either the sharks or the alligators would seize him.

Dare was completely at a loss to know what to do, and even as he hesitated he could see that Captain Sammy's struggles were growing fainter and fainter. It was only too evident that he could not hold out many minutes longer.

Dare rushed for the tender, calling Charley to follow him, but he knew even in his excitement that they could not pull him in over the rail of that frail boat without upsetting her and endangering the lives of all.

The condition of his mind was little short of agony, and just when his fear was the most intense he was conscious that a form had darted past him and plunged into the water.

He could not prevent himself from screaming as he saw what seemed to be a leap to certain death, and he looked quickly around, to see whether it was his brother or his cousin who had gone there bravely to die.

But Charley and Bobby were both standing behind him, and he passed his hand over his eyes, as if he fancied he must have been deceived in what he thought he saw.

It was certain, however, that some one had jumped over, for a swimmer could be seen making directly for the nearly exhausted man and splashing in the water at a furious rate.

"Why, it's Tommy!" Dare cried, astonished that he had not thought of this one of their passengers before, and then all his faculties were restored to him again.

"Give the wheels a couple of turns!" he shouted to Charley, as he picked up a heaving-line and ran to the bows.

The steamer was only about a dozen yards from the two who were struggling in the water against so many perils, and he hoped to be fortunate enough to run along-side them, when a rope could be flung around Captain Sammy.

CHAPTER XX.

THE RECONCILIATION.

ORTUNATELY for Dare's plan, the helm of the *Pearl* was still hard down, and the slight impetus given her by the wheels caused her to circle directly around the two in the water. Dare was thus enabled to swing the bight of the rope to Tommy, and in an instant after it was placed under the little man's arms.

"Now climb up on the rope, and then we'll all pull him in," said Dare to Tommy.

"That won't do," replied the little fellow, as he renewed his efforts at splashing, "for, you see, when I was out of the water they'd take his legs off quicker 'n a wink. Haul him in, and when you pass the rope to me be ready to snake me in sudden, or it'll be all up with me."

Surely Tommy was showing himself to be a hero, and neither of the boys thought of his past misdeeds as they admired his courage.

It did not take long to pull Captain Sammy on board

when all hands had hold of the rope, and, exhausted as he was, he managed to walk unaided into the forward cabin, where he applied his own restoratives.

Then came the more difficult work of rescuing Tommy; for, since the boy had spoken, all now knew the danger with which it would be attended.

The fins of the sharks as they circled around and around their expected prey, which they did not dare to touch, could be seen in dangerous proximity to the brave little pirate, and at times the ugly noses of the alligators seemed almost to touch him.

He was making as much noise as possible, but the exertion was telling on him, and when at last Dare succeeded in getting the rope around his shoulders it was quite time, for he was as nearly exhausted as Captain Sammy.

Bobby at this moment thought of what should have been done before, and, taking an oar, he reached out as far as possible, striking the flat of the blade on the water. By this means they succeeded in getting Tommy on board safe and whole; and the moment he was landed on the deck he scurried to his old hiding-place, as if he expected Captain Sammy would give immediate pursuit.

Dare tried to urge him to come into the cabin, in order to get some dry clothes; but Tommy displayed quite as much terror now at facing the little man as he did before

he had made such heroic attempts to save his life, and he crawled under the berth, without regard to the water that ran from him in little streams.

Tommy had hardly hidden himself, when Captain Sammy came on deck, apparently none the worse for his involuntary bath.

He looked at the three boys in silence for a moment, and then, in a voice not wholly free from traces of emotion, but still gruff, he asked,

"Who was it jumped in to help me?"

"It was Tommy Tucker," replied Dare, and before Captain Sammy fully understood that assertion he related the story of Tommy's being on the boat, speaking very rapidly, as if fearing that he should be interrupted.

For fully a moment Captain Sammy stood in perfect silence, and then he asked, in a voice which, the boys were almost certain, trembled,

"Where is he now?"

Charley told him of Tommy's fear at meeting him, and where he had hidden himself.

"Go and fetch him out;" and from the tones of the little man's voice it was hard to tell whether he intended to meet his late enemy in friendship or with the long feud still open.

It was one thing to order Tommy to be brought, and

quite another to bring him. Charley had coaxed and entreated, all to no purpose, and it was not until he threatened to go and tell Captain Sammy to come himself that the pirate could be induced to roll out from under the berth.

Then, when he went aft to where the little man was waiting for him, he appeared like a boy who expects to be knocked down each minute, and fears some harder fate is reserved for him because the blow is not dealt.

But the reception was far different from what he had imagined it would be.

Captain Sammy went to him as he came up, and, taking both the dirty hands in his, he said, in a voice that was husky with emotion,

"You have saved my life, lad, and that's something I can't repay by thanks. But for you this shattered old hulk would have been food for the sharks, and I standing before the great Captain. I never believed there was any good in you, Tommy, but you have shown that you are braver than most men would be. I'm going to take you home with me, lad—for if it hadn't been for you I should never go there again—and so long as I've got a timber to float on you shall be at the other end of it. Now get one of the boys to give you a dry suit of clothes till I can fix you up something to wear that looks more trim than what you've

got now, and take hold and have a good time with the rest."

And thus it was that Dare's troubles were over, and the not over-bold pirate made one of the crew of the yacht *Pearl*.

As soon as Tommy was clad in one of Bobby's suits of clothes the *Pearl* was started on her voyage again; and the trip seemed to have just begun for Dare, who had hardly had a moment's peace since he knew of the stowaway.

Despite his previous calling, Tommy proved a most valuable acquisition to the company; he was both willing and anxious to do everything in his power, and Captain Sammy soon began to like him as heartily as he had once disliked him.

Owing to the delay of the first day on the Caloosahatchee, Lake Kackpochee, through which they must pass, was not reached until noon of the second day after leaving Punta Rassa; and three hours later, when the *Pearl* glided out upon that large, lonely-looking body of water, the boys felt a sense of awe and isolation creep over them.

Lake Okechobee, as Dare had read when the idea that he might visit it had first come to him, is from forty to fifty miles long, about twenty-five wide, and with a depth of from five to twenty feet.

This was to be their abiding-place while they remained



“ YOU HAVE SAVED MY LIFE, LAD.”

in the Everglades, and Captain Sammy at once looked around for a good anchorage, which he fortunately found not far from the mouth of the river, where a piece of hard, shelving beach ran down into the water.

"Now, boys," said the little man, after everything had been made snug for a protracted stay, "I suppose you are aching to get on shore to try your hand at shooting? You can all take the afternoon off, and I'll stay here to keep ship. Keep your weather eyes open, for you'll find bears, panthers, and wild-cats hereabouts, as well as small game, and it wouldn't do to let any of them catch you napping."

Hastily promising to be careful not to allow any animals to get the best of them, the boys rowed ashore, and it was not many moments before they learned that on the shores of Lake Okechobee it is not necessary to hunt very long for game, for the woods appeared to be literally teeming with life.

Dare's greatest ambition in the hunting line had been to shoot a deer, and from the time his parents had first spoken about the trip to Florida up to that moment he had resolved that he would undertake any labor, however excessive, for the purpose of seeing one of those noble animals fall before his rifle.

Therefore it was that, while the other boys were growing excited at the abundance of feathered game near them, and

were discharging their weapons whenever a bird with particularly brilliant plumage would rise, Dare stood by, a silent spectator of the wholesale slaughter, as if waiting until his companions' exuberance of spirits should have worn itself out, as it were.

It was not long before the boys did tire of this wanton sport, for it was hardly anything else, since one could remain at a standstill and shoot right and left without disturbing the numerous flocks save for a few moments at a time; and when Charley suddenly discovered that it was too bad to bring the birds down simply for the sake of killing, Dare was ready with his proposition:

"Let's divide into two parties, Charley and Bobby in one, and Tommy and I in the other; then one party can take a long hunt for big game while the other stays nearer the steamer, in case Captain Sammy should need us. By that means we shall get on without trouble, and by changing around each day all hands will have an equal chance of getting a deer or a bear. Now, Charley, do you want to take a long tramp to-day?"

Charley, who had slaughtered a quantity of birds, had no desire for such violent exercise just then; and, with the understanding that he and Bobby should remain within sound of a signal from the *Pearl*, Dare and Tommy set out in search of game more worthy the hunter.

Tommy had not the slightest idea of how deer should be hunted, but since the taint of his piratical calling had been removed from him he was ready for anything, and he accompanied Dare in high glee.

After settling the points of the compass in his mind as well as he was able, Dare started into the woods in such a direction as would keep the sun on his left side, and in a very short time they were where the forest was as dense as though they were in the very heart of the Everglades.

Still Dare pushed on until the cover was more open, and just as he caught sight of a small space which was nearly free from trees he saw that for which he sought.

Three deer and a buck were feeding in the open, and the wind was blowing directly from them to the hunters.

Under such circumstances it was not a difficult matter for the hunter to creep quite near them, and, with hands trembling from the excitement of seeing the game he had so long desired to encounter, Dare took as good aim as was possible and discharged his weapon.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE TRACKLESS FOREST.



HE had aimed at one of the females, instead of at the buck, because she had chanced to be nearer to him; and, although she did not fall at once, he knew from her movements as she started away that his bullet had taken effect.

The herd were off at once, but the wounded one ran so unsteadily that Dare, believing she would drop almost immediately, raised a shout of triumph, and started after his game, closely followed by Tommy.

The trail was not difficult to follow, even for inexperienced hunters, for it was distinctly marked by the blood that fell from the wounded animal, and Dare's heart beat high at the thought that at last he had killed the game he so ardently desired to kill.

But the deer was not so near her death as he had thought, for they continued to follow, catching glimpses of the wounded animal, as, left far behind the others of the

herd, she ran with increasing difficulty, until the sun had sunk almost below the tree-tops.

In the excitement of the chase they had not noticed the passage of time, and when at last they came to where the poor animal had fallen, never to rise again, they were surprised to find that it was so nearly dark that it was with difficulty they could see the game they had killed.

"We must hurry back to the *Pearl*," said Dare, as he looked about him with a troubled air, "for it won't be long before it will be too late for us to be able to tell where the west is."

It seemed as if it was immaterial to Tommy whether they could distinguish the points of the compass or not, and he answered "All right," much as if they only had the question of a five minutes' tramp before them.

Dare was so thoroughly anxious about their position that he did not even stop to try to skin his game, but commenced hurriedly to cut out one of the haunches, that they might at least have proof of what they had killed.

Inexperienced as he was, and with only a small-sized hunting-knife to work with, it was no slight task to cut out the meat he wanted to carry; and when the job was finished the darkness—which, in tropical countries, succeeds the light so quickly—had formed an impenetrable veil around the amateur hunters.

During the operation of cutting out the haunch Dare had turned the deer several times, and had changed his own position so often, that when he was ready to start again he had no more idea of which direction he should go in order to find the *Pearl* than if he had been led there blindfolded.

Not wanting Tommy to know that he was so utterly confused, he called to him to follow, and started off at hap-hazard, stumbling over trunks of fallen trees, and tripped up by the running vines, until it seemed worse than folly for them to continue on their blind course any longer.

"Tommy," said Dare, solemnly, as he stopped and took one of his companion's hands in his, "we're lost!"

"I know that," was the laconic reply from the ex-pirate, and he appeared perfectly indifferent about the matter.

"But what shall we do?" asked Dare, irritated by the calm manner in which his companion spoke.

"Get up in a tree, an' wait till morning," replied Tommy, philosophically.

The ex-pirate's advice was not only good, but it seemed as if it was the only thing that could be done; and, without being able to see toward what new peril they were going, they began to climb the nearest tree.

With their guns slung to their backs the boys tried to

get themselves into something approaching a comfortable position on the crotch of the limb.

But it is hardly possible to make one's self comfortable on the branch of a tree when it is a question of remaining all night, and the hours that intervened before daylight seemed the longest that Dare had ever known, although it is possible that Tommy had had some experience in dreary hours when he was hiding from Captain Sammy in the cabin of the *Pearl*.

Whenever sleep did visit their eyelids it was only for a few moments, and then they would awake with a start as they found themselves slipping from their perch.

In a state of continual awakenings, intermingled with the greatest desire to sleep, the time passed, and daylight came quite as suddenly as it had disappeared.

The first thing Dare did, when it was light enough for them to pursue their journey again, was to fire off his gun several times, that the report might serve as signal in case their companions were anywhere near them.

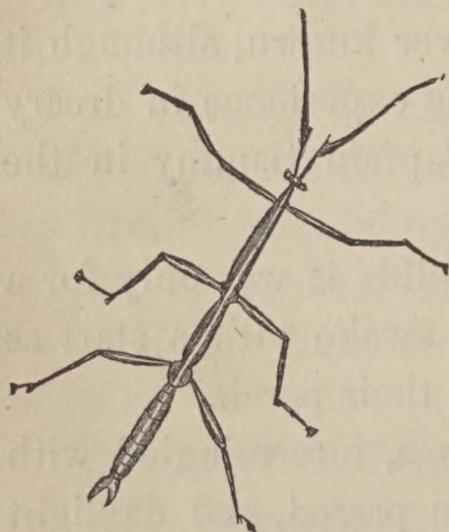
The first thing Tommy did was to build a fire and cook some slices of their venison, for they both felt nearly famished.

The breakfast of hot meat gave them renewed courage, and they started out almost thoroughly invigorated.

They had walked nearly an hour without seeing any in-

dications that they were on the right course, when Tommy, who was in advance, uttered a cry of joy, and rushed toward a flat stone, at which he gazed intently.

"Here's a feller what'll show us our way," he cried, as he pointed to what looked more like the skeleton of an insect than anything else. "You wait a minute, and he'll stand up and point right to where the *Pearl* is."



"THE SPECTRE."

Dare had heard, since he had been in Florida, of an insect called "the spectre," which superstitious people believed would point out the way to travellers lost in the forest, and, without believing that they possessed any

such power, he examined the creature with much interest.

Tommy, sincere in the belief that the spectre would point out the right direction for them to take, asked very solemnly if it would tell them the way they ought to go, and then he waited patiently for an answer.

It was not many moments before the insect partly raised its body, and waved its fore-legs to and fro, as if really answering Tommy's question.

The ex-pirate started off at once in the direction pointed

out; but Dare, who remained a moment longer, saw the spectre seize a fly in its feet, killing it instantly. It had waved its legs for the purpose of enticing the fly, rather than to show Tommy the way, although no amount of reasoning could convince the boy of that fact.

Fortunately, the insect had pointed directly in the course the boys had been pursuing, so that there was no need of any discussion as to whether they should follow its directions or not.

It was nearly noon before Tommy lost faith in the spectre's power, and then there was good reason for it, since they had walked steadily without finding even a stream which might give them a course for the lake.

They had suffered from the lack of water; but this suffering had not been severe, since they had found pools of brackish water now and then, which they drank as eagerly as though it had sparkled like crystal.

They were now as hungry as they had been in the morning, and Dare proposed that they should cook more of the haunch of venison, to which Tommy had clung pertinaciously. But it was only necessary to attempt to cut it in order to find that it was no longer fit for food, the heat having thoroughly spoiled it.

"We must shoot the first thing we see, for we shall never get out of this if we don't keep ourselves strong by

plenty of food," said Dare; and Tommy promised to obey, which promise came very near being fatal to both of them.

The ex-pirate was in advance, and, in less than ten minutes from the time he had promised to shoot the first object that presented itself, Dare saw him raise his gun to his shoulder.

It was impossible to see what kind of game the boy was aiming at, but Dare waited silent and motionless, hoping that the result of his shot might be a good dinner for both.

The instant the report of the rifle died away Dare heard a loud snarl, and a rustling of the bushes a short distance ahead, as if some very large animal had been wounded.

At the same time Tommy sprang back and began to reload his gun.

"What was it?" asked Dare, beginning to grow alarmed, as the noise in the bushes increased.

"A panther," replied Tommy, in much the same tone he would have used if he had said "A bird," and then he added, quite calmly, "I fired 'cause you said I must at the first thing I saw; but you'd better look out, for he ain't dead yet."

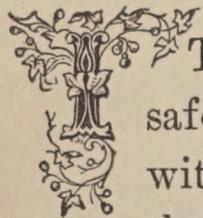
It seemed an aggravation of their misery to be obliged to fight a panther when they were exhausted from the long tramp and lack of food; but there was no way out

of it, and Dare peered cautiously around, in order to be prepared for any move the wounded animal might make.

It was hardly a moment before he saw the panther, as reared on its hind-legs, it seemed to be coming directly toward them, and not more than ten yards away.

CHAPTER XXII.

OUT OF THE WILDERNESS.



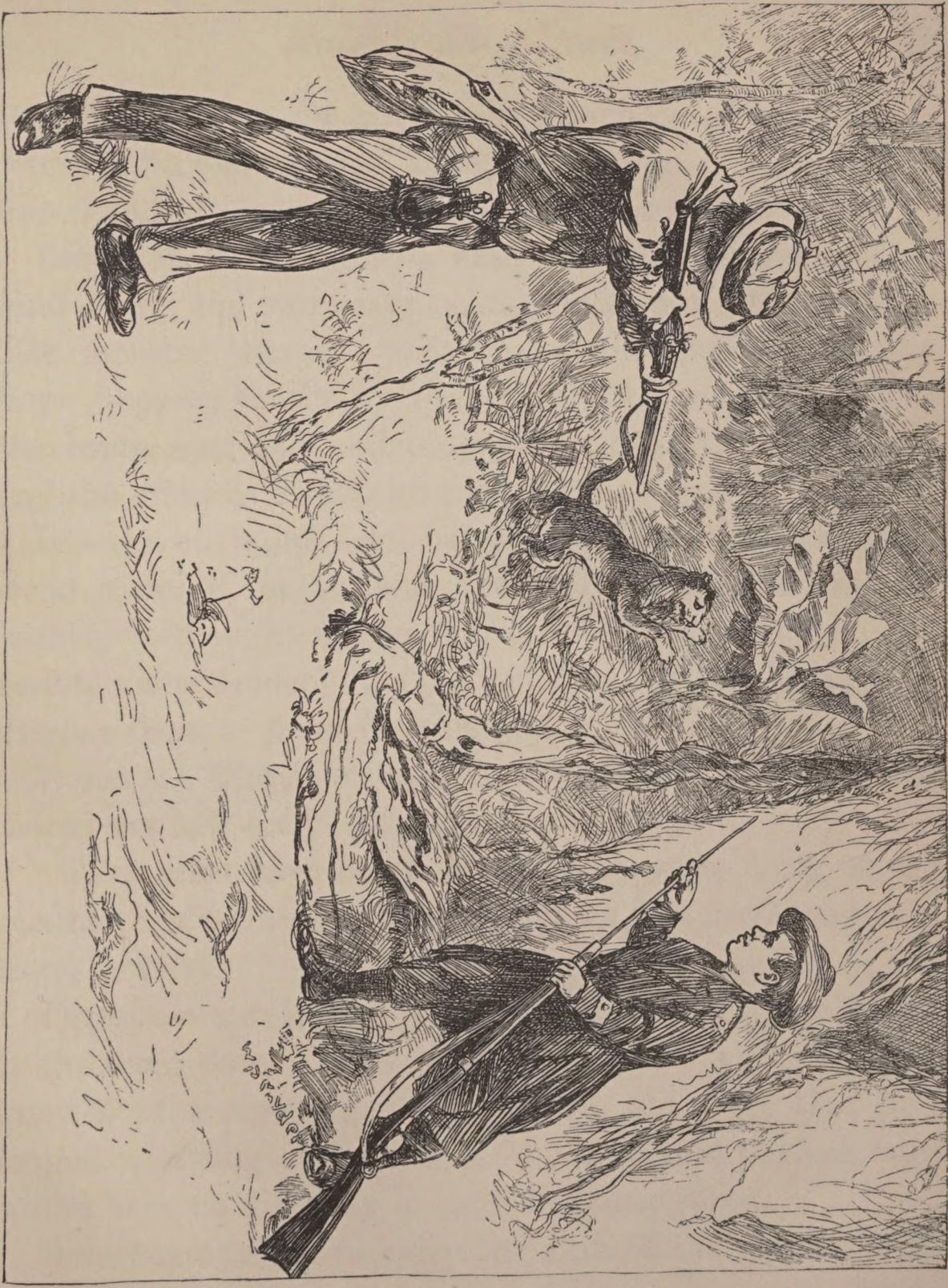
IT was anything rather than a pleasant or even safe position in which the boys found themselves, with a wounded panther advancing directly toward them, and they with no weapons other than two muzzle-loading rifles.

But there was only one way in which they could hope to extricate themselves, and that was by continuing the attack which Tommy had so rashly begun.

Reared on its hind-legs as it was, the animal presented a fair mark at short range, and Dare fired at him quickly, certain that he hit him full in the breast, but without causing any change in his movements.

Tommy, who had taken refuge behind a tree, where he loaded his gun with all the coolness and precision of an old hunter, was ready to take up his portion of the thread of the difficulty, and he also sent a bullet with apparently as true an aim as Dare's.

At receiving this shot the furious animal was brought to



DARE FIRED AT HIM QUICKLY.

the ground, where he gave such evidences of strength as warned the hunters that there was plenty of fight left in him despite his wounds.

Dare followed Tommy's example of loading while behind a tree, and two heavy charges were put into the guns. The monster was still writhing on the ground; and the boys, stepping cautiously up to within ten or twelve feet of the brute, sent two bullets crashing into his skull, which had the effect of killing him instantly.

It was a short but hard battle, well fought, and the boys stood viewing the evidence of their skill as marksmen, without a thought of the fact that they were lost in the forest, when suddenly a familiar sound greeted their ears, causing them to shout for very joy.

It was the whistle of the *Pearl*, and could not have been more than half a mile away.

"They must have heard us while we were firing at the panther," said Dare, joyfully; "but we will fire once more, to make sure."

The guns were loaded with powder, and both discharged at the same time. Then came three short whistles, showing that the signal had been heard, and after that prolonged whistling at regular intervals, so that the lost ones would have no difficulty in retracing their steps.

Dare was anxious to carry the skin of the panther with

him as a trophy, and he insisted on skinning the carcass before starting again to rejoin their friends.

The hide was not taken off in a remarkably workmanlike manner, but it was off, at all events; and then came a hurried march over fallen trees, among climbing, clinging vines, wherein lurked poisonous reptiles, until at last the waters of the lake could be seen from among the trees.

The little steamer had never looked half so beautiful as when Dare and Tommy stepped out on the hard beach, where they could see her, a short distance from the shore, while Charley and Bobby were just putting off in the tender.

Five minutes later and they were in their floating home once more, trying to eat as many as three meals in one and tell their story at the same time.

They learned that when night came and they had not returned Captain Sammy had ordered steam gotten up, and had cruised along the shore of the lake until midnight, sounding the whistle at intervals of about three minutes. After that time the *Pearl* came to an anchor; Charley and Bobby went to bed, while the little man remained awake all the night long, in order to keep the whistle going.

At daybreak the steamer was gotten under way again, and had been cruising along the shore all the forenoon, until the reports of the guns were heard when the boys were battling with the panther.

"It won't do to try any more such hunting adventures, lads, for you might not get off so easily next time, and I don't propose to leave any of you here in the Everglades," said Captain Sammy, in as stern a voice as possible; but his joy at their safe return was too great to admit of his speaking as gruffly as he could sometimes.

The *Pearl* was run back to her former anchorage, and, after everything was made snug for the second time, Captain Sammy said,

"Tommy, there's a cabbage-palm right over there. Can't you climb it?"

"Of course I can," replied the ex-pirate, in disdain that there should be any question about his ability to do such a simple thing.

"All right; here's my belt and knife, and if the boys will row you ashore we'll show them what a cabbage that is raised on a tree tastes like."

The boys were only too willing to do as the little man had hinted they should, for they were anxious both to see a cabbage-palm and how a leathern belt and a sheath-knife could be used in climbing a tree.

After they were on shore, and Tommy had started in the direction Captain Sammy had pointed, the boys could see the famous cabbage-palm, as it reared its graceful head above the surrounding trees. Fully ninety feet the trunk

rose straight as a reed, with not a branch to mar its tapering symmetry, and the top was one immense mass of dark-green, fan-shaped leaves.

It was in the centre of these leaves where the cabbage—which is really a young, tender shoot—would be found, protected by numerous fibres or folds, and Tommy set about his task of getting it with the greatest unconcern.

The belt he buckled around the trunk of the tree and his own body, and, by holding on with his knees while he shoved the belt farther up on the trunk, he was enabled to make reasonably rapid progress, at the same time teaching his companions a lesson in tree-climbing.

On reaching the top Tommy cut off some of the large leaves, which would make an excellent camp on shore, and then cut the cabbage from its secure and cosy home.

Captain Sammy was as delighted with the prize when it was brought to him as if he had received one of the veritable vegetables from which the tree takes its name; but when it was cooked that night the boys could not detect very much of a cabbage flavor. Dare thought it was more like a boiled chestnut in taste, and the others were of his opinion—all save Captain Sammy, who would insist that the flavor was that of a cabbage and nothing more.

The little man showed them how to tan the skin of the panther, and Tommy and Dare worked at it, while Charley

and Bobby went on shore to shoot some sand-cranes, coming back with two fine specimens, which Captain Sammy promised to stuff for them.

This offer raised the greatest enthusiasm on the subject of stuffed birds among the boys; and the little captain found that if he granted all the requests he should have work enough on hand to keep him busy about two months; therefore he proposed to teach the art of taxidermy to them, so that they might carry with them a goodly collection of specimens from the Everglades.

This offer was eagerly accepted by Dare and Charley, and for the next ten days little was done save stuffing and mounting the birds which Tommy and Bobby brought in, and the greater portion of the work was really creditable to the young taxidermists.

When every available inch of space in both cabins was filled with birds of gorgeous plumage or grotesque shapes, Captain Sammy proposed that they should start the idle engines once more, and make a complete tour of the lake, which proposition was accepted without a dissenting voice.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE EVERGLADES.

A decorative initial letter 'T' with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, positioned at the start of the first paragraph.

T was at an early hour on the morning after the tour of the lake had been decided upon that the *Pearl* left her anchorage and sailed to the southeast along the shore—or, at least, the geographical boundary—of the lake. It is necessary to speak of the shore only in a technical sense; for the greater portion of the distance the border of the lake was marked only by tufts of grass or small patches of land, looking like little islands.

This marsh, or submerged meadow, was really the lake shore, over which the water had flowed into what a writer poetically terms “that vast, island-studded lake, the Everglades.”

Captain Sammy talked during that first day of the voyage of discovery as if he had some stout internal spring which prevented his jaws from closing; but as all he said was entertaining and instructive, the boys would not have stopped him had they been able to do so. He pointed out

among the trees palmettos, oaks, cocoa-trees, crab-wood, mastic, and cypress; and among the birds very many varieties which they had not secured.

It was during their first night's halt that Captain Sammy said, as he armed himself with his formidable spectacles and a book,

"I did think when we struck in here that we could take a tramp inland, but the water is so high that you will have to get the information your father insisted you should have from this book," and he handed them Professor Agassiz's "Methods of Study in Natural History."

"Now, this book will tell you that what is called the Everglades consists of seven parallel lines of hummocks, each of which have formed in turn the Florida reefs. After they were reefs they became keys, and then mainland, and some do go so far as to say that the whole point of this State was built by them little polyps I was telling you about."

The boys had been trying to resign themselves, in a sleepy way, to what they supposed was a long lecture on the formation of that portion of the State; but when Captain Sammy ended thus abruptly, and then handed the book to Dare, that they might study it at their leisure, their relief was as great as their surprise.

Dare had but one question to ask, and the subject of it had troubled him considerably at the time he and Tommy were lost in the forest :

"Are there any Indians around here, Captain Sammy?"

"None of any account, my lad. Time has been when they had their own way down here, an', for the matter of that, pretty much all over the State; but there's only about a couple of hundred left now, and they don't show themselves very often."

Before the *Pearl* was gotten under way the next morning Captain Sammy gave Tommy a suit of clothes he had been making out of some old ones of his. It was a full sailor rig, cut man-of-war fashion, and the ex-pirate looked as nice and trim in them as if he had been fitted out by the most expert tailor in the country.

The trip around the lake was not nearly as exciting or interesting as they had fancied it would be, save now and then when they landed to get some new specimen of bird to add to their collection, and all hands were beginning to weary of what was becoming monotonous, when Captain Sammy came to the rescue.

"We'll come to anchor early this afternoon, and see if we can't fix the tender up for a night's fishing."

Tommy nodded his head approvingly, for he knew what was meant by fishing by night; but the others looked at

the captain in surprise, for they had not supposed the fish would bite at night, and Dare told Captain Sammy as much.

"I don't suppose the fish would bite," said the little man, "and that don't make any difference, for, you see, this time we will bite the fish," and then he chuckled over what he evidently thought was a very good joke, until the boys began to fear he would choke.

With some pieces of stout wire the little man made what looked like grates, such as are used in open coal stoves, and when these were done he and Tommy went on shore, returning with a quantity of pine-knots.

Four short spears with barbs on them were put into the tender, the grates were hung on either side, and Captain Sammy's arrangements were complete.

It was easy now to understand what he had meant by "biting the fish."

The *Pearl* was brought to an anchor about three o'clock in the afternoon; the fires were allowed to go out, in order to save coal; and all hands waited for the night to come.

The evening proved to be a good one for the sport, for there was no moon, and the stars were partially obscured by clouds.

"We couldn't have had a better time for the sport if

we'd been waiting round here for a month," said Captain Sammy, approvingly, as he gave the order for the boat to be hauled up along-side. "Before long I'll show you lads something that you can tell about when you get home."

The boys thought that they had considerable of that sort of material already stowed away, but they were eager for anything novel, and they lost no time in getting on board the tender.

Captain Sammy assigned to each of them a place in which to sit, for the little craft was uncomfortably crowded with so many, and he ordered Tommy to the duty of attending to the fires.

Each of the others had a spear, while Dare and Charley had an oar, their task being to row to such a place as the little man thought best suited to the sport.

Tommy had provided himself with some bits of tarred rope and paper, and by the time Captain Sammy had given the order to stop rowing he had the fires burning fiercely in the grates, with pieces of sheet-iron over the boat's side, to protect the wood-work from the flames.

"Now look down at the fish!" exclaimed Tommy, in delight; and the boys peered down over the sides of the boat.

Great was their surprise to find that they could see through the water so distinctly as to perceive even the

smallest pebble on the bottom, and fish of all sizes were darting in every direction.

"Pole her along with the boat-hook, Tommy," said Captain Sammy, and then he gave the others an example of how the fish were to be caught, by spearing and hauling on board a large-sized one.

Tommy poled the boat gently along, at the same time keeping the fire burning brightly, while all hands engaged in the exciting sport, capturing some that required all their strength to land in the boat.

Even Captain Sammy grew so excited in the sport that he failed to notice that the wind, and not Tommy, was urging the boat along, while the sky was completely overcast by the large, dark clouds that seemed hurrying along for the purpose of starting a storm.

"You'll have to stop now, for that's the last of the wood," said Tommy, as he threw a large pine-knot on the fire; and as he said this Captain Sammy started up in something very like alarm.

Hurriedly he gazed around, noticing for the first time the signs of the coming storm, and the means by which the boat had been propelled.

A dense darkness shut out everything beyond the circle of light from view, and it was impossible to see any signs of the little steamer.

For two or three minutes Captain Sammy stood erect and silent, mentally scolding at his stupidity in not hoisting the signal-lantern before leaving the steamer, and then he seated himself in the stern again with the air of one who, knowing he has committed a grievous error, resolves to take desperate measures to repair the wrong done.

"Take up your oars and pull as hard as you can," he said to Dare and Charley, and speaking as if he was simply in a hurry to get back to the *Pearl*. "Keep your fires ablaze as long as you can, 'Tommy,'" he added, "and if you haven't got wood enough use one of the thwarts."

But it was more difficult to return than even the little man had imagined. Urged along only by the wind as they had been, the increasing roughness of the water had not been noticed. Now, as Captain Sammy steered her right in the teeth of the wind, for that was all he had to guide him in his course, the little boat danced and rocked on the waves, while every now and then one would break over the gunwale, owing to her heavy load.

"Throw those fish overboard," said Captain Sammy to Bobby, who sat nearest him.

"All of them?" asked Bobby, in surprise, not willing to lose such a fine cargo.

"You may keep two; but put the others out as quick as

you can. Tommy, bear a hand on that bow oar with Charley and wake her up!"

Tommy, as fireman, had become useless, since the waves had fought his fire from the time the start homeward was made; and just before Captain Sammy spoke they had quenched the flames in both grates, coming in over the bow in no small quantity at the same time.

The darkness was now so intense that the old sailor could not see more than three boat-lengths ahead, and he knew, even though he was hardly willing to admit it to himself, that their chances for reaching the *Pearl* that night were well-nigh hopeless.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LOST ON LAKE OKECHOBEE.



HERE was no word spoken by those on the boat save now and then as Captain Sammy uttered an order in a sharp, quick tone, that told quite as plainly as did the surroundings the peril in which they were placed.

Bobby was kept bailing steadily, and even then the water would have increased faster than it could have been disposed of if the little captain had not assisted from time to time.

The wind was fast increasing in violence, until the waves in that inland sea appeared almost as high as on the ocean, and all the skill of the helmsman could not prevent them from breaking over the frail craft every few moments.

The boys labored manfully at the oars, but much of their strength was spent in vain, owing to the fact that at least half of the time the oaken blades were too high out of the water, or too deep in, because of the violence and height of the waves.

For nearly an hour this useless struggle was continued, and nothing had been seen of the *Pearl*. Owing to the fact that he had no means of directing his course it was very probable that they were headed in any other than the right direction, and Captain Sammy also knew very well that they might have run within a dozen yards of her without being aware of the fact.

It had begun to rain, and, if the gale continued to increase, as indeed it promised to, the little boat could not ride another hour.

Captain Sammy would have put about and let the wind drive them on to the shore some time before he did, if it had not been for the danger that would attend the turning of the boat; their only safety had been to keep her right in the teeth of the wind, but now that it was certain that they would be swamped very soon as they were going, the little man decided that the attempt must be made.

It was the only chance to save their lives, and he gave the order to cease rowing.

"I am going to try to get her around," he shouted, "so be ready with your oars the instant I give the word."

Not one of the boys there, with the possible exception of Bobby, was ignorant of the danger attending this attempt, and they knew that their lives depended upon the promptness with which they obeyed the orders.

For a few moments the wind forced the little craft directly backward, and then, as her bow rose on the wave, it swung her around, flinging her down into the chasm of waters sideways.

"Pull, Charley! Back water, Dare!" cried Captain Sammy, sharply, knowing only too well that, if she was not turned while in the trough of the sea, she would almost certainly be swamped as she rose on the next wave, and at the same time he leaned over, helping Dare with his oar.

The manœuvre was successful, but it was not accomplished a second too soon, since almost the instant it was done the little craft came up on the crest of the wave and the wind howled around them in a gust that was almost like a hurricane.

"Now row just enough to keep steerage-way on, and don't put out too much strength," said the little man, as he devoted all his attention to keeping the boat full before the wind.

There was nothing more that could be done, and the party waited in terrible suspense for the shock which should tell them they had reached the land while the little craft scudded before the gale as if she had a sail set.

Of course Captain Sammy knew that if they should strike the shore of the lake where there was a hard beach

the boat would be stove, but against such an accident he could take no precautions, and it was far better to wreck their boat where they could gain the land than try to save the craft and be swamped.

The rain seemed to descend in torrents, and Tommy was obliged to help Bobby in his work of bailing, or they might have been swamped by the weight of rain-water that poured into her.

"Of course you know that we're running for the shore?" said Captain Sammy, after they had dashed along in silence for some time, "and when we strike it will be with great force, so keep yourself prepared for it. After the first shock tells that she is fast, make for the land if you can see it; if not, stand by the boat until I've made the attempt."

From that time for fully an hour—and in their suspense it seemed as though it must be nearly morning—the party waited for the boat to strike the beach, all knowing only too well that, if they chanced to come upon some one of the tiny islands instead of the shore, there was every danger of their being washed entirely over it.

When at last the shock did come every one, save Captain Sammy, was hurled from his seat, and it was impossible to distinguish anything which told that they were near the land.

The boat's bow was stove in such a way that she filled

with water almost immediately, and it was as if they had been thrown into the lake.

Captain Sammy was about to leap over the side, to attempt to make his way to the land, if indeed they were on the shore of the lake, when Tommy scrambled toward him and said, almost imploringly,

"I can swim better than you can, an' it won't make so much difference if I should be drowned, so let me go first;" and then, without waiting for an answer, he plunged over the side, being immediately lost to view.

It would have been useless for Tommy to have waited for a reply, for Captain Sammy made none; it seemed as if it was impossible for him to speak; and when he passed his hand over his eyes it was not all fresh water that he wiped away.

Clinging to the sides of their shattered boat, the party waited for some sound which should come from Tommy, telling that he had gained the shore in safety, or for the long silence which would proclaim the horrible fact that he had lost his life in trying to save others.

The waves were making a clean sweep over them, and it seemed as if each minute of that waiting was fully an hour long.

Then Dare fancied he could hear some one calling, and, as he raised himself up to listen, he saw Tommy close

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EVERY ONE, SAVE CAPTAIN SAMMY, WAS HURLED FROM HIS SEAT.



beside him, the wind causing his voice to sound as if he was a long distance away.

"We are on a good hard beach," he shouted, "and all you'll have to do is to wade ashore."

At this news, which told that they had been waiting in dread within twenty feet of the main-land, the boys jumped out, and Captain Sammy ordered them to drag the wreck of the boat up with them, that the surf might not entirely destroy her.

On the beach it was no more possible to distinguish objects than when they had been on the water, but Captain Sammy led the way straight ahead, that they might gain some shelter from the storm in the woods.

But the gale was so furious that it was impossible to find any shelter deserving of the name, and as they stood beside the enormous trees, which bent before the storm like reeds, they had even a better idea of the force of the wind than when they were scudding before it on the lake.

While they were standing there, and before they had done anything toward trying to better their condition, Captain Sammy bethought himself of another and still more serious trouble which might have befallen them.

"You let go the anchor to-night, Tommy, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Which one did you use?"

"The smallest one; it had been used the night before, and so I let it go to-night."

"Then there is every chance that the *Pearl* is a greater wreck by this time than the boat is," said Captain Sammy, solemnly; "for it doesn't seem possible that one anchor, even if it had been the heavy one, could hold her against this gale."

There was no reply made to this ominous suggestion. Each one of the party knew of the dangers and privations which would be theirs, even though they did succeed in getting out of the Everglades, in case the *Pearl* had been wrecked, and to their present misery was added the horrible fear that they were, in truth, hopelessly wrecked on the shores of that inland sea.

Their two days' voyage of discovery had taken them just so much farther from the Caloosahatchee River, down which they must go to the coast, and they were that distance farther in the Everglades, through which it might be impossible to make their way on foot.

Their situation was a desperate one, whether the *Pearl* was safe or not; and they were far from bettering it by standing there in the storm thinking of the dreadful fate the future might have in store for them.

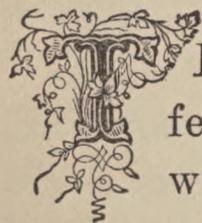
"Come," said the little man, who was the first to arouse from the stupor of dread and fear into which all had

fallen, "standing here shivering won't mend matters, and what we've got to do is to try to get up some kind of a shelter, or we shall all be dissolved before morning."

He had tried to speak in a cheery tone, and it had a good effect, for the boys began to move around, which was far better than standing idle, even if they could not better their condition.

CHAPTER XXV.

SUNSHINE AFTER THE STORM.



HE darkness was so intense that it was only by feeling their way among the trees that the shipwrecked party on the shores of Lake Okechobee could manage to move along, and then it was, of course, impossible to do anything toward erecting a shelter.

Captain Sammy had aroused them from the despair which had begun to creep over them, and that was all he cared to do, for he knew very well that it would have been impossible for them to put up so much of a shelter as would have shielded a cat from the storm, owing first to the darkness, and next to the wind, which would have torn away anything in the form of a camp as fast as it could have been put up.

After the boys had learned how useless it was to try to make a shelter, and were settling down into discomfort again, the little man started them out along the beach, under the pretence that they might be able to discover some traces of the *Pearl*.

In this manner, urged on from one useless exertion to the other, the night passed. At about the time for the sun to rise the rain ceased to fall, the clouds dispersed, and when the orb of day came up on the eastern sky the heavens were clear and bright for his journey across them.

With the first light of dawn each one of the party gazed anxiously around the shores of the lake, but as far as they could see there were no signs of the little steamer.

"Look for wreckage on the shore," cried Captain Sammy, eagerly, as from mere force of habit he shaded his eyes with his hands from the light which was hardly strong enough to permit of their seeing the shore on either side of them.

But no such ominous signs were in sight, and there was still hope that the little craft was yet afloat.

They had been thrown ashore where the smooth, hard beach extended for nearly half a mile, and to the left was a point of land around which it was possible the *Pearl* might be in view.

"Bobby, you run over to that point and see if the steamer is in sight from there, while the rest of us try what we can do toward patching up the tender," said Captain Sammy; "for we shall want her, whatever has happened to the *Pearl*. Then, if it should be that the little steamer is afloat, we must have the tender to get out to her in."

Bobby started off at full speed, while the others examined the boat that had been hauled up on the beach. Her bow was stove past all hope of mending properly, but Captain Sammy believed he could fix her so that a short trip might be made in her.

One of the oars and the rudder were gone, while the forward seat had fallen before the flames Tommy had tried to keep burning the night before.

But, fortunately for the party, the two fish that Bobby had saved when he threw the others overboard were still there. They had gotten wedged in under the stern-seat, and thus was the breakfast provided for the party who otherwise would have gone hungry.

"Now, Dare, you see if you can't cook these fish, and Tommy take the bailing-dipper and go for some gum."

No one save he who had spoken and he who was spoken to understood what kind of gum was desired, or what it was wanted for; but Tommy took the dipper and trudged off into the woods as unconcerned as ever.

It was not as simple a matter to cook the fish as at first appeared, owing to the difficulty of kindling a fire, for each one of the party had been thoroughly drenched the night previous, and, of course, the matches had shared the same fate.

But Captain Sammy was equal to this emergency, as he

had been to many others since the cruise commenced. After ordering Dare to find some wood which the heat of the morning sun had already dried, and have everything ready for the fire, Captain Sammy laid the wet matches on a rock in the sunlight. Around them he piled such dry material as he could readily find, and then, with the glasses from his and Dare's watch, he made such a sun-glass as speedily ignited the matches, as well as the lighter portion of the wood.

"There's your fire," he said; "now get breakfast."

By this time Bobby, who had for a while disappeared around the point, came into view, running at the top of his speed, and while he was yet a long distance away those on the beach could hear him shout,

"The *Pearl's* all right! The *Pearl's* all right!"

Then, when he was nearer, he told them that, almost as far ahead as he could distinguish objects, he could see the steamer riding at anchor, and apparently uninjured.

Captain Sammy's face expressed the thankfulness he felt at thus knowing that their situation was simply one of un-comfortableness, and not actual danger, while his feelings were shared in a greater or less degree by all the others.

Now, as the fish began to splutter and hiss at being impaled on sharp sticks in front of such a hot fire, all hands began to feel very hungry, and Bobby and Charley tried

to hurry the breakfast-time along by piling the fire high with wood—an operation which only served to sprinkle the fish more plentifully with ashes and cinders.

Some time before this not particularly nice breakfast was ready Tommy returned, with his dipper nearly full of gum; and when questioned by Charley as to what it was and where he got it, he replied that it was a substance which exuded from the gum-trees, and that he had been obliged to visit several to get that quantity, because, owing to the rain-storm, it did not flow as freely as it would after three or four days of dry, hot weather.

“Captain Sammy’s goin’ to try to patch up the boat with it,” he added; and the little man’s actions now showed that Tommy had told the truth.

He had taken off his flannel shirt and torn it into strips, which he forced into the seams of the boat that had opened with the point of his knife. When the gum was handed to him he looked at it critically, told Tommy to put it on the fire, and went on with his work.

The ex-pirate knew all about boiling gum down to use instead of tar, and he stirred the mixture carefully until fully two-thirds had boiled away, leaving a thick, dark material almost like melted glue.

Breakfast was ready before Captain Sammy had finished caulking the boat with the flannel, and all hands partook

“THE ‘PEARL’S’ ALL RIGHT!”



W. S. W. P. S.

of it as best they could with neither plates, knives, or forks; but no one made a remarkably hearty meal, owing to the exceeding freshness of the food.

After the rather unsatisfactory meal was ended Tommy proposed to the captain that he should go opposite to where the *Pearl* was lying, swim out to her, and try to work her in toward the shore, in order to do away with the necessity of spending so much labor on a useless boat.

Captain Sammy looked up at him a moment as if to assure himself that he was really in earnest, and then said, as he pointed to an alligator that was swimming by just then,

"How far do you suppose those fellows would let you swim?"

"Oh, I'll risk but that I could get out to the steamer before they could get hold of me," laughed Tommy.

"But I don't propose to have you risk it," said the captain, in a tone that showed he considered all argument was at an end. "I'm about done now, all but putting the gum on. As soon as I spread that you take the dipper and fill it again, while the other boys are walking as far toward the *Pearl* as they can go on the shore. Then you boil the gum down, and follow them. I'll go in the boat; and I don't want to carry any more of a load than I can help, for she isn't over and above strong."

Captain Sammy spread a thick coating over the seams, and while it was hardening Tommy started off gum-gathering again, while the other boys went down the beach in the direction of the steamer.

When at last Captain Sammy had repaired the boat as well as was possible under the circumstances, and Tommy was obliged to fill the dipper twice more before he had finished, she was very nearly water-tight. There were two or three small leaks, but it would be impossible for any more than water enough to wet their feet to come in during the short voyage they would be obliged to take.

"Now run on and join the other boys, Tommy, an' I'll pick you up when you come to the end of the beach," said Captain Sammy, as he got into the boat, using the solitary oar to scull with.

Tommy started off, and when he reached the others at a point where the beach merged into swampy land he found that they were hardly more than a half mile from the steamer.

When Captain Sammy came up he took Dare and Tommy in the boat, and, after they reached the *Pearl*, sent Tommy back for the other two.

When the party were once more on the steamer they found, to their great satisfaction, that she had suffered but little damage from the storm. Some of the lighter articles

that had been on deck, including two birds Dare had just finished mounting, had been either blown or washed overboard, and considerable water had been shipped.

The little craft had swung around and over-ridden her anchor-chain in such a way as to chafe her side; but everything could be set to rights in a short time, and it is safe to say that a more thankful party never gathered on Lake Okechobee than was this, when the inspection was finished.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOMEWARD BOUND.



WITHIN two hours after the shipwrecked party were on the *Pearl* all the mischief wrought by the storm had been repaired, save in the case of the tender, and she could not be made thoroughly serviceable again until the proper tools and material could be procured.

When Captain Sammy had patched her up with gum and flannel it was only with the idea that she was to be used for taking them back to the *Pearl* again. He knew very well that she would not be serviceable for a longer time than that work would occupy; and when, everything else being done, the little tender was pulled on board the *Pearl*, it did not require a very careful examination to see that it would not be safe to venture in her again.

“We can’t land again, boys, unless at some place where we can run the steamer right up to the bank, for it would be worse than foolhardy to attempt to get any distance in this boat, especially with so many alligators around.”

The boys were rather disappointed when they realized that their hunting trips were over; but they did not understand that the loss of that pleasure was not all that the wrecking of the boat meant, until Captain Sammy said,

"And if you can't go on shore we shall be sadly put to it for provisions. We shall be obliged to eat fish three times a day, and I reckon you'll get rather tired of that kind of a diet before long."

"But what can we do?" asked Dare; and it was evident from his reply that Captain Sammy had been leading the conversation up to the point where such a question would naturally be asked, for he replied, quickly,

"I'll tell you what I think we'd better do, and then you can decide matters to please yourselves, for I'm willing to go or stay, just as you say. It's settled that we can't land here, unless we keep steam up all the time, and that we can hardly do, on account of coal. Now, it will get lonesome after you've been shut up on the boat a few days, so I propose that you go on shore for a grand hunting excursion to-morrow, and that we lay still the next day, of course, for it is Sunday. On Monday we will start for the sponge-fisheries, where some of my vessels are, and from there go home. In Tampa we can get our boat fixed, fit out anew, and then start for the Florida reefs. What do you say?"

Since returning to Tampa did not mean giving up the cruise, but simply making two instalments of it, the boys readily agreed to the little man's plan, and began overhauling and cleaning their guns preparatory to the next day's hunt.

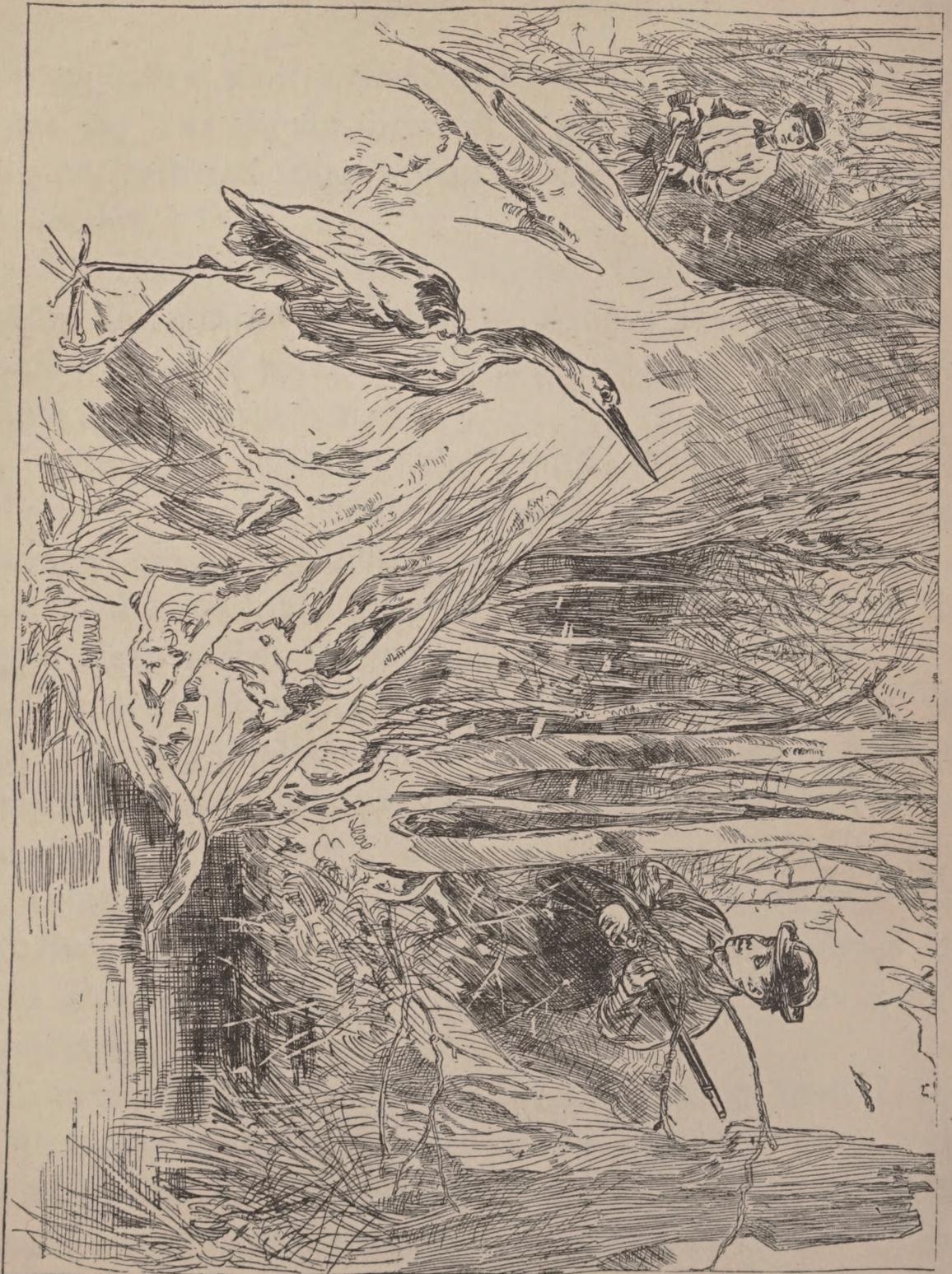
Some fishing was done over the rail that afternoon, not for the sake of sport, but that they might have food; and when the party went to bed at night there was not one among them who felt sorry they were so soon to leave the Everglades.

On the following morning there was a light breeze setting toward the land, and Captain Sammy concluded to allow the little craft to drift in to the shore, rather than go to the trouble of getting up steam; but he took very good care to let go the anchor some distance from the shore, paying out the cable till her bow struck the beach, so that she could be hauled out to a safer anchorage at night.

His orders to the sailors-turned-hunters were, that they should not go into the woods more than a quarter of a mile at the farthest, and that under no circumstances were they to follow any wounded animal more than a hundred yards.

Not being particularly in search of large game, the boys were perfectly willing to obey the commands which were

THE BOYS ADDING TO THEIR STOCK OF CURIOUS BIRDS.



given with a view to their own safety; and their hunting that day was chiefly directed to getting more specimens of the feathered tribes to add to their already rather large collection.

But Dare was careful to see that their larder was provided for, and he bagged quite as much as could be eaten before it would spoil, after which he joined the others in their search for rare birds.

During the entire day the hunting match was kept up, the boys going on board the steamer once or twice for the purpose of carrying their game, or of getting something to eat; and when night came they were quite tired enough to go to sleep as soon as they had rolled into their berths.

The next day, which was Sunday, was spent quietly on the steamer, Captain Sammy talking to them in a way which was as impressive as any sermon they had ever heard.

Bright and early Monday morning Charley was up and in the engine-room, and by seven o'clock the paddles of the *Pearl* began to revolve as she started on the homeward trip.

Down through the narrow stream leading from Lake Okechobee to Lake Kackpochee the steamer glided; and if the tender had been in condition to use the boys would have pleaded hard for one day on the smaller lake, so much

more cheerful-looking did it seem than the vast body of water on which they had been so long.

The first day's journey ended about five o'clock in the afternoon, when the yacht came to an anchor a short distance below Fort Deynaud; and after supper all hands went into the standing-room, as had come to be their custom at the close of each day.

After they had been there a short time Captain Sammy pulled out of his pocket a small piece of printed paper, which was very much crumpled and soiled.

"There," he said, as he handed it to Dare—"there is a piece about sponges that I cut out of an old book I found, an' I want you to read it aloud, so's you an' your messmates will know all about what they're goin' to see, an' won't be worrying the life out of me asking questions."

Dare took the printed slip in silence, for he had learned that it was better not to remonstrate with Captain Sammy, even when he appeared to be unjust, and read the article as he had been told to do, while the little man smoked and stroked his chin with evident satisfaction.

And this is what Dare read :

"The kinds of sponges that are fit for use are found in the seas of warm climates. Two species are brought from the Levant, and a very inferior one from the West Indies and coast of Florida. The trade in sponges is very consid-

erable, and is carried on chiefly by the Turks and the inhabitants of the Bahama Islands. The number of men employed in the Ottoman sponge-fishery is between four and five thousand, forming the crews of about six hundred boats. These boats find their chief employment on the coasts of Candia, Barbary, and Syria. Here the sponge is obtained by divers, who take down with them a flat piece of stone of triangular shape, with a hole drilled through one of its corners; to this a cord is attached, and the diver makes it serve to guide him to particular spots. When he reaches the growing sponges he tears them off the rocks and places them under his arms; he then pulls at the ropes, which is the signal for his companions in the boat to draw him up.

“The value of sponges collected in Greece and Turkey is from \$450,000 to \$500,000 annually. The Greeks of the Morea, instead of diving, obtain sponges by a pronged instrument; but the sponges thus collected are torn, and sell at a low price. The best sponges are obtained from detached heads of rocks, in eight or ten fathoms of water. The sponges from the Bahamas and the Florida coast are of a larger size and coarser quality. They are torn from the rocks by a fork, at the end of a long pole. To rid them of the animal matter they are buried for some days in the sand, and then soaked and washed.”

"There," said Captain Sammy, when Dare had finished reading, "I could have told you all that just as well as for you to read it; but now you've got it just as it was writ down, an' if it ain't right you can't be throwin' it in my teeth that I don't know nothing."

Then Captain Sammy relapsed into a moody silence, looking as if no amount of coaxing or persuasion could thaw him out, for fully ten minutes. At the end of that time he began to tell stories, only stopping when it was absolutely necessary that they should go to bed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

RECKLESS STEERING.

 I had been announced by Captain Sammy, just before they had retired, that he was anxious to anchor in Charlotte harbor the next night, so that they could reach the sponge-fishers at an early hour Wednesday morning. It was necessary that he should have a long day with them, in order to finish his business by nightfall.

To do this they must begin their preparations for the start as soon as it was light enough to admit of their working.

It hardly seemed to the boys as if they had been in bed ten minutes when Captain Sammy called them next morning; but they got up, regardless of their desire for another nap, and the result of their early rising was that they swung around the point of Boca Grand Key just at sunset.

The yacht had been kept running at full speed all day, and, as a natural consequence, each one of the boys had

been obliged to work so hard that they had not the slightest desire to visit the picturesque little town on the key.

They retired at once, and started again at nearly as early an hour on the following morning, each one being anxious to see this strange fishery where a marine plant was the kind of fish sought for.

The sponge-fishers were employed not far from Tampa Bay; therefore when Captain Sammy had finished his business among them it would require only a few hours' run for the *Pearl* into Tampa.

Three hours after they had left Boca Grande, Captain Sammy pointed directly ahead to some low islands or keys, lying almost level with the water, and around which a number of vessels or boats could be seen.

"There are the sponge-fishers," he announced, "and in less than an hour we shall come to anchor among them."

The boys had fully expected to see a novel sight when once they were among the sponge-fishers, despite Tommy's assertion that there "wasn't much to be seen," and they were all excitement as they approached.

But when the *Pearl* was anchored in the very midst of the fleet of vessels, and nothing was to be seen more strange than a number of small boats, each containing from two to four men, all engaged in plunging long poles into the water, and drawing them up, with a mass of sponge at

the end, they were disposed to feel that they had been defrauded in some way.

It was really less novel and interesting to see these men than it was to see a party spearing eels, and after the boys had watched them for half an hour they had seen all they cared about.

Captain Sammy had been bustling around, making frantic signals with his hands, from the time the *Pearl* had first come to an anchor, and all his noise and fuss resulted in a spare boat being sent to them from a schooner of his called the *Bonita*.

The little man proposed to visit all the vessels lying there; those which he owned to see that the work was being conducted to suit him, and the others for the purpose of bargaining for the purchase of the sponge, the greater quantity of which was sold in Key West.

And it was not his intention to take any of his own men away from their work to row him around on his tour of inspection and purchase, for he said, in the most benevolent manner possible, and as though he were conferring some great favor,

"I'm going to let Bobby and Tommy row the boat, and Dare and Charley can stay here to keep ship."

Neither of the two boys selected had any very great desire to labor at the oars on an errand which would be so

uninteresting to them; but they were careful not to let Captain Sammy see that they looked upon it other than as the greatest favor.

After they had left the steamer *Dare* and Charley found it rather hard work to amuse themselves in a place where there was really so little to be seen. They watched the sharks as they glided around among the boats in search of prey, their dorsal fins visible above the water, looking sinister because of the very grace and swiftness of their movements.

After this they set to work catching fish, for the purpose of surprising Captain Sammy by having a chowder all ready for him when he should come on board for dinner, and they did succeed in surprising him, for neither he nor any one else could have told what the dark-looking mixture was simply by judging from its taste and appearance.

Captain Sammy really appeared to be grieved because the captain and engineer of the *Pearl* knew no more about cooking than was shown by this chowder, and he obliged them to watch all his movements while he cooked two ducks, giving them a long lecture on cooking, which was only finished when the dinner was.

"I'm goin' to take you in hand on the next cruise," he said, as he got into the boat again, "and by the time we've

been the whole length of the reef you will be able to get up almost as good a dinner as I can."

But he seemed to think they could wash dishes well enough, for he left the yacht without doing anything toward helping to clean up the little cook-room or the dining-table, and it was fully an hour, owing to their awkwardness, before Dare and Charley succeeded in doing it in anything like a proper manner.

After this work was done the boys lounged on the seats in the standing-room, wishing that Captain Sammy would return, so that they could get away from the very disagreeable odor caused by the decaying sponges, until the movements of an incoming schooner attracted their attention.

She evidently was one of the fleet of sponge-gatherers, but the singular manner in which she was handled caused great surprise to the boys, amateur sailors though they were.

It seemed as if the helmsman had no idea as to where he wanted to go or what he should do, for he steered his vessel in the wildest possible manner, and without the slightest regard to the direction of the wind. The craft would be headed directly for one of the anchored vessels, as if the only purpose was to run her down, and then she would come about, with sails flapping, blocks rattling, and men shouting, standing toward another vessel.

This singular behavior on the part of the crew or cap-

tain of the schooner caused the greatest excitement among the other fishermen, and they shouted and yelled at those on board the offending vessel until there was a perfect Babel of confusion.

"It won't be many minutes before some craft gets smashed, if they keep on at this rate," said Charley, when the vessel grazed by the side of one that was anchored not far from the *Pearl*.

"The men must have been drinking," said Dare, and in a few moments the craft was so near that the boys could plainly see those on board, and it was only too evident that, from the captain down, all hands were in a state of complete and beastly intoxication.

They had probably just received pay for their cargo of sponges, and the money which they had labored hard and braved so many dangers for had been used to degrade them to a level many degrees lower than the brutes.

But those on the yacht had no time for contemplation of the besotted sailors, for their position of spectators was quickly changed to that of participators in the general excitement.

The vessel, which had been some distance from them, now changed her course, heading directly for the *Pearl*, and in such a direction as to strike her about midships.

"They'll run us down, sure!" cried Dare, as he jumped

DARE WAS TUGGING AWAY AT THE CABLE.



to his feet, with the intention of signaling them; but, as he realized how useless that would be, he shouted to Charley, "See if there isn't steam enough on to send us ahead a little way, and I'll trip the anchor."

Since they had intended to remain on the sponging-grounds twenty-four hours at least, the fires had been drawn, and Charley knew even before he rushed into the engine-room that there was not an ounce of steam in the boilers; but yet he made the trial, shouting to Dare almost immediately afterward,

"It's no use; the water isn't even warm."

Dare was tugging away at the cable, and as Charley spoke he looked up at the approaching schooner.

Her sails were full, and she was not more than a hundred feet away, coming with a force that must crush the yacht like an egg-shell.

"Help me launch the boat!" Dare shouted. "She will keep us from the sharks a few moments at all events."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE NEWS AT TAMPA.

A decorative initial letter 'T' with intricate floral and vine patterns, positioned at the start of the first paragraph.

THE excitement among the fishermen was now intense; there seemed to be no chance but that the little steamer would be run down, and, in such event, the lives of those on board were in great peril. It was hardly possible that they could remain in the water a single instant without being devoured by the sharks, and the vessel that was sailing toward them was so high out of the water, owing to having no cargo on board, that it would hardly be possible for the boys to gain any hold of her as she came crashing on to them.

Every boat in the vicinity was headed at once toward the apparently doomed steamer, but yet not one of them could, by any possibility, reach her for some moments after the crash would come.

Meanwhile the boys on board were working with an energy and desperation such as could only have come to them in a moment of as great peril as they were then in.

The boat would hardly be of much service to them after

they got her launched, for, lying in the sun as she had been, the seams, that were only imperfectly closed at the first, were now opened so that she would hardly float more than five minutes. But, as Dare had said, she might serve to keep them from the sharks a few moments, and in that time some one of the other boats might pick them up.

It was no light task to launch the boat unaided in the few seconds they had at their disposal; but yet they succeeded just as the schooner, with her drunken crew, were within ten or twelve feet of them.

At this moment, whether by chance, or because some idea of the damage they were about to do gained an entrance into their stupefied brains, no one ever knew, the helmsman jammed his wheel hard down, and the craft was just beginning to sheer around in obedience to it when she struck the *Pearl*.

Dare and Charley were all ready to leap into the almost sinking boat when the final crash came, and Dare saw the helmsman's movement.

"Hold on!" he shouted to Charley; "she won't strike us full, and there are a good many chances that the *Pearl* won't sink."

Even as he spoke the blow came, and both boys were hurled to the deck, while the tender, which they had been at such labor in launching, was sunk immediately.

It was hardly more than a hair's-breadth which had saved them; for they were saved, even though such a blow had been struck at the little craft.

When Dare had started to trip the anchor he had, almost unconsciously, let off the turn of the cable from the miniature windlass, and the consequence was that the yacht was riding almost as free as if no anchor had been down. The wind, acting on her upper works as on a sail, had begun to force her through the water sideways, which diminished the blow very sensibly. The schooner, having begun to veer around, did not strike the *Pearl* with her cut-water, but hit a glancing blow that had the effect of forcing her along, instead of bearing her down. The impetus was so great, however, that the *Pearl* was carried along to the full length of her chain-cable, which snapped apart as if it had been a thread, nearly flinging her on to a vessel anchored on the port side.

The starboard rail was entirely stove in, but no damage had been done below the water-line, and Dare and Charley, scrambling to their feet, made every exertion to get the other anchor down before they should drift into some of the other craft, and thus work more damage to themselves.

Captain Sammy, with Bobby and Tommy, who had pulled for the yacht with all their strength when they saw the peril she was in, came on board almost immediately

after the second anchor was down. The little man occupied at least ten minutes of his time in shaking his fist and scolding at those who had been the means of losing him a cable and anchor, as well as of crushing one rail almost into kindling-wood.

After he had thus freed his mind he turned his attention to examining the damage done, and after that was ascertained he said, with a sigh of relief,

"Well, we ought to be very thankful that it is no worse. When I saw those drunken brutes sailing right down on you I made sure that the *Pearl* was gone forever, and your being saved was only a question of how long it would be before we could get at you. It won't cost much time or money to make the rail as good as new, and we have got out of the scrape cheaply."

By this time the career of the vessel with her drunken crew was over. They had tried the experiment of running one of the islands down, as they had attempted to the *Pearl*, and the consequence was that the vessel was ashore in what looked to be a sinking condition.

Captain Sammy had nearly completed his work, when it became necessary to start to the aid of Dare and Charley, and now he concluded that he would try to do no more that day.

"We can stop here on our way to the reef," he said,

"and then I can see those whom I have not already talked with. We will spend the rest of the day in fixing the rail, so that we sha'n't look so much as if we had been out in a gale when we go into port, and to-morrow morning we will start for Tampa."

The tender which they were to repair having now gone to the bottom, or floated off full of water, it would be necessary to have a new boat for the *Pearl*, and Captain Sammy concluded to keep the one that had been sent him from the *Bonita*, which fact he announced to the vessel's captain, with a great deal of unnecessary scolding about those who had done the mischief.

Now that they had a boat again the boys concluded that they would go on shore, to see what the little village on the key looked like; and when Captain Sammy announced that the rail was patched as well as it could be until he could get the steamer home, they started for the land, leaving the little man alone to keep ship.

There was nothing on shore to interest them, save the "crawls" or pens for turtles, which appeared to make up the belongings of each household as much as a hen-pen does to that of a farmer's in the interior States. They inspected the occupants of these crawls, with a view to distinguishing the different species Captain Sammy had told them about, and then returned to the yacht.

That evening they had the good-fortune to witness one of those phenomena of the sea which, once seen, is never forgotten.

The evening was calm, with no light save that shed by the stars or the little, twinkling lights displayed at the mast-head of the vessels. As the last gray shadows, remembrances of the sunset, faded into black Captain Sammy called all hands on deck to see the phosphorescent sea, which was more than usually luminous.

The water was as smooth as glass, and, whenever anything was thrown into it, it was as if the object had broken through the surface of a sea of molten gold. Striking the water with an oar caused a shower of golden drops, each one enframed, as it fell back into the sea again, in a circle of the same brilliant color, the whole forming as brilliant and beautiful a picture as the boys had ever seen.

They remained up a long time after they should have been in bed, dipping their hands beneath the surface and withdrawing them coated with gold; describing great circles in lines of fire, or sending up showers of the brilliant liquid. Captain Sammy explained that the phosphorescence was caused by an infinite number of animalculæ in the water, which gave out this brilliant light; but his explanation was so meagre and unsatisfactory that the boys privately determined to study up the matter when they got home.

It was nine o'clock on the following morning when the yacht *Pearl*, Darrell Evans commanding, swept around Mullet Key into the waters of Tampa Bay, and three hours later she was made fast to the pier at Captain Sammy's dock.

"Now you boys run home, so that your parents will know I brought you back whole, and the pirate and I will attend to cleaning up," said Captain Sammy; and the boys were not long in obeying him.

Rushing into the hotel with the impetuosity of young whirlwinds, in the hope of surprising Mr. and Mrs. Evans, their joy was considerably checked when the landlord said to them, just as they were almost tumbling up the stairs in their eagerness,

"Your father and mother went home last week."

All three stood looking at the man as if they could not understand what he had said; and, as a way of making them realize the truth of his assertion, he handed Dare a letter.

It was from Mr. Evans, stating that business had called him suddenly away, and Mrs. Evans was not willing to be left behind. He had left passage tickets for the boys, and they were to return home as soon as they received his letter.

"Oh dear! and we have got to go back without finishing our cruise," said Charley, in a mournful tone.

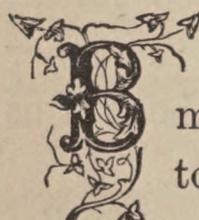
"Yes," replied Dare, "we must go, for he says, come as soon as we get the letter. Of course, if he had known that we should get it before the voyage was over, he would have said that we could stay until it was done; but since he didn't know that, we must go home."

It was a sorrowful party that retraced their steps to the dock to tell Captain Sammy and Tommy that, so far as they were concerned, the cruise was over. And the other members of the *Pearl's* crew were quite as sad about it as the boys were.

"It can't be helped, lads," said Captain Sammy, philosophically. "All we can hope is that you will be back here again before the winter is over. You can't leave here until four o'clock to-morrow afternoon, so you had better pack up your birds and other things you've got aboard here this afternoon; and to-morrow morning, not later than ten o'clock, come around to my house, and the pirate and I will give you a dinner such as you ought to learn how to cook."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FAREWELL DINNER.

Y the arrangement which Captain Sammy had made the entire portion of the last day they were to remain in Tampa was to be spent with him.

The steamer sailed for Cedar Keys—at which point they were to take the cars for Fernandina, leaving there in a steamer—at four o'clock in the afternoon, and an early dinner was to be served, in order that they might have as much of the afternoon as possible in which to visit for the last time the little steamer which had been their home for so many days.

It lacked fully ten minutes of the time appointed when Dare knocked at the door of Captain Sammy's home, which was immediately opened by Tommy.

They were almost too much surprised for words at the pirate's changed appearance. His hair was combed neatly, his face was perfectly clean, and his costume was that of a particularly neat sailor out for a holiday. White flannel trousers and shirt with blue collar and cuffs, in the corners

of which was worked white stars, gave to the once disreputable-looking boy the neatest possible appearance.

Captain Sammy could be seen in the adjoining room, dressed with the same scrupulous neatness; but he was too busily engaged about something to be able to stop to speak, or even scold.

But the room in which they had been ushered was the most wonderful of anything they had seen in the State, for it was as full of odd little things as an overstocked museum. The mantel-piece fairly bristled with whales' teeth, sharks' teeth, and alligators' teeth; each corner of the room was completely filled with sprays and branches of coral, while every available inch of space on the walls was covered with pictures of all kinds of possible and impossible looking vessels.

A stuffed bird was standing on his head under one of the windows, as if it had been frightened at the many strange things around, and had assumed that attitude in sheer desperation. The model of a vessel, possibly the same one Captain Sammy had commanded, stood against an enormous turtle-shell, and at one end of the room lay at least a bushel of shells of almost every conceivable variety.

Bits of rope, in which were tied all kinds of curious knots, complicated blocks, and odds and ends of every de-

scription littered the room, save directly under the mantelpiece, where stood what the visitors thought was the most beautiful article of all.

This was neither more nor less than a trim little schooner, about six feet long, rigged in the most perfect manner, with neither a block nor a line missing or out of place.

Captain Sammy entered the room just as the boys were gazing at the vessel, and a grim look of satisfaction came over his face as he observed the visitors' admiration of this, which was probably his favorite article among all the curiosities.

"Can she sail, Captain Sammy?" asked Dare.

"That she can," replied the little man, enthusiastically; "she can live in almost any weather; an' I've seen more lives saved through the craft than this one's the model of than I ever saw lost, which is sayin' a good deal. Sail? why, that 'ere craft could turn a square corner, if anybody that knew how much twice two was could get on board of her. Sail? why, she could get clean away from the wind, an' have to lay-to till it caught up with her."

Captain Sammy patted the sides of the little craft as if it was some living thing that could understand his caresses, and then, glancing up at the clock, he rushed off to the kitchen in the greatest possible haste.

Master Tucker seemed to take naturally to this great

change in his surroundings, and, in answer to Dare's questions, he told them that Captain Sammy had announced his intention of regularly adopting him. The little man had already visited Mrs. Tucker, and, by promising to contribute a certain amount each month toward her support, had induced her to consent to the plan.

Therefore Tommy was to begin to attend school on the following Monday, and he would persist that all the changes in his circumstances were wholly due to the boys, who had shown him by example that true pleasure and right-doing go hand in hand.

All this conversation, which was broken in upon from time to time by their admiration of the schooner, had occupied them so long that when it was finished Captain Sammy popped his head in at the door and shouted, as if he thought they were miles away,

"Shipmates, ahoy! All hands to dinner!"

They went into the kitchen, where Captain Sammy, with evident pride, gave them seats at a table that seemed almost groaning under the weight of evidences of his skill as cook. Turtle, which was cooked in every imaginable way, was the principal dish, and in addition to it were fish, fowl, and fruit sufficient for at least a dozen hungry men.

It was Captain Sammy's purpose to have them partake of everything on the table; and so strictly did he carry it

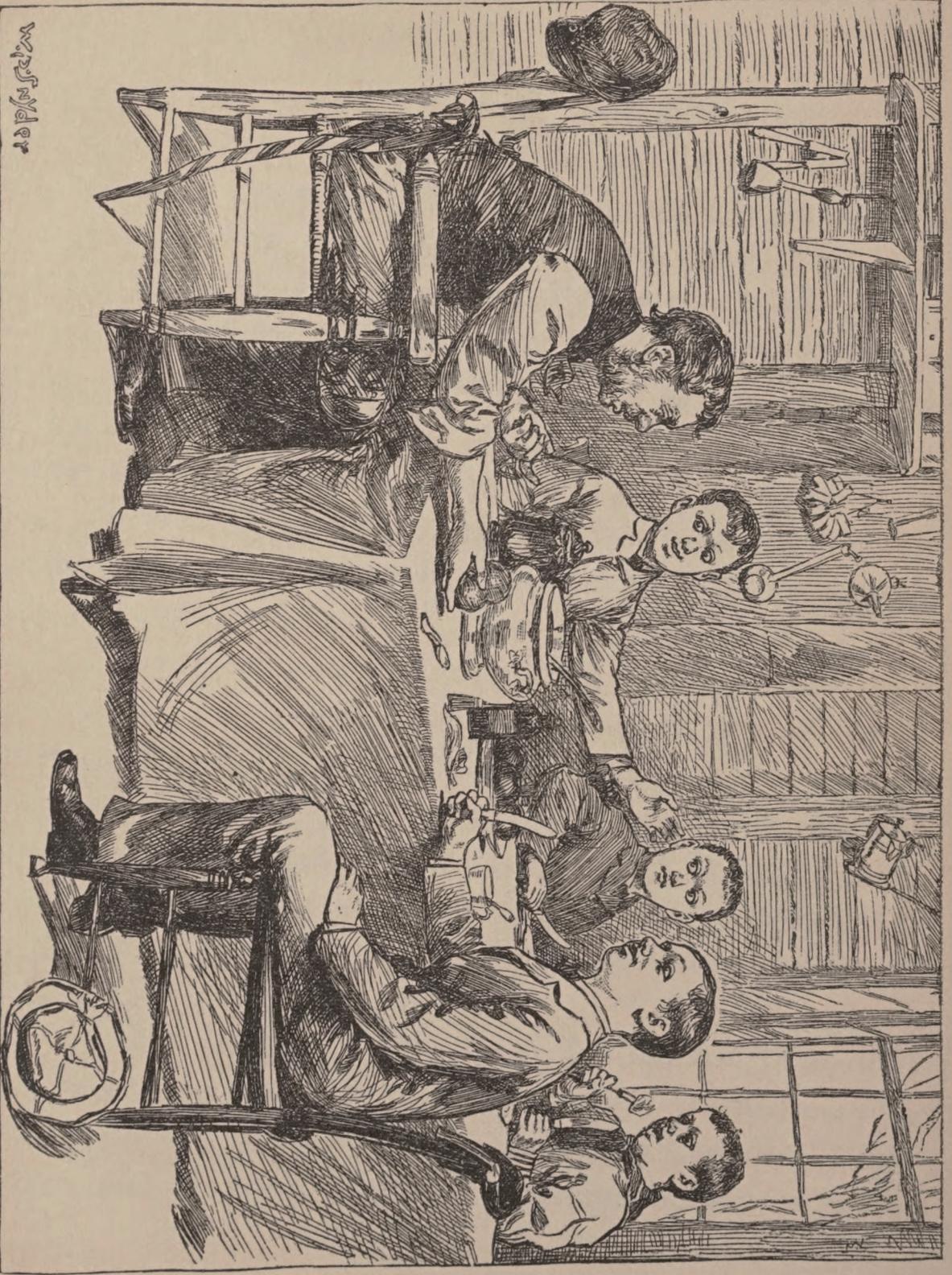
out, that even when Bobby had eaten so much that he had serious doubts as to whether he could walk home, or would be obliged to get the others to roll him along like a barrel, the little man glared at him so fiercely that he ate another turtle-steak and two more oranges, through fear of personal violence.

And it was a jolly time; for when the little man was not scolding or frowning at his guests because they did not eat more he was brimful of fun, and told stories until their heads were as full of the wonders of the sea as their stomachs were with food.

"Now," said Captain Sammy, after he was satisfied that full justice had been done to his feast, and the table looked as if it had been swept by an invading army, "I'm downright sorry that you're goin' away, for I'd counted on having you here with my pirate for a long time yet. I'd made up my mind that we'd all go out turtle-fishing in May, and that would have been rare sport, where all you would have to do would be to walk up to an old turtle, after she'd laid her eggs, an' tilt her over on her back."

Even though the boys did not speak their faces showed so plainly how sad they were at not being able to participate in such glorious sport, that Captain Sammy added, quickly,

"If it can't be done this year it can another, an' when-



W. J. Miller

THE FAREWELL DINNER WITH CAPTAIN SAMMY.

ever you come you know you'll be welcome here. The pirate an' I shall stay right on this spot till my old bones are laid away like a bale of sponges, to make 'em ready for the great Captain, who won't ask where I hail from, only wantin' to know if I sailed close by his compass. It was Tommy here," and the little man laid his hand affectionately on the boy's shoulder, "who saved my old life when it wasn't hardly worth the saving, an' he an' I'll be together as long as I stay in this world; an', next to him, it was you who saved me, for if it hadn't been for you he wouldn't have been where he was. I ain't much on talkin', lads, but my heart is in the right place, an' all I can say is, that jest so long as I've got a roof over my head, or a deck under my feet, jest so long I'll give you up three-quarters of it, an' be glad of the chance."

Captain Sammy's eyes were getting suspiciously red, and when he finished speaking he arose hastily from the table and went out on the veranda, where the boys found him shortly after, sending up great clouds of tobacco-smoke in the most furious manner.

After that the *Pearl* was visited for the last time, and, with hearts heavy at leaving this strangely-assorted couple, whom they had learned to like so well, the last adieus were spoken, and the boys were on the steamer bound for home.

* * * * *

Although Dare, Charley, and Bobby had fully intended to visit Florida during the following winter, circumstances prevented, and it was not until last year that they succeeded in so doing.

Then they went by the way of Jacksonville; and, although they had never seen that beautiful winter resort, they did not remain there an hour longer than was necessary.

There was but one place in Florida they were anxious to reach, and but two persons they particularly wanted to see. That place was Tampa, and those persons Captain Sammy and his pirate Tommy.

They started on the first train that left Jacksonville for Cedar Keys, and there they were so fortunate as to land an hour before the time for the mail-steamer to start for Tampa.

They had given no intimation of their intended visit, answering Tommy's last letter without once mentioning the subject that for five years had lain so near the pirate's heart—their visit to him since he had become a steady, honest boy.

Therefore there was no familiar face to greet them as they landed from the steamer, and they were all the better pleased that it was so, for the surprise would be the more complete.

During the five years they had been absent from Tampa they had by no means forgotten the way to Captain Sammy's house, and when they approached it they were thoroughly well pleased at seeing such evidences as told that the "family" were at home, and unaware of their presence.

Captain Sammy's familiarly gruff voice called out "Come in!" in response to their knock, and, opening the door, they saw the little captain leaning back in his favorite chair, smoking, while seated at the table was Tommy Tucker Basset—he having long since been legally adopted by Captain Sammy—reading aloud from one of the little man's favorite authors.

It was a hearty greeting that both the occupants of the cottage gave them, and the three weeks they spent there were as full of enjoyment as Captain Sammy and his pirate—as he would still persist in calling him, very much to Tommy's confusion—could fill them.

Although they did not attempt to reach the Everglades again, they took many a cruise in the *Pearl*, which looked as bright and new as if she had just been built; and when at last their visit was ended Captain Sammy and Tommy took them up to Cedar Keys in the yacht.

"Come soon again," said the little man, as they parted at the railroad-station. "I don't tell you not to forget us,

for that I know you never will, and you may be sure that we shall never forget you, for my pirate learned what pleasure there was in leading an upright, God-fearing life when you boys came down here and took the job of raising the *Pearl*. Good-bye!"

THE END.

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