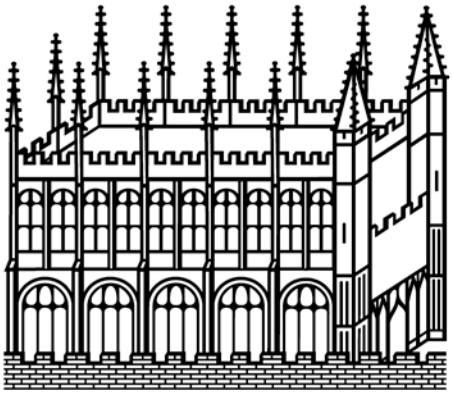
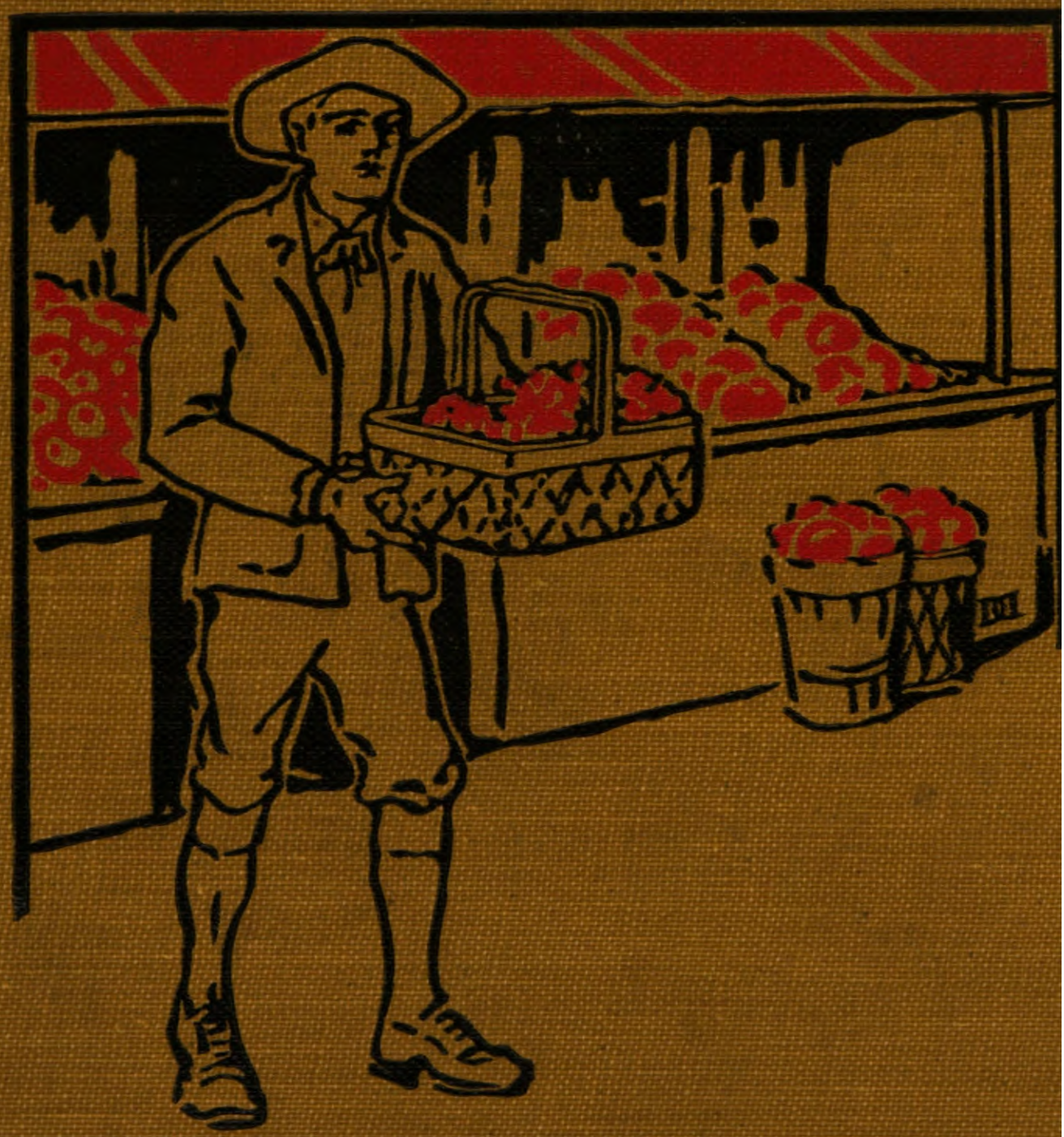
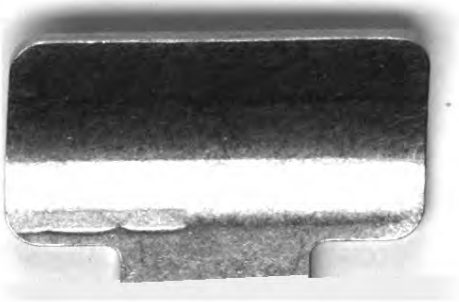




CHRYSTAL, JACK & CO AND DELTA BIXBY



CHRYSTAL, JACK & CO.

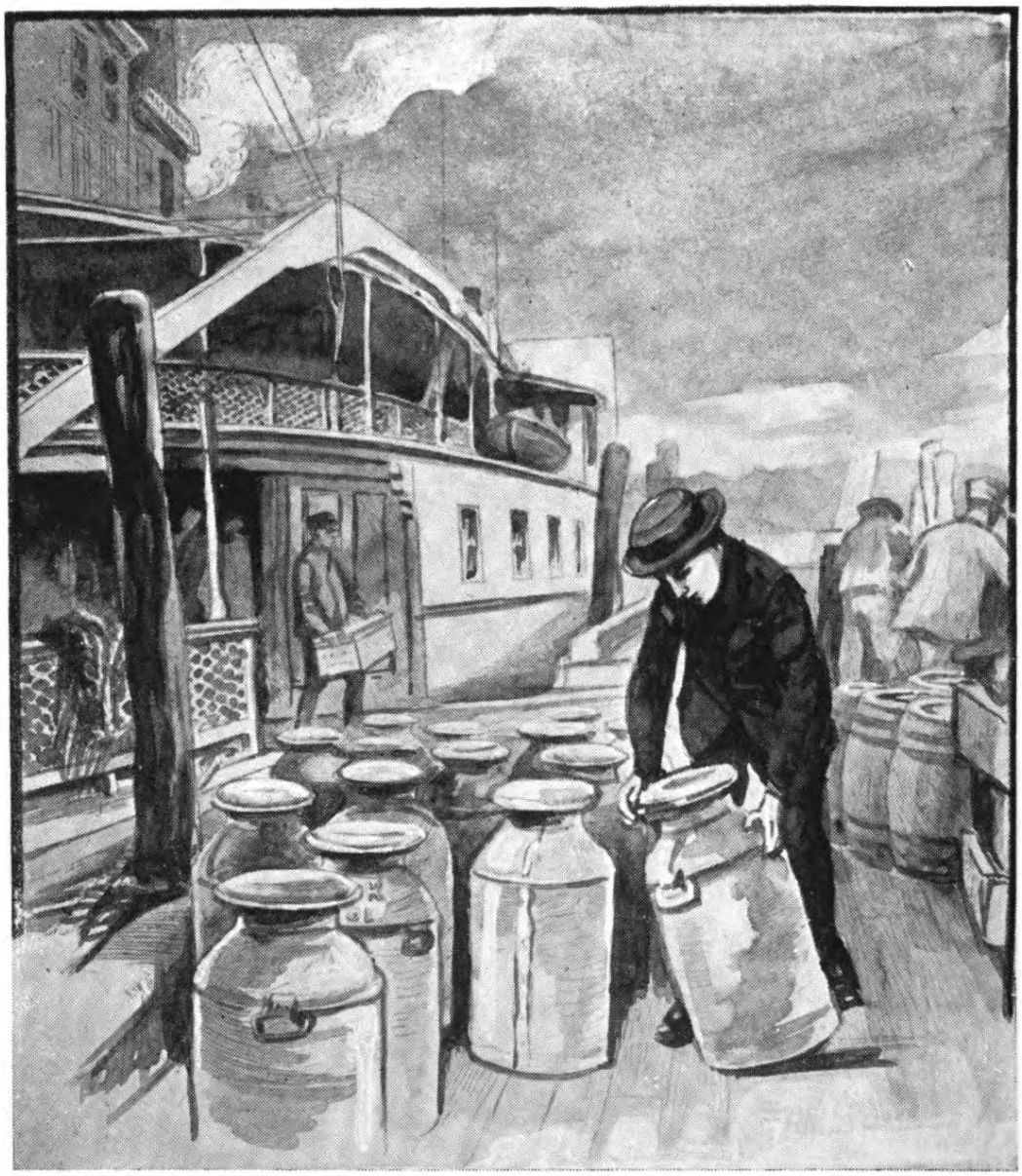
HARPER'S YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERIES

NEW LARGE-TYPE EDITION

TOBY TYLER ..... James Otis
MR. STUBBS'S BROTHER ..... James Otis
TIM AND TIP ..... James Otis
RAISING THE "PEARL" ..... James Otis
ADVENTURES OF BUFFALO BILL ..... W. F. Cody
DIDDIE, DUMPS AND TOT ..... Mrs. L. C. Pyrnelle
MUSIC AND MUSICIANS ..... Lucy C. Lillie
THE CRUISE OF THE CANOE CLUB ..... W. L. Alden
THE CRUISE OF THE "GHOST" ..... W. L. Alden
MORAL PIRATES ..... W. L. Alden
A NEW ROBINSON CRUSOE ..... W. L. Alden
PRINCE LAZYBONES ..... Mrs. W. J. Hays
THE FLAMINGO FEATHER ..... Kirk Munroe
DERRICK STERLING ..... Kirk Munroe
CHRYSTAL, JACK & CO. ..... Kirk Munroe
WAKULLA ..... Kirk Munroe
THE ICE QUEEN ..... Ernest Ingersoll
THE RED MUSTANG ..... W. O. Stoddard
THE TALKING LEAVES ..... W. O. Stoddard
TWO ARROWS ..... W. O. Stoddard

HARPER & BROTHERS
PUBLISHERS


BODLEIAN



JACK ASSISTED IN UNLOADING THE MILK-CANS

CHRYSTAL, JACK & CO.

AND

DELTA BIXBY

TWO STORIES

BY

KIRK MUNROE

Author of "WAKULLA," Etc.

ILLUSTRATED

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

CHRYSTAL, JACK & CO.

Printed in the U. S. A.

F-Y

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

CHRYSTAL, JACK & CO.

CHAPTER I.

THE COUNCIL FIRE.

IT was late in November when the runaway accident happened through which the Carys lost their father, and Chrystal was so sadly injured that for weeks they hardly dared hope she would live.

Dr. Cary had been for so long not only the physician, but the friend and counsellor of nearly every family in the little Hudson River village of Hartley, that now his loss was deeply felt on all sides.

Their last day together had been spent by Chrystal and her father in the city making winter purchases, for the Carys had no mother. She had died when the twins were born, and they were now eight years old.

Of all the children Chrystal was the eldest,

and had faithfully filled her mother's place ever since that duty had been demanded of her. Jack, only a year younger, came next, then Mabel, and then the twins, who were known individually as Percy and Sally, but collectively as "Pepper and Salt." The pleasant Cary cottage was nestled snugly in a tiny valley, hollowed from a steep hill-side that commanded a fine view of the river, and they called it "Ingle Dell."

In this household, so suddenly bereft of its father, and uncertain whether its sister-mother was to leave them or not, the winter passed slowly and sadly. They tried not to remember when Christmas came; and though several little gifts had been provided for each one by Chrystal and her father, those for whom they were intended had not the heart even to look at them, and they were all laid away in the spare-room closet.

The date of the New Year was beginning to have a familiar look before the tide turned, and Chrystal was pronounced to be out of immediate danger. She slept heavily most of the time, and

one day, while in this condition, she startled Jack, who sat in the room reading, by saying, very faintly, but as though continuing some interrupted conversation,

"Very well, father, we will do what you think best."

Jack dropped his book and sprang to her side. His movement awoke her; she looked at him for a moment, and there was the trace of a smile on her face, then she again closed her eyes.

Her words had startled Jack more than a little, because they were so in accord with his own thoughts; he had been trying so hard to do what his father would think was best, and so often longed for Chrystal's clear-headed counsel and practical advice. Although friends and neighbors had been very kind, and had done much for them, the burden of responsibility had fallen upon Jack's shoulders. Sturdy fellow that he was, he was willing to work with all his might if only the work were laid out for him; but he hated to think; Chrystal had always done his thinking, and she could do it so much better than he. Now, as the temporary head of the

family, he was obliged to work and think too, and the thought that came most frequently to his mind was: Would father do this or that?

There had been but a few dollars of ready money in the house at the time of Dr. Cary's death, and although all the shopkeepers in the village were willing to let Jack have supplies on credit, he began to be frightened at the size of the bills he was running up. He knew almost nothing of his father's affairs, for Chrystal had kept the doctor's books as well as the family accounts, and the longer she was ill the more did the others realize how dependent they had been upon her, and pray for her recovery.

The twins kept on with their school, for Jack thought it best for them to do so, and with them life went on much as it always had. Mabel's time was so taken up with the care of Chrystal that a large share of the house-work, as well as that outside the house, fell to Jack. Some boys would have rebelled against building fires, sweeping, dusting, washing dishes, and even making beds; but Jack was not the kind of a boy to feel ashamed of doing, just as well as

he knew how, willingly and cheerfully, whatever lay plainly in his line of duty. Mabel did the cooking, and when she was thus employed he took her place at Chrystal's bedside. Once a week a skilful physician, who had been one of Dr. Cary's intimate friends, came up from New York to visit the sick girl.

After the day on which she had spoken to Jack from her dreams the invalid's recovery progressed slowly but steadily. At last the time came when, very white, thin, and weak, she was lifted from the bed upon which she had lain so long, and placed in an easy-chair by the window. Then the doctor from New York brought her a pair of crutches, and told her that with their aid she would soon be able to get about the house, but that it might be some months before she could hope to walk without them.

This was sad news for poor Chrystal, who had always been so strong, active, and full of life, and when Jack came into the room soon afterwards he found her sobbing bitterly.

"Don't, sister! don't!" he cried. "Even if you are to walk with crutches for a while, that's

a great deal better than sitting still and not being able to get about at all. Besides, even so, you are by far the best of all the Carys. While we have got health and feet, you have got more brains than all the rest of the family put together, and it's always brains that tell in the end."

These words from Jack comforted his sister greatly, and during the days that followed, as she sat in that sick-room, thinking and planning, she became more and more grateful that her full mental strength had been spared to her.

By the middle of April she was able to go down-stairs, and the evening on which she rejoined the family circle in the cheerful sitting-room was a very happy one. At first its joy was clouded by the sight of the empty arm-chair that had been their father's, and about which were clustered some of their happiest associations. This great chair, with its crimson cushions, stuffed arms, and high back, had been drawn close to the open fireplace, in which a bright blaze sprang merrily upward from a pile of birch and hickory logs. When Chrystal en-

tered the room Jack led her directly towards it.

"Oh no, not that chair!" she said, drawing back.

"Yes, sister, that very chair. We've talked it all over, and decided that, as you are now the head of the household, you alone are entitled to occupy our father's chair."

She gave way reluctantly, and they seated her triumphantly in the chair, that was ever afterwards known as "Chrystal's," and from which so much of their life-work was to be planned and laid out.

After this Chrystal had several long and serious talks with Jack and Mabel. She spent many hours in going over the account-books that she had kept so carefully up to the time of her father's death, and she sent for all the outstanding bills in the village to be brought to her. By the last of April she knew the exact financial condition of the family, and had formed a plan for its future support which she was ready to submit to her brothers and sisters.

Although these children had loved their father as dearly as ever a father was loved, and

would cherish his memory so long as they lived, neither Chrystal nor Jack believed in parading their grief to the world. As the latter said, it was their own sorrow and not other people's. Consequently there were no outward traces of mourning visible in the household, no black dresses nor crape veils, no black-bordered note-paper, and no putting away in attics or dark corners of the things most used by their father, and which served as constant reminders of him. The tears that Chrystal shed in the privacy of her own room were never seen by the others, for whom she always had a smiling face and cheerful words. Now that she was again with them, all the little household jokes, of which every happy family has its share, were resumed, and they talked as freely of their father, and of what he would have them do or leave undone, as though he had only left them for a while, and might return at any time.

Dr. Cary had been in the habit of discussing all the important events of their lives, as well as his own plans for their pleasure and welfare with his children, and these pleasant family gath-

erings and talks had come to be called "Council Fires." Therefore, when Chrystal announced one morning at breakfast-time that there would be a council fire held directly after supper that evening, they all knew what she meant.

They formed a pleasing picture, those orphaned Carys, as they gathered in their cosey sitting-room that evening. In the great chair, against which leaned her crutches, sat Chrystal, now almost a woman, her thoughtful face tinged with a faint color from the ruddy firelight that shone full upon it. Stretched out on a rug at her feet lay curly-haired Jack, a very ideal of youthful health and strength. In a low rocker, near the centre-table and lamp, sat Mabel, whose dresses still reached but to the top of her buttoned boots, busy with a bit of sewing. The twins, rosy and chubby, with faces brimful of fun and mischief, sat close together on their own little bench at the opposite side of the fireplace from Chrystal. Each had an arm thrown round the other's neck, a very favorite position of theirs, and they were trying hard to assume such

a look of gravity as became the importance of the occasion.

Chrystal introduced the subject they were to discuss by saying, "I have called this council fire because it is high time for us to decide upon some means of gaining a livelihood and providing for our own support. You, Jack and Mabel, know that we are very poor, and that the few uncollected bills left by our dear father are barely sufficient to pay what we owe in the village. We own this house and its contents, the acre of ground on which it stands, a horse, a cow, and a flock of chickens. We have absolutely no source of income, and no relative in the world who can help us except Uncle Herkimer."

"And he won't," muttered Jack.

"He has offered to adopt any one of us," continued Chrystal, "who will leave the rest, and promise to hold no communication with them until he or she becomes of age. Whoever accepts this offer will be thoroughly educated, and will receive a liberal provision of money by uncle's will. I for one have no desire to accept

such an offer, and Jack is of the same mind with me. Will you accept it, Mabel?"

"Oh, Chrystal!" cried the girl, in a reproachful tone, while the quick tears started to her eyes. "Can you think for a single minute that I would leave you to go and live in the finest house in New York on such conditions? You ought to know I wouldn't, not for all the wealth in the city, nor in the whole world."

"Good for you, Queen Mab!" shouted Jack. "I only wish Uncle Herkimer would come out here. He would find out what we thought of him. If I knew him by sight I'd go to New York and hunt him up, just for the pleasure of expressing my feelings to him."

"I didn't think for a moment that you would accept the offer, Mabel, or be anything but your own true, loyal self," said Chrystal, and turning to the twins she asked, "How is it with you, children?"

"I guess we don't want to go and live in Uncle Herkimer's old house," responded Percy.

"Old house!" echoed Sally, in a tone expressive of deep scorn.

This affair being thus settled, the council fire resolved itself into a committee of the whole to consider ways and means.

"We might sell Trudy and the cow," suggested Jack.

"I'm afraid we could not get more than fifty dollars for both of them," answered Chrystal; "and I'm sure they will be worth more than that to us to keep."

"Why not take boarders, or start a school, or write stories?" suggested Mabel, whose enthusiasm would never allow her to see the difficulties in the path-way of any of her schemes.

"Yes," cried Jack, "why not turn 'Jingle Bell' into a great summer resort, an academy, or a publishing house? But seriously, sister, why can't we mortgage the place for a thousand dollars or so? That will keep us until we can look round and get started at something that will pay."

Chrystal answered Mabel first, saying, "You see, dear, we haven't room for more than one or

two boarders, even if we could get them, and that business can only be made profitable when it is conducted on a large scale. As for a school, we could teach only the very youngest children, such as parents are willing to expend but small sums upon, and of those there are not more than half a dozen in this neighborhood. Writing is, of course, wholly out of the question, for none of us has had any training in that direction, and the literary market is already sadly overstocked with capable and well-known writers in every department."

"Well, I'm sure I can't think of anything else," cried Mabel, quite crestfallen at this dismissal of her plans.

"And Jack," continued the eldest sister, turning to the handsome fellow on the floor, "you surely cannot have forgotten so quickly what father said so often, 'Guard your home as you would your life, and never give an outsider the slightest claim upon it except in a case of the direst necessity.' It would not only be wicked to mortgage our home before we are absolutely forced to do so, and then I should prefer to sell

it, but by obtaining a little money in that way we should merely be postponing a question that can just as well be decided now as at any other time."

"Right again, sister, as you always are!" exclaimed impulsive Jack, sitting up on the rug as he spoke; "and I should be the very last one to sign a mortgage on dear old 'Jingle Bell' if such a cruel thing ever had to be done. But what do you propose we should do? I'm sure you've got some wise plan in your mind."

Before Chrystal could answer, Percy spoke up and said, "We might pick berries and sell 'em."

"Yes, sell 'em," said Sally, who always echoed Percy's wise sayings.

"We might sell you both for roly-polies!" cried Jack, tipping the twins over on the rug by a sudden movement, and then tickling them amid their screams of laughter.

When quiet and order were again restored, Chrystal said, "Much as you may laugh at Percy's suggestion, Jack, it is very nearly the same as the plan I have to offer."

"What! support ourselves by becoming berry-

pickers?" exclaimed Jack, with open-eyed astonishment.

"Not precisely," was the answer, "but something in that line. You see that while individually we are weak, as regards our ability to earn a livelihood, by all working together I think we can accomplish something."

"A sort of an 'E pluribus unum, united we stand, divided we fall,' theory," said Jack.

"Exactly—and I propose that we go into business as a united family, and start a wholesale floral establishment."

"Here?" asked Mabel.

"No, in New York City."

CHAPTER II.

TRAILING ARBUTUS.

CHRYSTAL'S proposition was such a surprising one that for a minute the other members of the council fire gazed at her without speaking, as though trying to comprehend her meaning.

At length Jack said, slowly, "A wholesale floral establishment in New York City? Well, sister, your schemes are certainly planned upon a liberal scale; but to plan is one thing, and to carry out a plan is another. Are you prepared to enlighten us further as to this undertaking? I must say that it would seem to possess the merit of novelty at least."

"Well," said Chrystal, smiling at the general amazement with which her plan was received, "I am glad that you find any merit in it. Perhaps if I analyze it, as we used to analyze sen-

tences in the grammar class, it may meet with your further approval."

Here Jack settled himself in a comfortable position, assumed a judicial air, and expressed himself as being ready to listen to the evidence in the case.

"I am not at all sure that my scheme is a feasible one," continued Chrystal, "but I think it is worthy of a trial. In the first place, I believe that wild-flowers, such as grow in this vicinity, will sell just as readily as those that are cultivated, if they are only carried to the proper market. At any rate they are the only salable things I know of that we can have in quantity for the gathering."

"Point number one is well taken," remarked Jack.

"Then it is a business that must necessarily be divided into three departments—the gathering of the flowers, the sorting, arranging, and shipping, and the selling. In one or another of these duties all of us, even helpless I, can take part and perform a share."

"Yes, indeed; and yours will be the most im-

portant part of all," cried Jack, "because you will have to do all the thinking."

Only noticing this interruption with a bright smile, and a nod which meant "Thank you for the compliment," Chrystal said, "Father once told me that more flowers are sold in New York than in any other city of the world. Certainly it has lots of shops in which cultivated flowers can be bought; but I have never seen one entirely devoted to wild-flowers. I'm sure there must be thousands of people living in the city who were born and brought up in the country, and who would be only too glad of the chance to get such pleasant reminders of their old homes."

"But how about the 'wholesale establishment'?" asked Jack.

Chrystal laughed as she answered, "I used the expression partly because it sounded well and added dignity to my scheme, and partly because I hope it may come literally true. The establishment may at first be only a basket on a street corner; but if our undertaking meets with any success at all it will soon be something better.

I also said 'wholesale' because I hope a large part of the business will be to supply the city florists with wild-flowers; but perhaps I should have called it a 'wholesale and retail establishment.' You will please take notice that I have used the word establishment, rather than store or shop, on account of its elasticity. An establishment, while sounding very fine, may mean almost anything."

"I think it's a splendid idea," cried Mabel, who, neglectful of her sewing, had listened eagerly to all these details, "and I'm sure it will succeed. Hurrah for Chrystal, Jack & Company!"

"Hip, hip—hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" shouted Jack; while the shrill voices of the twins trailed on behind like an echo.

"You ought to give three more special cheers for the company, Jack," said Chrystal; "they'll be just one apiece, you know."

Jack immediately acted upon this suggestion, while all three members of the company joined in and cheered themselves heartily. The enthusiasm was so great that poor little Sally did not

know where to stop, and so gave a fourth cheer all by herself. It sounded so lonesome and feeble that the rest laughed until this member of the company was covered with confusion and blushes.

When the new firm, having been thus formally named and recognized, was again ready to attend to business, Jack asked,

"When and how do you propose that we begin operations, Chrystal?"

"To-morrow," answered the senior partner, promptly. "This is the season of the very sweetest and daintiest of wild-flowers, the trailing arbutus. We haven't any time to waste, and it will be a splendid flower to begin business with. Do you all agree to give my plan a trial?"

"Yes," shouted the three members of the company.

"If you will do all the thinking, and lay out the work for the rest of us," said Jack.

"Very well, then, I propose that we try it for one month, and if we have not made our every-day household expenses out of it by that time, we'll give it up and try to think of something

else. To-morrow, as soon as the *Mayflower* comes up the river, I wish you, Jack, would go down and see Captain Brengle. Tell him what we propose to do, and find out on what terms he will take you to the city and bring you back again every day for a month."

The *Mayflower* was a small river steamer that left the village every night about twelve o'clock with milk for the city. She made several other landings on the way down, and reached New York about daylight. At noon, after all her empty milk-cans had been collected, she started back again up the river. Her captain, Eliphalet Brengle, was a fat, jolly man about fifty years of age, who was widely known up and down the river as "Elephant Brengle." Dr. Cary had more than once proved a kind friend to him, and Chrystal felt sure he would take an interest in their plans, and help them all he could.

Mabel suggested that the name of the flower with which they were to make their first business venture being the same as that of the steamer which was to carry it to market, was a happy coincidence. The rest agreed that it was a lucky

omen, and were greatly cheered by it; for even when people are not superstitious they are pleased to find the good omens on their side.

"As soon as you get out of school to-morrow, I want you, Percy and Sally, to go into the woods and find out where the best patches of arbutus are," said Chrystal. "You need not gather any, only notice where it grows thickest. If you see any other flowers, or any pretty green things, bring me some samples of them."

"I know where there was lots of it in Farmer Ellinger's wood lot," said Percy.

"Yes, lots in a lot," echoed the faithful Sally.

"When you get back from your interview with Captain Brengle, Jack," continued the head of the firm, "I wish you would drive out to the big swamp, and get a load of sphagnum-moss. We shall want it, you know, to keep the flowers fresh. Later in the afternoon you will all go out and gather flowers. In the evening we will arrange and pack them, and the next morning Jack shall see what he can do with them in the city."

The council fire broke up soon after this, and the several members of the firm of Chrystal,

Jack & Co. went to their beds to dream all night of the new and fascinating business scheme that had just been unfolded to them.

The *Mayflower* was hardly made fast in her dock the next day before Jack Cary sprang aboard, and was greeted by Captain Brengle, with, "Hello, Jack, my hearty! how goes it?"

"I think the going will depend somewhat upon you," answered Jack; and, seeing that he wished to talk with him, the captain led the way into his own state-room.

Here Jack unfolded to him the scheme of the floral establishment, and asked what he would charge to carry him and his flowers to the city every day, or rather every night.

Captain Brengle listened attentively to the whole story, and when it was ended he said, "I believe you've struck a good scheme, my boy, and one that has money in it. New Yorkers are gone on flowers, and I've had lots of 'em come up the river with me, different times, on purpose to get the wild ones. There must be plenty more who can't get away, but who want 'em just as bad. Such folks will be glad enough to buy 'em

of you. You've got an awful hard row to hoe in getting started, though, and I shouldn't be a bit surprised if you got discouraged and gave it up long before the end of a month."

Jack said nothing in answer to this gloomy foreboding, but mentally resolved that at the end of a month he would show Captain Brengle how mistaken he was in judging his character.

"As to your travelling up and down on the *Mayflower,*" continued the captain, "I'd be mighty glad to give you a pass, and carry you for nothing; but I can't do that, Interstate Commerce Bill won't permit it, for we make a stop in Jersey, you know." Here the captain winked at Jack, and the latter said,

"Of course I didn't expect anything of that kind; I only thought that perhaps as I was going to travel so much you might sell me a monthly ticket at reduced rates."

"Just so; but seeing as I haven't got any monthly tickets to sell, how would you like to ship regular as one of my crew, and help sling milk-cans? You might manage to do considerable work in that way when you wasn't sleep-

ing." With this the captain winked at Jack again.

"Oh, thank you, captain!" cried Jack. "Yes, indeed, I shall be very glad to ship as one of your crew, and I will work to pay for my passage; really I will."

"All right," answered the captain, "that's settled, then, and you'll be down some time this evening. We leave at sharp midnight, you know. Mind, though, and never let me catch you at work when you ought to be asleep; that's against the rules of my ship." As he finished this speech Captain Brengle shook with suppressed laughter, got very red in the face, and winked several times, all in appreciation of his own joke.

Jack was jubilant over the success of this first step in their new enterprise, and hurried home to tell Chrystal the good news. After dinner he harnessed Trudy, and drove several miles back in the hills to the big swamp to get the sphagnum-moss. It was a wild place, remote from dwellings, and Jack's keen eye noted with pleasure the great quantity of swamp azalea and

mountain-laurel bushes surrounding it. "In a few weeks more they'll be covered with blossoms," he said to himself, "and nobody else'll ever take the trouble to come 'way out here after them."

By a little raking over of the dead leaves on the hill-side, back from the swamp, he discovered such numbers of the pink, wax-like arbutus flowers that he thought it would be a pity not to gather them. So he filled the wagon-box with them and the moss for which he had been sent, and started homeward, much pleased with his success. When he reached home he felt well rewarded for his forethought, for the twins had found the arbutus very scarce in the vicinity of the village, so great was the demand for it, and Chrystal was beginning to fear they would not have enough to make up even a dozen bunches.

In addition to their may-flowers, each of the twins brought in an armful of trailing ground-pine. By close searching in warm, sheltered places, Mabel had also discovered a handful of

hepaticas, whose sweet petal faces were well protected by tippets of furry sepals.

After supper Chrystal, Jack & Co. spent a happy evening in arranging these treasures. They made forty small bunches of arbutus, each surrounded by a fringe of the ground-pine; and these, Chrystal said, ought to bring ten cents apiece. Enough was left to make into two large bunches, that were decided to be worth twenty-five cents each; and the hepaticas were made into five very small bunches, that, if they could be sold for five cents each, wuld bring the value of the whole up to four dollars and seventy-five cents.

This mathematical result was arrived at and announced by Jack, who also remarked that nearly five dollars for their first day's work was pretty good for a beginning.

Chrystal reminded him that the flowers were not yet sold, and perhaps would not be; whereupon Master Jack declared confidently that he, for one, had not the slightest doubt that they would all be sold by noon the next day.

All the bunches were laid in a large flat bas-

ket, and around their stems was packed a quanity of damp sphagnum-moss. Over the top was spread a light mat of sweet-scented grasses that had been braided by Chrystal the summer before. She had meant to make a table-cover, but her supply of grass had given out before it was half finished, and the work had been laid aside until another season. Now it proved to be exactly the right size, and just the thing for this new purpose.

By ten o'clock Jack was ready to start on his walk to the landing. Just as he was leaving the house, Chrystal called out, "Don't forget to take your luncheon, Jack."

"I never thought of that," said the boy, coming back and looking in at the door. "Do you think I need one? I am not a bit hungry."

"Of course you are not now," laughed Chrystal; "but of course you will be very hungry by morning, and again before you get home; so I have put up in this tin pail enough for two lunches. After this we will have a late dinner when you get home, and supper just before you start away in the evening."

As Jack walked down to the steamboat landing with the large basket containing his stock in trade on one arm, and swinging the lunch-pail in the other hand, he was in capital spirits, and whistled merrily. He had entered upon this new undertaking with an impulsive enthusiasm, and had not the shadow of a doubt that it would be successful from the very outset. Poor Jack!

The scene on and in the vicinity of the *Mayflower* was a busy one. Farm-wagons, heavily laden with huge cans of milk, were rattling down to the little wharf from all directions. Men with lanterns were running here and there; the mate was shouting orders to the deck-hands, and all was delightful bustle and apparent confusion. On the upper deck, smoking a cigar, and placidly surveying the scene below him, sat Captain Brengle, and Jack, who was at first somewhat bewildered by the unaccustomed turmoil, soon spied him out and made his way to where he sat.

"Hello, Jack!" shouted the good-natured captain; "got down in good time, didn't you? Put those traps in my room, and you'll find a lounge

in there that you can sleep on. You won't be disturbed, for I never sleep at night, only in the daytime, like the owls. Don't want to turn in yet? Well, get a stool and come out here with me. What! want to go to work? Oh, yes, yes! I forgot. Well, there's no accounting for tastes. Some folks take their recreation one way, and some another. If you feel that you must work off your superfluous energy, I suppose you must."

Jack worked so hard with the rest of the deck-hands that when the steamer finally got away he thought he would lie down and rest until the first landing was reached.

Four hours later he awoke with a start, and, springing to the state-room door, found that the hubbub going on down below meant that they had reached New York, and that the city milk-wagons were already rattling away with the *Mayflower's* cargo.

Jack hurried down to do his share of the work; but there was little left to do, and by the time it was light enough to see without the aid of a lantern, he found himself at liberty and

quite alone; for the crew had tumbled into their bunks, and Captain Brengle was already sound asleep in his state-room.

A feeling of faintness turned the boy's attention towards the lunch-pail; and, getting it, he sat down on deck to eat his breakfast. It was washed down by a drink of water from a hydrant on the pier, at which he also made his morning's toilet. Thus the time was passed until five o'clock, when the rising sun gave promise of dispelling the chill and dampness of the night, and warned him that it was time to begin his day's business.

Captain Brengle had advised him to try one of the great uptown markets first, then to make a round of the florists, and finally to spend an hour or two on Fourteenth Street or Twenty-third Street, where most of the fashionable retail shops are located. Not knowing of anything better to do, Jack decided to follow the programme thus laid out for him.

With his basket of flowers on his arm, and not feeling quite so light-hearted as he had done

the night before while on his way to the landing, the boy stepped on shore, and, turning into a narrow street, was quickly lost to view from the *Mayflower.*

CHAPTER III.

A DAY OF DISAPPOINTMENTS.

THE early morning sights and sounds of a great city, before it has fairly wakened, are not pleasant; and long before he reached the market for which he was bound, Jack wished heartily that he was back at Ingle Dell. He wondered who was making the fire in the kitchen, and remembered with a guilty feeling that he had been in such a hurry to leave home as to neglect to provide a supply of kindling for the morning.

At length, after making a number of inquiries and taking several wrong turns, he reached the market to which he had been directed. Here he found himself in the very busiest rush of the day, and for a while was completely bewildered by it. It was the hour in which the buyers for the great hotels make their daily purchases, and they were out in force ordering whole sides of

beef, entire carcasses of sheep and lambs, hundreds of chickens, vegetables by the barrel, and everything else in such quantities that they commanded the most immediate and polite attention to the neglect of all other customers wherever they stopped.

In the crowds of these, and other purchasers who were hurrying hither and thither, were fat-faced, portly butchers whose snow-white aprons reached to their feet, and great hulking fellows covered with blood and grease, bearing on their heads and shoulders sides and quarters of beef. These pushed their way recklessly through the throng, heedless of whom they smeared with their burdens. Women with market-baskets on their arms bargained in shrill tones with other women who presided behind mounds of butter and eggs, or who sat in savory bowers of dried herbs.

As Jack wandered amid these scenes, with the basket which he had not the heart to uncover on his arm, he was constantly mistaken for a possible customer by the stall proprietors, and importuned to purchase this thing or that. He

had expected to see some flower-stands or booths at which he might offer his wares, but he passed entirely through the market without discovering anything of the kind. It was only when he had left the building and gained the sidewalk in its front that he discovered any sign of flowers. Here were quantities of potted plants, some in bloom, but most of them not, ranged in long rows close to the wall. At sight of them Jack's face brightened, and stepping up to the man who appeared to be the proprietor, he said, pleasantly, at the same time uncovering his treasures, "Would you like to buy some trailing arbutus to-day? It's perfectly fresh, and was gathered only last evening."

As if lost in astonishment at the audacity of this proposal, the man turned and stared at Jack as though he were some unheard-of curiosity. For half a minute he looked the boy all over from head to foot, then he said in a resentful tone,

"Well, of all cold cheek! Asking *me* to buy flowers!"

At this moment a gentleman who had just

picked up a pot containing a diminutive rose-bush on which was a single blossom, asked the man its price. He turned to answer that it was one dollar and the very rarest plant he had. As he did so, the gentleman's eye fell on Jack's basket of dainty nosegays.

"Ah, that's more like what I want!" he exclaimed. "Are those for sale, my lad?"

"Yes, sir," answered Jack, his heart throbbing tumultuously, and his face flushing at the prospect of making his first sale. "Ten cents apiece for the small ones, and twenty-five for the large ones."

"I believe I'll take one of the small ones," said the gentleman, picking one out, and handing Jack a ten-cent piece. "I know it will please my little girl as much as anything I can carry her."

He walked away, smelling of the sweet-scented flowers and admiring their delicate beauty as he went, while Jack gazed at the first tangible result of his new business venture as though he had never seen such a bit of silver before. His pleasant reverie was of but short duration, for the gentleman had hardly turned away when the

man who owned the potted plants exclaimed, savagely,

"See here, young fellow! what do you mean by breaking off my trade in that way?"

"I didn't break off your trade," answered Jack, boldly, and greatly surprised at this attack. "The gentleman broke it off himself. I had something he wanted to buy, and you did not; that's all."

"Oh, I didn't, eh!" cried the man. "Well, I will have them. If you don't give me half the flowers you've got in that basket, to pay me for my lost trade, I'll take 'em all."

"You'll take them, will you?" said Jack, coolly, but with a red flush mounting in his face.

"Yes, I will;" and with these words the man stepped towards the boy, and made a snatch for his basket.

Jack gave a quick side spring that landed him on the curb-stone; while the man, tripping over one of his own flower-pots, fell with a crash upon a dozen more. By the time he regained his feet Jack was half a block away, speeding swiftly

up the street. The man shook his fist in the direction of the retreating form, and declared he would get even with that young villain yet.

As Jack did not hear this threat, it of course did not affect him in the least; and if he had he would only have laughed at it. At the same time, he thought he had better not try to do any more business in the vicinity of that market, and that it would be wise not to frequent the neighborhood of the potted-plant man.

Within a few blocks of the market he came to a large flower store, where, although it was so early, an active business was being carried on in receiving, renovating, and preparing flowers for sale. Bouquets and "floral pieces" were in process of construction; artificial stems of fine wire or wooden tooth-picks were supplied to stemless flowers; dead leaves and blossoms were being stripped off and thrown aside; and the show-windows were receiving attractions in the shape of stands of potted plants, vases of gay flowers, and an artful grouping of bright artificial blossoms, dried immortelles, sheaves of wheat, and plumy pampas grasses.

The proceeding that interested Jack most was the renovating of old flowers, from which much of their original beauty and fragrance had departed. A dozen boys and girls, seated in a corner around a great pile of partially withered blossoms, were engaged in this work. A rosebud that had perhaps done service in some belle's bouquet or ball-room decoration the night before, but which now looked brown and withered, would be picked up and examined. First the withered petals would be stripped off, revealing others of faint pink or delicate cream color beneath them. A wire stem run through these, just above the calyx, and twisted just below it, served to hold them closely together, while a little manipulation and blowing gave the bud that appearance of just beginning to open which is generally considered the most beautiful stage of development in a rose. A carnation, almost fallen to pieces, would be quickly restored to an appearance of having just been plucked, by a toothpick stem and a few twists of fine wire. Bits of flowers strung on wire were made to look like whole flowers; and

when all these were gathered into compact, closely wired bouquets, and liberally sprinkled with water, they were in a condition to be offered for sale at the street-crossings, and to deceive many purchasers.

So intent was Jack upon watching and studying these operations that he did not notice the approach of the proprietor of the establishment until he was startled by hearing a harsh voice inquire,

"Well, young man, what do you want here?"

Jack started so violently, and turned such a red face towards the proprietor, that the latter's suspicions were at once aroused; and when the boy said,

"I only came in to see if you wanted to buy—"

he interrupted him with,

"No, I don't want to buy anything; but I want you to clear out of here. I'm losing altogether too many flowers through sneak-thieves nowadays."

Jack's face burned like fire, and he was for a moment too indignant to speak, when he found himself pushed out of the door on to the side-

walk. Quickly recovering himself, he stepped inside the door again, and said, loudly and boldly,

"I'll have you to understand, sir, that I'm no thief, and even if I were I'd be no worse than a man who has old, withered flowers fixed up so as to sell for fresh ones."

"Oh, well!" answered the proprietor, "I don't care what you are. I only want you to get out of here, and don't let me see you around any more."

It was a long time before Jack could make up his mind to venture into another flower shop, and when he did, and had stated his errand, he only got for an answer,

"No, we've more flowers on hand now than we know what to do with."

The same thing was repeated almost everywhere he went. One man, after examining the contents of his basket, offered him fifty cents for the whole lot, an offer that Jack indignantly refused.

Another, who was quite an elderly man with a kindly expression of face, told him that while

his flowers were very fresh and sweet, he was afraid they wouldn't sell, as the arbutus market had been overstocked by shipments from the South more than a month before, and he guessed people must be tired of them. He advised Jack to go into some other business; but when asked to mention some particular business he replied,

"Oh, I don't know just what; but there must be plenty of ways for a strong young fellow like you to earn a living in this big city besides selling flowers."

Jack thanked this man for his advice; but went away from the store with a slow step and a heavy heart. He had expected not only to dispose of the stock in his basket long before this, but also to have obtained several orders for more arbutus to be furnished on the morrow. Instead of this the florists, upon whom he had based his chief hopes, had failed him utterly, and his only sale had been effected on the sidewalk. Must he, then, stand on the street-corners and curb-stones, and offer his wares, like the ragged boys and girls whom he saw thrusting into the notice of all passers their wretched lit-

tle bouquets of renovated flowers? He felt as though he would almost as soon beg for a living. No, he could not do it. He would go back to the steamer, tell Captain Brengle that the whole plan was a failure, and ask him for regular employment as a deck-hand.

Then the thought of those waiting so anxiously and so full of hope at Ingle Dell came over him. Was there anything, no matter how humiliating, that he would not undergo for their sakes? Yes, he would try again. There were still two hours left before noon, when he must return to the *Mayflower,* and during this time he would try his best to dispose of the stock in his basket. How he hated the flowers now, and wished he were well rid of them!

Filled with these conflicting emotions, Jack stationed himself at the edge of the sidewalk, with one foot on the curb-stone, and his basket resting on that knee. Then uncovering it, he displayed its contents to the crowds of well-dressed shoppers, most of whom were women and children, and waited for customers. On both sides of him, and even mingling with the throngs

of pedestrians, were peddlers and venders of every imaginable variety of small articles—toys, shoe-laces, soaps, pictures, and a thousand more. These attracted attention by shrill cries, and by obtruding their wares directly in front of the passers-by.

Jack could not do either of these things, but remained perfectly quiet, and consequently unnoticed for a long time, waiting for the purchasers who failed to appear. He had stood there for more than an hour, watching every approaching pedestrian with anxious eyes, when all at once he found himself surrounded by a group of small venders of renovated bouquets, who began to jeer at and make fun of him.

"Look at de dude a-sellin' posies!" they cried. "Taking away de trade of de kids! Oh, ain't he a daisy! Look at his swell clothes! He ain't a-sellin' 'em; he's givin' 'em away, he is. Say, Johnny, give us a flower, will yer?"

Rendered nearly desperate by these and dozens of similar taunts, Jack, feeling meaner and more ashamed than he had ever done in his life, was looking for some way of escape from

his juvenile tormentors, when suddenly they scattered and ran like a covey of frightened quail. At the same moment there was a general movement among the itinerant venders on both sides of him, their cries were hushed, and the authoritative voice of a policeman was heard, calling,

"Come now, move on! Move on, I say!"

Mechanically Jack obeyed this stern command, and with the rest of the curb-stone merchants "moved on"—not on the sidewalk, but at the very edge of the road-way close beside it. His thoughts were tumultuous and bitter, and he was so absorbed in them that he paid little attention to anything about him.

All of a sudden there came from behind a prancing of hoofs, a metallic jingle of harness, and a rumble of wheels. Before Jack could look around he had been struck by the passing carriage and thrown down, while the contents of his basket were flung far from him, and scattered over the sidewalk among the feet of the pedestrians.

Jack heard one of the occupants of the carriage say, as it rolled away, "It's a wonder that

more of these beggars are not killed; they're always under the horses' feet."

He picked himself up somewhat dazed, but unhurt save for a bruise or two, and began to gather together his scattered bouquets. As he did so he heard another voice, and this time a very kindly one, say,

"Poor *Epigæa repens,* and, as I live, my dear little friend *Hepatica triloba* too; this is certainly an awkward plight for you, but I trust we may effect a rescue. Here, my lad, let us go into yonder quiet corner and see if we cannot soothe the ruffled feelings of these woodland beauties."

CHAPTER IV.

JACK REPORTS A FAILURE.

LOOKING up, at these words, Jack saw a little old gentleman, dressed in a brown suit and spotless linen, wearing a tall silk hat and a pair of gold-bowed spectacles, busily gathering up the scattered nosegays and tossing them into the basket. Their united efforts quickly finished the task, and then they both retreated to the quiet corner which the old gentleman had pointed out. Here he busied himself in dusting off the flowers with an immaculate white silk handkerchief, carefully rearranging them in their bed of moss, and talking to them all the while as though they were so many children.

Jack helped him, and when they had finished he said,

"You are very kind, sir, and I think you must love flowers. Wouldn't you like to have one of these bouquets?" With this he offered the old gentleman one of the largest he had.

"Thank you very much," replied the other. "Yes, I do love flowers; in fact, I may say that I am devoted to them. If I may be allowed I will present to you my card, which will in a measure explain the attraction they have for me. This is a superb bunch of *Epigæa;* but with your permission I will exchange it for one of the hepatica, as I have been unable thus far to procure any this season and am delighted to run across them."

"Oh," exclaimed Jack, "take both of them, and you are welcome to more too if you will have them. If it hadn't been for you I should not have had more than half of them left."

"I am greatly obliged," said the little old gentleman, his face beaming behind his gold spectacles. "I will accept these two with pleasure, and I trust that we may meet each other again; but now I must hurry to keep an engagement for which I fear I am already late."

With this he handed Jack a card, lifted his hat as politely as though to a lady, and walked away, gazing so intently at the flowers in his hand as he went that he was continually coming

into collision with those whom he met or overtook, and as continually apologizing.

Jack watched him out of sight, and then looked at the card that he held in his hand. On it was inscribed,

"IRA HOLABIRD,
"Professor of Botany, —— Seminary."

"No wonder he likes flowers," thought Jack.

Just then he noticed a little girl who was gazing wistfully at the contents of his basket and tugging at the dress of a pale-faced, poorly clad woman. The latter was saying,

"No, dear; I can't afford to buy them, and you mustn't tease."

"Oh," said Jack, with a reckless generosity, born of many disappointments, "I'm not selling them; I'm giving them away now." Here he handed the remaining large bouquet to the little girl, who took it bashfully, but with a face as radiant as though it were a gift of priceless value.

The woman made a courtesy, and thanked him gratefully.

As they walked away, Jack heard a low laugh close behind him, and a voice saying,

"I am afraid you won't make much money selling flowers in that way."

Turning, he saw that one side of the corner in which he was standing was formed by the end of a low wooden structure, built directly upon the sidewalk, and occupied as a news-stand. In its narrow door-way stood a hump-backed lad with a very sweet face, who was evidently the proprietor of the stand, and who had just made the above remark.

"No," answered Jack, rather bitterly, "but it seems to be easier to get rid of flowers by giving them away than by trying to sell them." Then, struck by a sudden thought, he added, "Don't you want to take the rest of them? I've got to go now, and must hurry too."

As he spoke, the chime in a neighboring church-tower was striking a quarter to twelve o'clock.

"What should I do with them?" asked the hump-backed lad.

"Why, put them with your papers, and sell

them if you can. If not, then give them away to your customers. A sort of a chromo, you know, to every one who buys a paper," he added, with a forced laugh.

"Well, I don't mind taking them, if you really don't know what else to do with them; but you will come back to-morrow and see what has become of them, won't you?"

"I don't know," answered Jack; "perhaps so;" but in his heart he thought he should never want to visit the city again, so humiliated did he feel by his morning's failures.

"What shall I sell them at?" asked the lad, as Jack emptied the contents of his basket on the counter, and started on a run down the street.

"For whatever you can get," he called back.

"Hello, Jack!" shouted Captain Brengle, as the boy came running breathlessly down to the pier, just as the *Mayflower* was starting. "You nearly got left. Glad to see your basket's empty. Guess you've been in luck. I'll come down by-and-by and hear all about it."

Jack was too tired and discouraged to feel like talking over his morning's experiences just then;

so he curled himself up in a dark corner, behind some boxes on the lower deck, where he could indulge in his own sorrowful reflections undisturbed. His cheeks burned anew as he remembered the insults to which he had been subjected, and he felt that he hated the city and everybody in it. He became calmer after a while, and finally fell into a sound sleep. Captain Brengle wondered what had become of him when he went to have the promised talk, and was somewhat troubled at his non-appearance. The boy awoke in time to be of assistance in unloading the milk-cans at the end of the voyage, and when this was done he picked up his empty basket and pail and started for home.

The captain had been obliged to hurry away from the steamer as soon as she was made fast, and so did not have a chance to speak to Jack; but the mate said to him,

"I suppose you'll go down with us to-night, Mr. Cary?"

"I don't know," was the answer. "I guess not to-night; at any rate, don't wait for me if I'm not on hand."

Although in the sweet country air and soothing quiet Jack felt much happier than when he left the city, he dreaded to reach home and meet the other members of the firm, who he knew were by this time so anxiously expecting his arrival. He walked very slowly; but in spite of all his delays he at last came in sight of the dear little cottage, and was greeted by a shout of welcome by Mabel and the twins, who were watching for him on the porch.

"You haven't brought any back! have you, brother?" asked Mabel, anxiously peering into the empty basket as he reached the house.

"No, not one."

"Oh, goody! goody!" cried the girl. "I was so afraid you wouldn't sell them all—and we've got a lot more flowers already gathered for you to take to-morrow."

The twins had rushed inside to tell the good news of Jack's supposed success to Chrystal, and with a beaming face she came on her crutches from the dining-room to greet and congratulate him.

"It's splendid!" she exclaimed, kissing him on

both cheeks; "but you sha'n't be bothered with any questions until after you've had dinner, for I know you must be awfully tired and hungry."

As Jack went up to his own room to wash for dinner, and to put on a clean collar and cuffs, he could not help feeling a little guilty, and somewhat ashamed of the interpretation he had allowed the others to put upon his empty basket.

When he again came down-stairs and entered the pleasant dining-room, where a simple but abundant dinner awaited him, he realized how precious this home was, and how well worth working and struggling for. Yet he had almost made up his mind to abandon, without half trying it, the only plan that had suggested itself to them for saving it. How he wished that he might have one more chance of trying it before being obliged to tell the others of its utter failure!

Mabel and the twins were so excited, and so anxious to ask all manner of questions concerning his day's experience, that Chrystal could hardly restrain them until after dinner was over. She succeeded in doing this, however, and it was

not until they were all gathered around the open fire in the sitting-room that she said,

"Now, Jack, tell us all about it."

"Well, sister," he answered, taking a bit of silver from his pocket and laying it on the table, "there is the sole result of the first day's business of the firm of Chrystal, Jack & Co."

"Only ten cents!" exclaimed Mabel, jumping from her chair and going to the table to examine the coin, as though she could hardly believe her eyes.

"You poor boy!" said Chrystal in a tone of pitying sympathy. The sight of that bit of money at once revealed to her clear mind the true state of affairs, and she felt that she knew almost exactly what Jack had suffered.

"Anyhow, ten cents will buy two bunches of fire-crackers," remarked Percy, philosophically.

"Yes, fire-crackers," echoed Sally, with her face, which had been suddenly overcast, again brightening at the prospect.

Then Jack related the whole story of his experience, from the time of his leaving home until his return to it, without omitting a single

detail, and the others listened with absorbed interest. In conclusion he said,

"So you see, sister, our grand scheme is an utter failure. The florists won't have anything to do with wild-flowers—at least not with our wild-flowers. As for selling them from a basket at the street-corners, I can't do it; it's too much like begging, and I'd rather hire out to Captain Brengle as a steamboat hand than to try it again. Perhaps, as the old florist said who advised me to try some other business, I can find work in the city. Anyhow, I've had enough of peddling flowers."

"I'm glad you went back and told that horrid man what you thought of him when he called you a sneak-thief," cried Mabel, hotly. Her cheeks were flushed, and she was almost crying over the disappointment caused by Jack's unhappy story.

"What a smash those flower-pots at the market must have made!" exclaimed Percy, who had gloated over this portion of the narrative.

"What a smash!" echoed Sally; "and what a happy little girl when you gave her the flowers!

I wish she'd come out here and play with me."

"Well, Jack," said Chrystal, smiling, "it seems to me that, take it all in all, you have had a remarkably successful day, and that we all ought to feel greatly encouraged by its results."

"A successful day!" repeated her brother, in astonishment. "What can you mean, sister?"

"Exactly what I say. You have been more successful than I dared hope you would be. In the first place, you have gained a splendid stock of experience."

"Oh yes; I have undoubtedly gained experience," answered Jack, bitterly.

"And it will prove more valuable to us than the money you would have made by selling every bunch of flowers in the basket. Besides, you did make one sale, which shows that there is a certain demand for our flowers."

"A ten-cent sale!" said Jack, scornfully.

"It is a beginning," replied Chrystal, "and all beginnings are small. But, better than anything else, you have made two acquaintances, who can help us as much as any other two in the whole city, and who will, I believe, put into our busi-

ness the only elements that it now lacks to insure its complete success."

"Who are they?" asked Jack, much mystified.

"One is Professor Holabird, of whom I have heard, and know by reputation. As a botanist, he will not only want a great many wild-flowers himself, but he can direct as many customers to you as any other man in New York."

"I never thought of that," said Jack, musingly. "I suppose he can, though, if he will; but who is the other?"

"The other, and the more important of the two, so far as we are concerned, is the hump-backed lad who has the news-stand," answered Chrystal.

CHAPTER V.

BUSINESS BEGINS TO LOOK UP.

"HOW on earth can the hump-backed lad help us, sister?" exclaimed Jack, with unaffected surprise.

"By furnishing us with the very place we want to sell our flowers," answered Chrystal. "Why, it's perfectly wonderful the way things have turned out," she continued, with increasing enthusiasm. "This young man—I wish you had learned his name—is evidently kind-hearted, obliging, and likes flowers. If we can hire from him even one end of his news-stand to display our wares in, it will be exactly such a place as we want. It must be located right on the best part of the busiest shopping street in the city."

"Yes, it is," assented Jack.

"Well, don't you see if we can get him interested with us, we can pay him a share of our profits for rent, and I don't doubt that he will

attend to the sale of such flowers as are left over at noon after you have had to come home. In fact, I am inclined to believe that the afternoon and evening will prove the best time of day for selling flowers. There are more people on the street then who have leisure to notice such things than in the morning."

"But we don't know anything about him," said Jack, a little doubtfully, but already greatly cheered by Chrystal's view of the situation, and beginning to become hopeful again over the brightening prospects of the floral establishment. "Perhaps he won't do it anyway, and perhaps he isn't honest."

"That will be for you to find out," replied Chrystal. "Though, even if he should prove dishonest, he could not cheat us very much if we had a daily settlement of accounts with him. The most we could lose at a time would be a single day's stock of flowers or its money equivalent."

"That's so," admitted Jack. "I declare, Chrystal," he exclaimed, admiringly, as he jumped up from his chair and stood with his

back to the fire," "what a wonderful girl you are! Here I came home knowing all these facts, but supposing that our undertaking was a dead failure. By looking at them in a different light, you present the whole matter in such an entirely new aspect that success seems more certain now than it did at first, and I for one am more than ever anxious to continue the experiment."

"And we won't give it up after all," exclaimed Mabel.

"No, indeed, we won't;" not so long as we have Sister Chrystal to show us what a tip-top scheme it is, and to turn failures into successes." "And you will take our flowers to the hump-backed man to-night?" asked Percy.

"And to the little poor girl?" added Sally.

"Well, I don't know," answered Jack. "Perhaps I'd better see him first, and make arrangements with him before I carry any more flowers into town. What do you think, Chrystal?"

"I think that, so long as we have them ready, you had better take them in with you; and if you

want to, you can leave them on the steamer while you go up and see your new friend."

"So I can," said Jack.

The evening was spent, as the preceding one had been, in making up bouquets; and when Jack again started for the *Mayflower* he was in quite as good spirits as he had been the night before.

Captain Brengle gave him a cordial welcome, and was much interested in the story of his day's travels and adventures. When it was finished he said,

"Well, you're a plucky fellow to make another try of it, and you certainly deserve to succeed, as I think you will."

"It isn't half so much I as it is Chrystal," answered Jack. "I'm afraid I shouldn't have gone to the city again if it hadn't been for her."

"Well, it's all in the family," said the jolly captain. "By-the-way, where did you say this hump-backed fellow's news-stand was?"

Jack told him, and remarking that it was a first-class location, Captain Brengle changed the subject.

The next day Jack did not make so early a start from the steamer as he had done the morning before, but slept quietly until nearly seven o'clock. Then, after a home-breakfast from his tin pail, he went uptown, leaving the basket of flowers behind.

As he approached the news-stand he looked curiously to see how many flowers were left. Not a sningle bouquet was visible, and he thought, "I guess he has given them all away."

Going up to the stand, and not seeing anybody, he called out loudly, "Papers!"

Upon this the hump-backed lad, who had been busy with something under the counter, hopped up, and recognizing his visitor, said, with a bright smile,

"Oh, it's you, is it? I've been looking for you for more than an hour. Won't you come inside?"

So saying, he threw open the door, and then, noticing that Jack had not brought his basket with him, he added, in a disappointed tone,

"Why, where are your flowers? Haven't you brought any to-day?"

"No," said Jack; "that is, I left them on the

boat; but I can get them in a few minutes if you think it is worth while."

"Yes, indeed it is," answered the other, eagerly. "Why, I've promised four bouquets the same as those I had yesterday, to be delivered early this morning, and I want a lot more for the theatre this evening."

"I suppose you gave away all those I left with you yesterday?" said Jack, inquiringly, and at the same time looking to see if there were any traces of them under the counter, or on the shelves at the back of the news-stand.

"Gave them away! Not much I didn't. I sold every last one, and could have sold more if I'd had them," was the startling answer. "I got four dollars for them, and here it is. You see, I've kept it separate from my paper-money."

With this the lad took a little box of silver from out of a drawer and handed it to Jack.

"You sold them all?" repeated Jack, in a bewildered manner, as though he had not fully comprehended the other's meaning. "Why, I never heard of such a thing."

"Yes, of course I did, and here is your money for them."

"It isn't my money," said Jack, "it's yours."

"They were your flowers."

"But I gave them to you."

"Oh no, you only left them with me to sell; but if you want to pay me a commission, I will take whatever you choose to give."

"All right," said Jack, "we'll divide it. You shall take half and I'll take half, and that will be two dollars apiece."

The lad declared this to be too much; but Jack insisted so strongly that he should take the amount named that he finally accepted it.

"By-the-way," said Jack, remembering one of Chrystal's questions, "my name is Jack Cary—what is yours?"

"Mine," answered the lad, "is Robert Linn, or Bob Linn, as almost everybody calls me; but if you'll excuse me a moment, I believe my coffee is boiling." Here he again stooped under the counter, and Jack saw that he was making a pot of coffee over a very small oil-stove.

"Do you do your own cooking here?" he asked, in surprise.

"Oh yes; that is, I make coffee and tea for

breakfast and supper. You see, these come at the busiest times of the day, when I can't leave. At one o'clock I shut up shop and go out for half an hour, and get dinner at a little restaurant around the corner."

Jack saw that this was a busy time, for even while the lad was talking, and preparing his simple breakfast, he had to jump up half a dozen times to wait upon customers. These were men who were on their way down-town, and hurrying to catch the elevated trains, but who still found time to stop for their morning papers, and to exchange greetings with the pleasant-faced proprietor of the news-stand. As Jack watched his quick motions, and heard his shrewd remarks and cheery laugh, he kept saying to himself, "Bob Linn, Bob-o-link," and somehow the fancy pleased him greatly.

"Why can't I wait on your customers while you eat your breakfast?" he asked.

"You can if you want to; that is, if you won't have some breakfast too."

"No, I thank you, I've just had mine."

So Jack sold papers while Robert, perched on

a low stool under the counter, drank his coffee and ate his rolls and cheese, talking between mouthfuls.

"But you haven't told me yet how you came to sell the flowers," said Jack, at length.

"Oh, easy enough. After you left I freshened them up a bit with a sprinkle of water, and then set two bunches at a time up on the counter, where folks could see them. The rest I put in a dark place; you know flowers always keep better in the dark."

"No, I didn't."

"In that way all but a dozen bunches sold themselves. A little before eight o'clock I ran over to the theatre across the way and sold all that were left, in about ten minutes, to the folks who were going in. Some of the ladies said they were the sweetest arbutus they had ever seen. I got fifteen cents apiece for the last two bunches, but the rest went for ten."

"So there is a demand for them, after all," said Jack.

"Well, I guess there is; and don't you think you had better go to wherever you left your flowers and bring them up?"

"I don't know," answered Jack, hesitatingly; "do you mean bring them up here to your news-stand?"

"Why, yes, unless you've got some better place engaged, or want to sell them on the sidewalk."

"Oh no, indeed I don't," replied Jack, hastily; "and I don't believe there's a better place than this in the city, only I thought that perhaps we might make some sort of a regular business arrangement about it, couldn't we? You see it's this way."

Here he told Robert the whole story of the firm of Chrystal, Jack & Co., and their plans, including their hope that he might be induced to become interested with them, and undertake the sale of their flowers at such times as Jack could not be there. When he had finished he looked at Robert anxiously, and was disappointed to notice that the latter seemed to hesitate.

"Perhaps you don't like flowers, and don't want to go into the flower business?" he said.

"Yes I do, though. I should like it better than any other, for I think I love flowers best of anything in the world. I was only thinking

that I ought to speak to my old gentleman about it first."

"Your father, do you mean?"

"Oh no, I've neither father nor mother; they both died in Ohio, and I came East a year ago to live with an aunt who was very well off; but she was dead, too, when I got here, and the people who took her property didn't know me, and wouldn't have anything to do with me. So I went to selling papers for a living; and it is only about two months now since one of my customers, 'my little old gentleman' I used to call him before I found out his name, set me up in regular business here. He hires this place, and I pay him ten per cent. of all I make for rent. I don't believe that comes to as much as the rent that he has to pay does, though."

"Well, do you think he'll object to your making an addition to your business?" asked Jack.

"No, I'm pretty sure he won't; for he's just the very best old gentleman in the world, only I don't like to make any change without telling him first. I'll tell you what we'll do. You go and get the flowers, and leave them here to-day

without making any arrangement. He is sure to look in here some time before night, and then I'll tell him all about it, so that we can settle it to-morrow."

Agreeing to this, Jack went for the flowers, and when he came back started out again to deliver the four bouquets Robert had promised at the addresses the latter gave him.

When he again returned he found the hump-backed lad in a great state of excitement.

"There's been a lady here looking for you," he exclaimed, as Jack entered the narrow doorway—"an elegant lady in a carriage. She asked for the young man who had arbutus for sale, and wants to know if you can furnish her with five dollars' worth of wild-flowers every Tuesday morning during the summer."

This statement seemed so incredible to Jack that he could hardly believe it, and thought it must all be a mistake. Who was the lady? How did she know anything about him, or where to find him, or that he sold flowers? His name wasn't in the City Directory. Did she ask for him by name?

With these and many similar questions he plied poor Robert, until that lad finally cried, "There she comes again, and you can ask her. I told her you would be back within half an hour."

Sure enough, a carriage had stopped right in front of the news-stand, and from it a lady of middle-age, simply but richly dressed, had alighted, and was crossing the sidewalk. She nodded pleasantly to Robert, but spoke to Jack, saying,

"Are you the young man who sells wild-flowers?"

"Yes, ma'am," he answered; "I've tried to sell wild-flowers, but thus far I haven't met with any great success."

"You give them away sometimes, don't you?" asked the lady, with a smile.

"I did give two or three bunches away yesterday," answered Jack, wondering if she were going to ask him to make her a present.

"And it was through one of those gift bouquets that I discovered you. Perhaps you remember giving one to a poor woman and a lit-

tle girl. Well, they distributed half of that bouquet among some sick neighbors in their tenement-house. As a member of the Flower Mission, I became interested in some of these people, and happened to visit them yesterday afternoon. I was surprised at seeing such unusually fresh and fine specimens of arbutus in their rooms, and inquired where they came from. My protégés referred me to the woman to whom you had given them. She told me where she had seen you, and finding fresh arbutus on this newsstand, I thought this must be the place."

"It is very remarkable," said Jack.

"Oh no, it is only a case of quick return from bread cast upon the waters; but the reason I have hunted you up is this: In the Flower Mission we have quantities of cultivated flowers sent in, but very few wild ones, which I, being country born and bred, think are much the more beautiful. I have long wanted to find somebody who would furnish these regularly, and if you will undertake the contract, I will take five dollars' worth from you every Tuesday morning, beginning next week."

"Very well, madam," replied Jack, trying to conceal beneath a business-like exterior the tumult of joy that was filling his heart; "where will you have them delivered?"

"At the Flower Mission rooms on Fourth Avenue, at nine o'clock precisely, and I will be there at that time to receive and pay for them."

CHAPTER VI.

SOME QUEER CUSTOMERS.

ONLY the narrow limits of the news-stand, and the presence of throngs of passers-by, who, not knowing the circumstances, might consider him a lunatic if he gave full vent to his feelings, prevented Jack from expressing his delight at this unexpected bit of good-fortune in his own fashion after the lady had departed. He would have given three cheers for her, three for the Flower Mission, three more for Chrystal, Jack & Co., and three for "Bob-o-link." He would probably have also executed a wild war-dance if he had been at home in the midst of his appreciative family.

As it was he turned to Robert with a beaming face and exclaimed, "Isn't it perfectly glorious, Bob! I tell you, old man, this wild-flower business is going to be a big thing! Hasn't my sister Chrystal got a level head, though!"

Robert's face was as radiant as Jack's, and he said, "We didn't know yesterday, when I laughed at you for giving your flowers away, what a good stroke of business you were doing, did we?"

"No, indeed, we did not. Let's give away some more. Here's a poor child now. Holloa, little girl!" he cried to a ragged child about the age of his sister Sally who stood on the sidewalk gazing at the flowers on the news-stand counter, "don't you want a nosegay?" At the same time he offered her one of the small bunches of arbutus.

"Yes, sir; thank you," she answered, taking the offered flowers, at the same time laying a ten-cent piece on the counter and then running away.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Jack. "Yesterday I couldn't sell them, and to-day it seems that I can't give them away. Here comes another. I wonder if she will allow me to present her with a bouquet?"

This little girl acted precisely as the first one had done, and after laying down her ten-cent

piece ran away, leaving Jack staring after her in a state of most unqualified amazement.

"Did you ever see anything like that?" he asked, turning to Robert, who had regarded this transaction with a puzzled expression only equalled by Jack's.

"No, I never did," he answered; "but we're likely to become familiar with the experience, for here come some more."

Two girls came this time, and they were followed by a boy. They were all ragged, dirty, and bore on their persons evident traces of the extremest poverty; but they all paid promptly for their flowers, and departed with them in the highest glee.

These proceedings were kept up until within ten minutes ten bouquets had been sold to ten as poor-looking children as New York City could produce, and both Jack and Robert were in such a state of wonderment that they pinched themselves to see if they were not asleep and dreaming.

If they had gone outside and looked half a block down the street, they would have seen jolly,

"HOLLOA, LITTLE GIRL! DON'T YOU WANT A NOSEGAY?"

red-faced Captain "Elephant" Brengle, shaking with a mirth that longed to express itself in roars of laughter. He was surrounded by a clamorous throng of little ragamuffins, both boys and girls, to certain of whom, selected for their honest-looking faces, he was handing silver dimes and giving instructions.

But neither Jack nor Robert thought to look down the street, and so, to this day, they are not able to account for the sudden desire for trailing arbutus and the wealth with which to gratify this desire that seemed to exist among the poor children of New York that morning.

When it was time for Jack to leave he asked Robert how early he would be at the news-stand in the morning.

"As early as you like," was the answer, "for I stay here all night."

"Do you mean that you sleep here always?"

"Yes," replied Robert; "this is my only home at present, and there," pointing to a small, compactly folded cot, "is my bed."

"How cosey and jolly it all is!" said Jack, admiringly.

"Yes, it's pretty cosey; but it's awfully lonesome sometimes, especially when I have bad nights and can't sleep. When those come I go out and talk to the night watchman of the theatre. What I most long for, though, is the country, such as these flowers come from. I get so tired of the city streets and noise, and now that spring is coming on, it seems as if I should go wild shut up here. I go up to Central Park Sundays, and that's better than nothing, though it's only a city sort of country after all."

"Well, good-by," said Jack, to whose mind this little complaint had suggested something which he did not care to speak of just then. "I'll come up in the morning just as soon as I can leave the boat."

Jack was as anxious to see Captain Brengle and tell him of the wonderful success of that day's business as he had been to avoid him the day before, when he had only failures to report. The captain seemed to have taken a great personal interest in the doings of Chrystal, Jack & Co., and was quite as anxious to hear of all the events of the day as Jack was to tell of them. He

was of course interested in the Flower Mission order; but when it came to a description of the ragamuffin customers it seemed as though he would never tire of asking questions concerning them. He broke out with such roars of laughter when Jack told of his unsuccessful efforts to make them presents of flowers that the boy looked at him in astonishment, and wondered what there was about it so extremely funny.

Captain Brengle never told him, though. He was not the kind of a man to do a good deed and then boast of it, and he probably extracted more genuine pleasure from the secret thus kept than he would have from all Chrystal, Jack & Co.'s thanks if they knew that he had expended a dollar for the benefit of the new firm.

Jack worked hard unloading milk-cans at the several landings until the end of the trip; but here he could not wait, even to work, he was so anxious to get home. He ran most of the way between the landing and Ingle Dell, and got there so much earlier than he had the day before that nobody was on the lookout for him, and he entered the house unnoticed.

His shouts of "Hello, Chrystal! Hello, Mab! Hello, Pepper and Salt!" brought them quickly to him, with cries of surprise and delight.

"It is all right, Jack! I know it is from your face," cried Chrystal as she came, last of all, out from the sitting-room on her crutches.

"Yes, Chrystal, I think it's all right, and it looks as though our firm was on the high-road to success."

Neither he nor they could wait, as they had done the day before, until after dinner; but an outline of the story had to be told and listened to at once.

How excited they became over his recital, and how they rejoiced! How proud Jack felt when he handed Chrystal the two dollars, and said there were more to be had where those came from. They were amazed at the Flower Mission order, and laughed and wondered over the ragged customers; but most of all they asked questions about Robert, or "Bob-o-link," for Jack's name for the hump-backed lad was unanimously adopted by them all.

"Poor fellow!" said Chrystal, when Jack told

them of his longing for the country, "I wish he could see the country around here."

"That's just what I was going to speak about!" exclaimed Jack, eagerly. "Why can't I bring him out here to-morrow to spend Sunday with us?"

"Have you satisfied yourself as to his honesty?" asked Chrystal, with a little smile.

"Well, I should say I had!" replied Jack, almost indignantly. "Didn't he give me the money for those flowers when he might have kept it just as well as not and I been none the wiser?"

"Do you consider him a gentleman?"

"Yes, I'm sure he is. Why, he talks as grammatically as you or I, and he did not use a single bad or even slang word all the time I was with him."

"Those may certainly be regarded as strong proofs of a person's gentle breeding," said Chrystal; "and I don't know that there is any objection to your inviting him out here to spend Sunday. If he is to become a member of our firm it will be well for us to get acquainted with him."

After a hasty dinner Jack harnessed Trudy to the wagon, and taking the twins with him, went to the woods in the vicinity of the great swamp after arbutus and whatever else they could find. It was dark when they returned, but they had in addition to arbutus and hepaticas a quantity of early saxifrage and a few hardy ferns.

That night Jack slept soundly from ten o'clock, at which time he reached the boat, until six o'clock the next morning, much to the satisfaction of Captain Brengle. When he awoke he was so impatient to see Robert that he did not wait to eat breakfast, but taking the flowers and tin lunch-pail with him, he started off at once for the news-stand.

Robert was on the lookout for him, and almost before he got inside the narrow door-way Jack exclaimed,

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes, he came very soon after you left."

"What did he say?"

"He asked all about you, and wanted to know if you were the same boy whose flowers he helped pick up the other day."

"Why! you don't mean to say that he is Professor Holabird?" cried Jack.

"Yes, of course he is; didn't I tell you his name? I thought I did."

"No, you only called him your little old gentleman."

"Well, he is Professor Holabird, and he was very much interested in your business plan, and said the idea of having a regular place in the city for the sale of wild-flowers was a capital one."

"I suppose that's because he is a professor of botany," said Jack.

"He is a good business man as well as a professor, I can tell you; and if he says a thing is good, it's just got to be so, that's all," replied Robert, to whom the little old gentleman was the one perfect man in the world.

"Then I'm glad he thought so well of our plan," laughed Jack. "What else did he say?"

"Only that he would come and see you about it this morning. Just as he was going away he bought six bunches of arbutus for his scholars."

"Good enough!" exclaimed Jack. "He must

be a regular trump, and I shall be glad to meet him again. He seemed an uncommon nice old gentleman the other day, and my sister Chrystal says that anybody in his position can send us a lot of customers if he wants to. It seems to me rather queer, though, that a professor of botany should be so much interested in boys like you and me. How did the flowers sell yesterday?"

"Tip-top. I didn't have any more ragged customers; but, with what the professor took, and what sold themselves in the afternoon, I didn't have half enough for the theatre in the evening. Altogether, with what you sold in the morning, we took in five dollars yesterday, and here it is. No, I sha'n't take half of it. Fifty per cent. is altogether too big a commission."

"But," said Jack, quite dazzled by this wonderful good-fortune, "if it was not for you I should not probably be making anything, certainly not more than a dollar or so a day; and you have your rent to pay for this place and all that."

"Yes, but it's your scheme. To carry out my

part of it puts me to no extra expense, and gives me very little extra trouble; so that whatever I make from it is clear profit. I'll take one dollar of the five, and that's every cent I will take. Twenty per cent. is a good commission and ought to satisfy anybody. Now I'm going to get breakfast. Have you had yours?"

"No, I brought mine along, so as to have company in eating it."

After putting some of the fresh flowers on the counter, where Robert said they might attract some customers from among those who stopped for papers, which sure enough they did, the boys sat down to breakfast. Although it was interrupted several times a minute by the purchasers of papers or flowers, it proved a very merry meal, both of them being in capital spirits over the success of the new business undertaking.

While they were laughing, chatting, and eating they heard a voice that they instantly recognized, saying,

"Ah, *Filices!* you have come to the city early this season. You must belong to the *Os mundaceæ,* for they are the early risers. Yes, I

thought so, you are *claytonianas,* and have not yet wholly put off your woolly winter coats."

Both the boys had sprung to their feet at the first words of the professor, and now, laying down the fern-leaf at which he had been peering intently through his glasses, he became aware of their presence, and greeted them cordially and politely.

As he entered the news-stand he said, "So this is Jack, is it?"

"Yes, sir," answered the boy; "I am never called anything but Jack, though I was named John after my father, Dr. John Cary."

"Yes, yes, I understand," replied the professor; "and Robert tells me that you live up on the Hudson somewhere?"

"At Hartley," answered Jack, "and it's one of the best places on the whole river for wild-flowers. I wish you could just see it once, for it's a place that a professor of botany, like you, would just love," he added, enthusiastically.

"Perhaps I shall some time; perhaps I shall," replied the professor, smiling at the boy's eagerness. "And so you have gone into the wild-

flower business, have you, and want to make an arrangement with my young friend Robert to act as your salesman?"

"Yes, sir, we should like to—that is, my sister and I—I mean our firm would be very glad to make some such arrangement with Mr. Linn."

"Oh, so you are one of a firm, are you? May I inquire its name, and who belong to it besides yourself?"

"We call it Chrystal, Jack & Co.," answered the boy, his face reddening, as he imagined that perhaps the old gentleman was making fun of him. "And it consists of my sisters Chrystal and Mabel, the twins, and myself; but it was Chrystal's idea."

"Your sister Chrystal must be a young woman of very good common-sense, and first-rate ideas of business, to have conceived such a plan."

"Yes, indeed, sir, she is," cried Jack, eagerly; "and I wish you could only see and talk with her about it instead of with me."

"I should be most happy to do so," said the old gentleman, "though perhaps your sister would not care to meet me if she knew who I was."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRM'S NEW MEMBER.

"YOU are Professor Ira Holabird, are you not, sir?" said Jack, somewhat bewildered by the old gentleman's manner and words.

The professor gazed at him for a moment through his spectacles, as though wondering how Jack could have obtained this information. Then he said, slowly, "Yes, Ira Holabird. It had slipped my mind that you knew it."

"Why, you gave me your card," explained Jack. "Besides, Robert Linn told me, and he says that this is your news-stand, and he does not like to make any arrangement with us about occupying a part of it without consulting you."

"He is quite right, though I do not own the stand, but have only leased it for the purpose of putting him in here," said the little old gentleman, smiling and peering at Robert over his glasses. "Now let me hear what you have to propose."

"I propose," said Jack, "that he should let us have the use of half of this stand, should devote half his time to selling flowers, and should receive half the profits."

"That is a proposition that we cannot consider," said the old gentleman, shaking his head vigorously.

"I don't see how we can afford to offer any more," said Jack, in a disappointed tone.

"And I don't see how you can afford to offer so much," replied the old gentleman. "You will, as you say, need half the space in the stand, and for it you, or rather the firm of Chrystal, Jack & Co., should pay half the rent; while Robert, for his news business, pays the other half. As for his time, he cannot very well divide it so as to devote exactly half of it to your business and half to his. I think I should word that part of the contract 'devote such time as is found to be necessary.' "

"Yes, that is much better," agreed Jack.

"Then, in regard to his compensation," continued the old gentleman, "fifty per cent. commission is, under the circumstances, altogether

too much. Let me see, how many members did you say there were in your firm?"

"Five. Chrystal, myself, Mabel, and the twins."

"Very well; supposing, as Miss Chrystal is the head of the firm, and the originator of this scheme of yours, that we set her down for thirty per cent. of the profits, after all expenses are paid. Then we put you down for twenty per cent., and give ten per cent. to each of the three remaining members. How much is left?"

"Twenty per cent.," answered Jack, after a moment's mental calculation.

"Exactly; and that, in my opinion, should be the new member's share. What do you say to such an arrangement, Robert?"

"I think it's a particularly good one for me, and shall be only too happy to enter into it."

"Very well, then. Supposing you lay it before the other members of your firm, Master Jack, and if they all agree to it we will have it drawn up in the form of a regular business contract. You both understand, do you not, that all the expenses are to be deducted from the receipts before any division of the profits is made?"

"Yes, sir, we do," answered both of the boys.

"Supposing there are losses instead of profits," suggested Jack; "shall we divide them too?"

"Certainly," answered the old gentleman. "But I cannot imagine that there will be any losses in a business that has started out so prosperously, if it is followed up with industry and managed with prudence. You have some capital to start with, of course?"

"No, sir," answered Jack, "we have not, as our father left only money enough to settle his debts.

"Have you no relatives who are willing to help you?"

"No, sir, we have but one relative in the world, an uncle who has spent most of his life in California; but he has not done anything for us, and we don't expect he ever will. My opinion of him is that he is a regular 'old hunks,'" added the boy, hotly.

"Seems to me that is a pretty hard name to apply to a relative," said the professor, gravely.

"I can't help it, sir; that's what he is. You see, he was my mother's only brother, and just because she married somebody he didn't like he got provoked and went off to California. He

has never been to see us. I suppose he is too proud to come now that he is rich and we are poor, and we never heard from him after mother's death until about a week ago. Then Chrystal received a letter from him saying that he was living in New York. It also said that he hoped we were not in need of anything; but the only thing he offered to do was that he would give any one of us, who would leave the others and go to live with him, a home, an education, and a provision for the future."

"That was certainly a liberal offer. Which of you accepted it?"

"Not one of us! I guess if you knew the Cary family you'd know that not one of them would go off and leave the others in trouble. No, sir! we stick together through everything, and, anyhow, none of us would leave Chrystal."

"I admire your loyalty," said the little old gentleman, heartily, "and I hope that some time or other I may have the pleasure of becoming acquainted with the other members of a family who are so devoted to each other."

"I am sure we should be very happy, indeed,

to see you at Ingle Dell, sir," said Jack, politely. "Robert is coming out there to-day to spend Sunday with us."

"I!" exclaimed the hump-backed lad with the most unbounded surprise. Up to this time he had been so busy selling papers and flowers that he had only caught scraps of the conversation between the other two. But he overheard Jack's last remark and wondered what he meant by it.

"Why, yes," replied Jack; "didn't I tell you that Chrystal and Mabel and all of them send you an invitation to come out and spend to-morrow with us? You are to go up on the boat with me this afternoon."

"Oh, how I should love to go!" cried the lad. "I haven't seen a bit of real country since I came East! but I don't see how I can."

"Why not?" asked Jack.

"Because, you see, Saturday evening is one of the best in the week for the news business, and I couldn't disappoint my regular customers. Besides, I haven't got any clothes fit to go visiting in."

"By-the-way, Master Jack," interrupted the professor, as though suddenly remembering something he had forgotten. "One of my particular errands of this morning was to procure some flowers for my scholars to use in their botany lesson. Would you mind taking this *Saxifrage Virginiensis,* a bunch of the *claytonianas,* and a small quantity of the *Epigæa* up to the seminary for me?"

"Certainly not, sir," answered Jack. "I shall be very glad, indeed, to do such an errand."

As soon as he had gone with a basket well filled by the professor's liberal purchase, the latter turned to Robert and said,

"Now, my boy, I want you to accept this invitation."

"How can I, sir? I can't go in these old clothes, and they are all I have."

"Can't you buy some new ones?"

"Not ready-made, sir. You see, I have to get all my clothes made on purpose for me, and that makes them so expensive that I don't have a new suit any oftener than is absolutely necessary.

There is one at the tailor's now, but I haven't saved quite enough money to pay for it yet."

"I will lend it to you."

"Oh, thank you, sir! you are awfully good; but I can't leave the stand; I might lose a lot of customers if I did."

"Can not you engage a substitute?"

"Not one that I could trust."

"Supposing I stay in your place?"

"You, sir? Oh no."

"Why not? Can't you trust me? I'll give bonds if you require them."

"Oh no, sir! I didn't mean that, of course," exclaimed Robert, greatly embarrassed; "but it would never do for a gentleman like you to be seen serving papers from a street-corner news-stand."

"Nonsense! I'm not proud. I've sold papers before now, and I guess I can do it again. Why, I used to run a news-stand myself years ago, before I became a professor of botany, and I do not know that I have any more reason to be ashamed of it now than I had then. You go and get those new clothes, and when your friend

comes back tell him that you have arranged your business so as to go home with him. Give me your key, and spring the lock when you go away. I'll see that your trade does not suffer. Now, no more words about it. I don't want to be thanked. Only, when you come back on Monday, I want you to tell me that you have had a first-rate time."

The professor had gone when Jack returned, and Robert was so transformed in appearance by his new clothes that but for his deformity Jack would hardly have recognized him.

"I've found a substitute, Jack, and I am going home with you!" cried the happy lad.

"Good enough—that's first-class! and if you don't have a good time it won't be my fault!" exclaimed the other. "But what has happened? seems to me you have got something besides a substitute. Where on earth did you find a suit of new clothes that fit you perfectly so quickly?"

Robert told him about the new suit, and also that Professor Holabird himself was to take his place in the news-stand for the rest of the day.

"Isn't he a regular brick!" exclaimed Jack,

when he heard this, "and won't he look queer selling papers! I'd like to see him. He can't be very well off, though," he added, reflectively, "for I don't believe a rich man would do such a thing."

"I don't know whether he is rich or poor," replied Robert, "but I do know that he is the best and kindest friend I've got in this world."

Probably no two happier boys left the city that day than those whom the *Mayflower* carried on her trip up the river. Robert was so full of high spirits that they continually bubbled over in bright sayings and doings. He completely won the heart of Captain Brengle, who declared that he had not laughed so much in years except once.

When Jack asked regarding that once, he said,

"It was at your ragamuffin customers;" and the boy thought, "What a capital story-teller I must be to have produced such an impression by so simple a narrative."

"Look here!" exclaimed the captain, as he was recovering from a fit of laughter caused by one of Robert's comical pranks; "how does it hap-

pen that you are such a jolly fellow? I always thought that persons afflicted as you are were very unhappy, not to say cross and surly."

"I am afraid some of us are," answered Robert, gravely enough now. "I overheard some one say about me, several years ago, 'Poor fellow, how I pity him! Of course he'll grow up with an ugly, soured disposition, such as all humpbacks have.' I did not believe then, and I do not believe now, that they all have such dispositions; but I made up my mind that I would not show it, even if I did have it. Ever since then I have tried to be just as cheerful, and to get just as much pleasure out of life, as though I had been born straight instead of crooked."

"Well, my lad, I'm sure you are succeeding not only in finding out the pleasant things of your own life, but in making the lives of other people brighter and happier wherever you go, and I honor you for it."

The captain afterwards told Jack that Robert's little story was one of the best sermons he had ever heard.

Fearing that the walk up the long hill would tire his friend too much, Jack proposed that Robert should wait on board the *Mayflower* while he went home for Trudy and the light wagon in which to carry him to Ingle Dell. Robert agreed to this, and after the others had gone he amused himself by watching the unloading of the milk-cans, and the passing up and down the river of the numberless queer craft that are always afloat on the broad bosom of the Hudson.

CHAPTER VIII.

A VISIT AND AN ARREST.

IN watching all these interesting things the time passed so quickly to Robert that he was surprised, on hearing the rattle of a light wagon and a shout, to look up and see that Jack had already returned. An extra seat had been put in the wagon, and on it sat the twins holding each other's hands, and looking the picture of unalloyed happiness.

"Pepper and Salt insisted on coming down to help escort you home," said Jack, as Robert approached the wagon. "Percy and Sally, this is Mr. Linn."

Robert stepped up to the back of the wagon to shake hands with the children to whom he was thus introduced, and Percy, extending a little brown hand to him, said, gravely,

"How do you do, Mr. Bob-o-link?"

Like an echo came Sally's "Mr. Bob-o-link," as she too held out a plump hand to be shaken.

Robert looked somewhat confused, and Jack burst into a peal of laughter.

"Oh, you twins—you twins! you'll be the death of me yet," he exclaimed, as soon as he recovered his breath.

When the origin of this name, which the children had honestly supposed to be his rightful title, was explained to him, the new-comer laughed with the others, and said it was a very good name indeed, and one always associated in his mind with happiness and cheerfulness.

The poor fellow, shut up for so long between city walls, seemed to draw in new life with every breath of the sweet country air, and he became silent with delight over the beauty of the far-spread landscape as it was unfolded by each successive rise of the road.

"Here we are at 'Jingle Bell,'" cried Jack at last.

Chrystal and Mabel were waiting at the door to give the stranger a warm welcome; for Jack had already told them that he was to be one of their firm, and they wished to make him feel as much at home as possible.

The lad was greatly affected by the sight of Chrystal's crutches and her sweet, patient face, while his deformity and cheerful expression aroused at once her sympathy and admiration. "I am certain we can help each other," she said to herself. At the same time Robert thought, "Now I am determined that this flower business shall succeed, if I have to neglect everything else to attend to it."

What a jolly dinner they had, and how thoroughly the homeless city boy enjoyed it! After the first formality had worn off a little they all called him "Mr. Bob-o-link," and very soon they had become so infected with his high spirits that Chrystal declared the wit of the Cary family was becoming so brilliant as to be almost dazzling.

"Yes, it's as clear as crystal," said Jack.

"And as happy as Queen Mab," retorted Chrystal.

"As smart as pepper and salt," added Mabel.

"It flies like a bobolink," said Percy, whose turn came next.

"Or a humming-bird," remarked Sally, who

had not quite caught the drift of the game, but thought she was safe in following Percy's lead.

"And after all, it's as hard to catch as a Jack-o'-Lantern," concluded Robert.

"Yes," said Jack, "it's hard to catch; but I am thankful that none of you have said, as you might have done, that it is as foolish as a jackanapes, as powerful as a jack-screw, as aspiring as a jack-staff, as wicked as a jackdaw, as smooth as a jack-plane, as sharp as a jack-saw, as rough as a jack-towel, as fragile as a jackstraw, as keen as a jack-knife, or as wandering as a Jack-tar, because I might have felt badly if you had."

"Why don't you add that the spring of the year causes it to pop up like a Jack-in-the-box?" laughed Chrystal.

"Now, sister, that's too bad! Let us say, *Requiescat in pace, Hic jac(k)et,'* which, literally translated, means, 'Here Jack rests in pieces.' "

All this was not very profound wit, but it circulated rapidly, and answered its purpose so well that at the conclusion of the meal Robert felt very much at home among the Carys, and

had already become their most devoted ally.

After dinner they took a long drive to show him where the different wild-flowers grew, and he became enthusiastic over the abundance and variety of these promised for the summer.

The next morning all but Chrystal drove to church, Mabel and the twins occupying one seat of the wagon.

While Jack took Trudy round to the horse-shed the others waited for him in the vestibule, and when he rejoined them he found them all in an unusual state of excitement.

"Just step this way, and look in there at the second side-pew from the front," said Mabel.

Jack did as requested. Then he stared, rubbed his eyes, and looked again. "Well, I never!" he whispered. "What do you suppose that means?"

Jack's astonishment and the excitement of the others were caused by the sight of a person who occupied the pew pointed out by Mabel. It was none other than Professor Holabird, who now sat in Hartley church as composedly as though he had been a regular attendant there for years.

During the service Jack could hardly take his

eyes off the old gentleman, as he was so puzzled at his appearance, and so curious to know what had brought him there. After church they all waited close to the door until he came out, when Jack sprang forward to greet him.

"Ah, my boy!" said the professor. "I thought I should find you at church, so I got a buggy at the landing and drove up here. And is this Miss Chrystal?" he added, looking at Mabel.

"Oh no, indeed," answered Jack; "this is Mabel, and these are the twins."

"And this is Mr. Bob-o-link," said Percy, anxious that his new friend should not be overlooked.

"I believe I have the pleasure of an acquaintance with Mr.—what did you call him?" asked the old gentleman, smiling on Percy and Robert, at the same time lifting his hat to Mabel.

"Mr. Bob-o-link," answered Sally, eager to have something to say.

"Yes, yes, so he is, little one. Well, Master Jack, aren't you going to invite me to go home and dine with you?"

"Yes, sir, of course; that is, I didn't know—

I mean, we shall be only too happy to have you come, though our Sunday dinner is a very unpretentious affair; and if Chrystal had only known—" stammered poor Jack. He was covered with confusion and blushes caused by the unexpectedness of the proposal, and the difficulty of expressing hospitality, and at the same time excusing the plainness of the dinner that awaited them.

"I accept the invitation with great pleasure," said the professor; "and if Miss Mabel will honor me by taking a seat in my buggy I shall be most happy to drive her home, following your guidance."

Still as much puzzled as ever, Jack and Robert, with the twins on the back seat, drove home in the light wagon, followed by the professor and Mabel.

Chrystal was, of course, greatly surprised to see the little procession turning in at the Ingle Dell gate; but when she learned who the professor was she extended to him a sweet, cordial welcome that at once won the old gentleman's heart.

The simplicity of the dinner was entirely forgotten by those who listened to or took part in the bright conversation that, largely sustained by the old gentleman, caused the meal hour to pass so quickly and pleasantly.

He said that one reason he came to Hartley, which he had done by the night boat, was to tell Jack that the Flower Mission lady had called again at the news-stand, with an order from a friend for another dollar's worth of wild-flowers, to be delivered every Tuesday morning. Then, too, he had felt the need of a breath of country air, and, above all, he had been desirous of meeting the other members of the firm in which his young friend Robert Linn was about to become interested. In addition to all these good reasons for coming, he had been so impressed by what Jack had told him of the floral beauties of the country around Hartley that he had thought it might be just the place for his botany class to visit for a few weeks in the summer. Did Miss Chrystal think he and they could find board there, if they should decide that it was the place for them?

Yes, Chrystal thought perhaps they could. At any rate she would make inquiries among the neighbors, and let him know within a few days.

Mabel had started, and then about to speak, when this was mentioned; but at a look from Chrystal she remained quiet. Her thought was, "Why could not we take this pleasant old gentleman to board for the summer?" and Chrystal had thought of it too.

During the afternoon the professor completely won the hearts of the Carys, and they voted him to be the most simple-minded and at the same time the most delightful old gentleman they had ever met. He interested them greatly by telling them many things they had never before known about their own wild-flowers, and giving them a number of useful hints in regard to gathering them.

At supper-time it was decided that Jack should stay at home over Monday, so as to gather enough flowers to fill the large order they had for Tuesday. The visitors, however, said they must return to the city that night by the *Mayflower*. So about ten o'clock they drove away from Ingle

Dell, having thoroughly enjoyed their visit and leaving most pleasant impressions behind them.

On Tuesday morning, as the flowers for the mission were not to be delivered until nine o'clock, Jack was in no hurry to leave the steamer, and when he did go ashore he concluded to carry uptown those intended for sale at the news-stand first. Full of happy thoughts, and with his basket on his arm, he was walking briskly past the very market in front of which he had met with his first adventure a week before, when he was stopped by a voice saying, "Holloa, young man! Have you got any of those may-flowers to-day?"

It was the same pleasant-looking gentleman who had been his first customer in the city, and who visited the market every morning. He seemed as much pleased to be able to purchase a bouquet as Jack was to sell it to him, and asked where they could be had regularly. Having given him the desired information, Jack was again starting on when he was startled by having a heavy hand laid on his shoulder. It was that of a policeman, who said,

"Have you got a peddler's license, young fellow?"

"No," answered Jack. "I didn't know I needed one."

"Well, I'm very sorry; but there's been a complaint made against you, and I must take you to the station."

Here was trouble as unexpected as it was sudden, and Jack's heart sank within him.

As the policeman led him away they were followed by a number of idle street boys, whose taunts and jeers made Jack feel that he must indeed be a criminal.

Fortunately the police-station was but a short distance away, so that this annoyance was quickly ended. There Jack found that the complainant who had caused his arrest was the potted-plant man, with whose trade he had unwittingly interfered a week before, and who had declared at the time that he would make things unpleasant for him.

Standing before the iron railing in front of the sergeant's desk, Jack was obliged to state his age and nationality; whether he had ever been

arrested before—if so, how often and for what; whether he was married or single, and to answer a number of other similar questions. Then his pockets were turned inside out by an officer, and their contents handed to the sergeant. His basket of flowers were set away in a remote corner, from which their fragrance pervaded the whole place, and he was led down-stairs and locked into a narrow whitewashed cell.

"You're lucky to be pulled in now instead of in the afternoon," said the officer who turned the key upon him, "for then you'd had to stay in here all night, anyway; but now you'll go up for trial in a couple of hours or so."

Jack sat down on the stone bench at the back of the cell, utterly dazed and crushed in spirit by the misfortune that had overtaken him. He had no idea of the magnitude of his offence, nor what punishment could be inflicted upon him for it. Would he be sent to prison? He shuddered at the thought. What would they do at Ingle Dell without him? What would become of the flower business? and would any of his friends ever speak to, or even recognize him

again after this disgrace? With such reflections it is no wonder that the poor lad was in a very unhappy state of mind.

Suddenly the thought of the Flower Mission order flashed across him. What would the lady who had given it think when her flowers were not delivered that morning? If he could only get word to Robert!

"Hello, officer!" he cried, hearing footsteps in the corridor.

"Well, what do you want?" gruffly asked a turnkey coming up to the grate door, and peering between the bars.

"Can I write a note to my friends, and send it off by a messenger-boy?"

"If you can pay for it, you can."

"I will pay anything you want, only let me have a sheet of paper and a pencil."

Half an hour later a note, telling of Jack's sad predicament, of the flowers for the mission left on board the steamer, and asking for assistance of some kind, was handed to Robert. It came during his busiest hour of the day. He could not leave the stand, but he could do what was

much better. Within a few minutes he had despatched two messenger-boys, one with an express wagon to take the flowers from the steamer to the mission, and one to Professor Holabird's house.

CHAPTER IX.

UNCLE HERKIMER COMES TO THE RESCUE

IN company with the other prisoners of the police-court—men and women, drunkards, thieves, street-brawlers, and other offenders against the law—Jack sat in the dock that morning, and, heart-sick at his surroundings, awaited his turn to be summoned before the justice. This gentleman was disposing of case after case with the rapidity of one well accustomed to the business.

"Three months on the island," "Ten dollars fine," "Go home, and don't let me ever see you here again," and similar expressions, had decided the fate of most of his fellow-prisoners before Jack's name was called.

"Well, John Cary," said the justice, eying him keenly, "I am informed that you have been peddling flowers on the street without a license. What have you to say for yourself?"

"I did not know that one was necessary," replied Jack, who had been led from the dock and now stood before the judge's bench.

"You look old enough to know that that is no excuse whatever," said the justice, sternly. "Ignorance of the law is not recognized by the law as condoning an offence against it. A number of cases similar to yours have been called to my attention lately, and I feel that it is high time for me to make an example that will put a stop to them. The ordinance is very explicit. It reads:

"'No peddler, hawker, vender, or huckster of *any* kind of merchandise shall conduct or carry on in the city of New York any business as such peddler, hawker, vender, or huckster, until he or she shall have first obtained a license. Any person violating the provision of this section shall be punished by a fine of not more than twenty-five dollars, or in default of payment of such fine, by imprisonment of not less than five or more than ten days.'

"Under the circumstances, I think I shall have to fine you twenty-five dollars."

"But I have not got the money!" cried poor Jack, in a very agony of apprehension.

"Very well, then, you will have to go to prison," answered the justice; and turning to the clerk of the court, he said, "Make out a commitment for ten days. Next case!"

Could it be possible that he, Jack Cary, who had never so much as seen the inside of a prison in his life, had been committed to one, and was really to be locked up in it? There must be some terrible mistake about it all; and yet the words uttered by the justice still rang in his ears: "You will have to go to prison." He had certainly said it, and had as certainly meant what he had said. Yes, there could be no doubt about it, he was really a criminal, and about to suffer the same penalty as the other offenders against the law who surrounded him.

They were already jeering at his evident misery, and the spectators were pointing at him as they whispered together about his case. Everything was beginning to spin round and round. It was high time this young prisoner was removed, and the justice nodded significantly to a policeman who was in attendance.

The officer was leading Jack, dazed and wretched, out of the court, when there was a commotion in the back of the room, and a little old gentleman, agitated and breathless, hurried down the aisle calling out, "Stop a minute! stop a minute!"

The justice was about to rap for order when he recognized the figure, and said pleasantly, but in a tone of great surprise, "Why, professor, is this you? What can we do for you to-day?"

"Bring back my nephew there, and let me pay his fine! They tell me you are sending him off to prison!" exclaimed the little old gentleman who had thus arrived just in the nick of time. As he spoke he pointed to Jack.

"Your nephew!" cried the justice, in astonishment. "Why didn't he tell me he was your nephew?"

"Because he didn't know it," answered the professor; and then, stepping up close to the bench, while the justice leaned far over it, he told him something in a low voice, in which the justice seemed greatly interested and amused.

Jack and the officer had stopped on their way

from the court-room, and were awaiting the development of this scene, Jack petrified with astonishment at the revelation just made, and the officer with the indifference of one who is accustomed to such things.

Calling the prisoner back, after a few minutes' conversation with the professor, the justice said to him, "I am sorry that you have been put to so great inconvenience, Mr. Cary, and am very glad your uncle has appeared in time to prevent any further unpleasant results. He has settled the matter in hand to my entire satisfaction, and you are discharged from custody."

Jack could hardly realize this sudden and happy change in the condition of his affairs; and as he walked out of the court-room beside the little old gentleman who had announced himself as his uncle, he did not feel quite sure if, after all, he were not being conducted to prison.

When they reached the sidewalk the old gentleman turned suddenly upon him, and extending both hands, exclaimed,

"Yes, Nephew Jack, I am your uncle Herkimer, the old hunks from California. It has come

out a little sooner than I had intended, but not much, after all."

"I can't somehow seem to comprehend it at all," said Jack, "for you are just exactly the opposite of what I supposed my uncle Herkimer to be; but if you are really my uncle, I feel awfully ashamed of what I have said about you."

"You only said what was perfectly natural under the circumstances," replied his uncle; "and I begin to think that perhaps I have acted very much like 'an old hunks' after all."

As they walked on together he told Jack that, in order to be able to distinguish his friends from those who were ready to claim friendship with him only on account of his supposed wealth, he had, for a time, dropped part of his name, and become a professor of botany; a study which had always been his hobby. His chief object in doing this had been to make, while thus disguised, the acquaintance of his sister's family, and he had been on the point of seeking them out when chance threw him and Jack together.

"It has all turned out just right," said Jack; "and won't Chrystal be glad!"

"How will Jack take it, do you think?" asked the little old gentleman, with just a trace of anxiety in his tone.

"I think Jack would rather have you for an uncle, rich or poor, than anybody he has ever met!" exclaimed the boy, heartily and honestly.

"And I," said Uncle Herkimer, "begin to think that as nephews go, Jack Cary is going to prove about as good a one as I could find. I was inclined to think so when he refused my offer of adoption, which, by-the-way, was only made to test the mettle of the Cary family. This opinion was strengthened when I found that he was not ashamed to earn an honest living in any way that offered, even if it was only selling flowers from a basket. Now that I have seen and studied him in his own home, where, after all, you gain the truest idea of a person's disposition and character, I am pretty well convinced of it."

The occupants of Ingle Dell were greatly surprised that afternoon to have a carriage drive up to the door, and amazed to see Jack and the little old gentleman alight from it. Their first

surprise was, however, as nothing to that with which they were overcome when Jack gravely, and with much formality, introduced his companion to them as one of the very best and kindest old gentlemen in the world, in fact as their uncle Ira Holabird Herkimer.

By the end of the year the floral establishment of Chrystal, Jack & Co. had so outgrown its modest, street-corner stand that it was deemed advisable to remove it to a store which happened to be vacant on the same street, and of which Uncle Herkimer took the lease. Here may now be seen every variety of our Northern wild-flowers in their season, and from here most of the city florists obtain them. The season opens in April with the trailing arbutus, which is quickly followed by the hepaticas, violets, anemones, blood-root, cowslips, and buttercups of May. In June the shop is a perfect bower of swamp azalea, mountain laurel, sweetbrier, and wild-roses, daisies, dear little bluets or quaker girls, lady's-slippers, wild-columbine, and all the other floral beauties that acknowledge the rule of this queen of months.

In July a specialty is made of lilies, and the passers-by stop and gaze in delighted surprise at the wonderful display of these with which the windows are filled. For it the ponds have yielded their treasures of dazzling white and yellow gold, and the swamps have sent the royal purple iris, first-cousin of the lilies. From the uplands have come the orange-red lily, from the meadows the yellow Canada lily, and from the rich, low grounds at the edge of the woods the beautiful *Lilium superbum.* Besides these, July contributes grass-pinks, meadow-beauties, and great bundles of flags and decorative cat-tails.

August makes a blaze of color with its cardinal-flowers, purple gerardias, cone-flowers, great pink marsh-mallows, sunflowers, and a few of the golden-rods. It is rich in yellows and reds, the brilliancy of which is softened by sprays of feathery spiræa.

September and October are the months of golden-rod and asters, the evening primrose, and the shy gentians; while in November a brave show is made with the orange and scarlet of the bitter-sweet, various red and purple berries,

sprays of evergreens, and great bunches of plumy, dried grasses.

December being holiday month, the whole place is given up to Christmas-trees of balsam, spruce, and hemlock, and to decorations of evergreen vines, red-berried, glossy-leaved holly, and white-berried mistletoe.

The establishment is a flourishing one, and Robert Linn, its manager, who has long ago exchanged the news business for this more congenial employment, finds his time fully and happily occupied in it. His flower-gatherers scour the woods, swamps, and fields within fifty miles of New York; but the members of the Cary family no longer take any active part in the business which they founded. They, too, have found more congenial occupations.

Chrystal, restored to full health and strength, and no longer using crutches, presides sweetly and graciously over her uncle's handsome city house. Mabel, who is devoting herself to music, also lives there, and is the delight and joy of her uncle's heart.

Jack is studying at New Haven, and prepar-

ing himself to assume the management of Mr. Herkimer's extensive and as yet only partially developed Western property.

The inseparable twins are at a boarding-school for both boys and girls, and are expecting in a few years to enter some college that will admit them both.

As for the little old gentleman, Percy says, "When Uncle Herkimer found that he couldn't adopt any one of us without the others, he took all the others for the sake of having one."

"Yes," says Sally, "he has adopted all of us, and all of us have adopted him."

END OF "CHRYSTAL, JACK & CO."

DELTA BIXBY.

CHAPTER I.

THE FOUR BE'S.

"WELL, Delta, there's no use trying to fit a square peg into a round hole," said Mr. Hiram Bixby, the boat-builder, to his youngest son, who stood near the work-bench whittling, and thereby adding to the clean litter of the shop. The speaker sighted along the edge of a bit of board that he held, to determine whether or not it was straight, and, detecting a slight unevenness, he began to plane it gently. As the silvery shavings curled from beneath the keen-edged tool he continued,

"That's an old saying, but it's a true one, and I've seen so many good square pegs spoiled by being forced into round holes that I've no desire to experiment in that direction myself. There's plenty of round pegs for the round holes in this world, and at the same time there is a

square hole waiting for every square peg. You're old enough now to begin to exercise your own judgment and to look out for yourself. You don't take kindly to study, and you say that you hate the very thought of being nothing but a boat-builder all your life."

"Oh, father, I didn't mean to put it in those words!" exclaimed the boy, looking up quickly from his whittling with a flushed face. "What I meant was that I hate to think of settling down quite yet to any one thing, and especially to anything that would keep me in this place all my life."

"Hate is a strong word, my boy, and should be used cautiously," said Mr. Bixby, with a smile. "I think I understand what you mean, though. You want to see something of the world, and try your fortune away from home before undertaking to decide upon your business in life."

"That's it exactly, father!" cried the boy, eagerly.

"There is certainly nothing wrong in such a desire, and I expect most boys feel very much

as you do. It is natural for young birds to want to try their wings. But travelling is a more expensive form of education than I can afford to give you, Delta. If I should let you go, and give you your own time between this and your twenty-first birthday, it would be about all I could do."

"All right, father!" exclaimed the boy, throwing away his stick and closing his jack-knife with a snap. "If you will only say I can go, and will let me start right off, I'll find a way to travel if it's only walking, and I won't ask you for a single cent."

"Well, my boy, we shall miss you greatly, and I wish you would be contented to stay at home; but I have already talked this matter over with your brother and sisters, and decided some time since to let you go as soon as you made up your mind that that was what you wanted to do and spoke to me about it. That being settled, I don't know of any reason why you shouldn't start as soon as you can get ready."

"Oh, thank you, father, thank you ever so much!" said Delta, with a new light in his eyes.

"You are ever so good to me, and I don't see why I shouldn't start to-morrow morning."

"You may do as you think best," said Mr. Bixby; "but whenever you go, and wherever you go, my son, always remember that as long as I live and you do nothing to disgrace it you have a home and a warm welcome awaiting you here."

After a few more loving words between the two, the boy walked out of the shop and towards the neat little frame house at the opposite end of the yard. He felt that he had taken a long stride in the direction of manhood during the few minutes just past, and he was already wrestling with the new problem of life that had been given him to solve.

Mrs. Bixby having died when Delta was a baby, the family consisted of the father and four children, the eldest of whom was now a man, and had been for some years his father's partner in the boat-building business; the second was a married daughter; the third was a daughter who acted as her father's house-keeper; and the youngest was Delta. When Mr. Bixby was a New England school-boy he had at one time

taken up the study of Greek, but had been obliged to drop it after having only learned the alphabet. In after-life he was very proud of even this fragment of classical knowledge, and that he might not forget it he gave his children the names of the Greek letters in their alphabetical order. Thus they became Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta Bixby; while, if there had been enough of them, it is probable that they would have represented the entire Greek alphabet down to omega. Delta was quite proud of having a name so different from that of any of the boys of his acquaintance, and always signed himself "Δ Bixby."

The home of the Bixbys was in a little Wisconsin town on the shore of Lake Michigan, and Delta, though possessed of a roving disposition, had not been more than a few miles away from it in all his life. For years he had cherished the hope of some time becoming a famous traveller and seeing the world. He studied his geography faithfully, and read all the books of travel he could get hold of, but cared so little for studying or reading anything else that he

was generally at the foot of his classes. His teachers pronounced him stupid, and found so much fault with him that his father finally took him from school and set him to work in his own shop. Here, although the boy readily learned the use of tools and became a fairly good workman, the monotony of the life and its close confinement told upon him, until he became irritable and unhappy. His brother could not understand his moods, and his house-keeping sister said she was always sorry to see him come in and glad to see him go out of the house. He had no mother to give him loving sympathy and advice, and it was so seldom that he saw his father alone that it was some time before he found an opportunity of confiding to him the longings of his heart.

Finally, upon the morning with which our story opens, Delta and his father were alone in the shop, and the boy felt that now or never was the time for him to speak. Laying down a piece of work that he had just finished, he plunged at once into the heart of the subject that weighed so heavily upon his mind, by saying,

"Father, I can't stand it any longer; you must

let me go away. I'm past sixteen now, and don't seem to be good for anything. I never shall be as long as I stay here; for I hate the very thought of being nothing but a boat-builder all my life, and nobody in this place'll give me a chance to try anything else." Here the boy, quite overcome with the vehemence of his own speech, paused, and picking up a bit of stick, began to whittle it vigorously to conceal his emotion.

Mr. Bixby was not surprised at this outburst, for he had for some time been anxiously watching his unhappy boy and waiting to receive his confidence. The conversation that followed has already been given; so it only remains to say that, taking his father at his word, Delta at once began making his simple preparations for leaving home and setting forth to see the world the very next day.

Now that he was really going away, and would no longer be a care to her, his sister, Gamma discovered that she was really very fond of the boy and should miss him very much. Nevertheless, she busied herself all that afternoon over his clothes and in preparing the substantial luncheon he was to carry with him. He

was to make an early start and walk to Milwaukee, twenty-one miles away. Thus far his plans were decided, but beyond that lay the wide world, and in what direction he should traverse it was as uncertain as where the year's end would find him.

During that last afternoon Delta wandered about the village bidding his boy friends good-by, and filling them with a vague wonder as to where he was going and what he was going to do. Most of them regarded him as a hero, and indulged in speculations as to the adventures he was about to encounter. They painted his future in such glowing colors that Delta himself was almost persuaded to believe that his journey through life was to be a sort of triumphal march, and that his rise to greatness was already fully assured.

The next morning he was up before sunrise, and after a hasty breakfast he took up the little bag of clothing and the package of luncheon that Gamma had prepared, bade his brother and sister good-by, and, accompanied by his father, who was to walk a mile or so with him, set off

on the first long journey of his life. The morning was a glorious one in early autumn, and the crisp air sent the blood of both pedestrians tingling through their veins; but for some distance they walked in silence, overpowered by the sadness of the parting so near at hand and the uncertainty of the future. At length Mr. Bixby said,

"I have no doubt, Delta, that many persons will blame me for letting a boy so young and inexperienced as yourself start off alone in this sudden way, but I have carefully considered the matter, and am convinced that I am doing right. You have good health, good principles, and good common-sense. You will learn more in one year of travelling and shifting for yourself than you would in ten of staying at home. Above all, you will acquire self-reliance, and discover that every success worthy of the name depends wholly upon the individual striving after it. Nobody else can win it for you. Now I am going to leave you. Here is a note which I want you to put in your pocket and read when you stop for luncheon. Good-by, my boy. May God bless you. Write

to me as often as you can, and never do anything that you would be ashamed to tell me of."

A long firm hand-clasp, a tremulous "Good-by, father," from Delta, who, manly boy that he was, could not wholly repress his tears, and the two had parted, one to return to his humble workshop in the little lake village, and the other to enter the great unknown world that lay beyond it.

A few hours later, hot, foot-sore, dusty, and weary, Delta threw himself down on a bit of shaded grass beside a brook, a short distance to one side of the road. Here he decided to rest for an hour, eat his luncheon, and read his father's letter. As he was already feeling lonely and homesick, he first opened the letter, which ran as follows:

"MY DEAR BOY,—I want to send with you on your travels four Be's, and I ask for them your unceasing care, your most thoughtful consideration, and that you will never neglect an opportunity of keeping them busy. Their names are:

" 'Be honest.'

" 'Be charitable.'

" 'Be industrious.'

" 'Be temperate.'

"I enclose with them a small sum of money, but all that I can spare, to help pay their expenses.

"Lovingly, your FATHER."

The money enclosed was a twenty-dollar bill, that fluttered to the ground as Delta opened the letter.

As the boy finished reading, and picked up the bill to replace it in the envelope, he became aware of a human presence, and looking up, saw standing near him a shabbily dressed man. He wore a straight-cut black coat buttoned close to his chin, and a tall hat that had evidently seen much service and rough usage. Finding himself observed, the man assumed what was doubtless intended for a benevolent smile, and seating himself on the grass near Delta, said,

"Well, my young friend, having finished the perusal of our little epistle, I presume we are now about to satisfy the wants of the inner man from that very suggestive-looking parcel by our side."

"I was going to eat my luncheon," answered Delta, somewhat puzzled by this form of address.

"That is exactly what I had supposed; and possibly you may be moved to bestow the portion that will remain after your own hunger is ap-

peased upon one who, like yourself, is a wayfarer and in need of food."

Now, Delta disliked the man's appearance and tone so much that his first thoughts were of how he should rid himself of such unpleasant company. Suddenly the remembrance of his father's letter and its four Be's flashed across his mind —"Be charitable." Here was a chance to keep one of them busy.

Thus thinking, he opened the luncheon and divided it equally with the stranger, who, while eating his share, maintained a steady flow of conversation. He told Delta that he was the teacher of a small mission school in the city, and had walked thus far out into the country to inform a farmer's family of the illness of their boy, who was one of his scholars. He also apologized for the shabbiness of his appearance, and said that the poverty of those among whom he labored appealed so strongly to his sympathies that he devoted the greater part of his salary to relieving their wants, and had but little left to expend upon himself.

When Delta heard this story, which he fully

believed, he began to feel ashamed of his suspicions, and to regret that he had judged this good man so harshly merely from his appearance. To atone for this he became more confidential than he otherwise would have been, and told the stranger of all his own plans, hopes, and fears.

The other listened to this story with close attention, and when it was finished said,

"How fortunate is our meeting! Being on my way back to the city, I can guide you through its mazes and can introduce you to my own cheap but tidy lodging-house. There you will be safe from the wiles of those wicked men who abound in all cities, and who are constantly on the watch for just such inexperienced youths as yourself."

During his morning's walk Delta had decided to try and work his way to New York City, where he hoped to ship as a sailor on some vessel bound to a foreign port. When he told the stranger of this plan the latter said,

"Well, it seems really providential that we should have met, for I am the very man who can get you a nice easy berth on a steamer that will

take you as far as Buffalo. It won't probably pay you anything, but then I don't suppose you will mind that so long as you get a big lift on your journey."

"Oh no," said Delta. "I shall be very glad of a chance to work for my passage, especially as you say the work will be easy."

"Oh, very easy; almost nothing to do; hardly enough to keep the voyage from becoming monotonous," answered the other, quickly.

After a while they took to the road, and tramping sturdily along, the two strangely assorted companions reached the city about sunset. Leading the way through what seemed to Delta an interminable length of streets, the stranger finally stopped in the neighborhood of the docks, and entered what he had called a "tidy little place," though it struck the boy as being anything but tidy.

Leaving Delta sitting in a long, low room filled with rough-looking men, most of whom were smoking, the stranger went to a desk, behind which stood a sleek-looking clerk, to engage rooms. When he came back he said in a low

tone to Delta, "The house is so uncommonly full to-night that I had to pay a dollar apiece in advance for the rooms."

The boy was about to hand him a dollar from his own little store, which amounted to about six dollars that he had been a long time in saving, in addition to what he called the "Be" money received from his father that day. The stranger, however, said,

"Oh, never mind now; you can pay for the suppers, and that'll make us square."

After visiting their rooms, which were about the size of prison cells, and for which Delta would have thought a dollar a night a very extravagant price but that he had no idea of what city prices were, they went out for supper. This they got in a small restaurant in which sat many customers in their shirt-sleeves and with their hats on—queer city manners they seemed to Delta—eating and drinking. Here the stranger tried to make Delta drink something, saying that he really needed it after his long walk; but remembering his father's Be's, the boy steadily refused. His companion, however, took several

tumblers of some dark liquor, which he said had been ordered by his physician, and when Delta went to pay the supper-bill he was amazed at its amount, for it did not seem to him that they had very much to eat.

After leaving the restaurant the stranger wanted Delta to walk about with him and see the city; but the boy said he was too tired to do anything but go to bed, so they went back to the hotel together.

"By-the-way," said the stranger as they entered the hotel, "if you have any money or valuables about you, it would be well to leave them in the safe. They might be stolen from your room, you know."

Delta thought this was a good idea, and said that he had a valuable letter which he would like to place in a safe place if he knew where to find one.

"I'll show you," said the stranger. "Come with me to the desk, and I'll give the letter to the clerk with my own hands. He knows me, and will take the best kind of care of anything I leave with him. You'll know it's all right, for you can see him put it in the safe and lock it up."

While he talked they had stepped up to the desk, and, taking the precious letter from Delta's hand, the stranger said to the clerk,

"Here, Charley, lock this up safe for me, will you?"

Delta saw the letter placed in the iron safe and felt much relieved; but he did not notice that a receipt for it was handed to his companion, nor did he know that the receipt was made out in a different name from his own.

The next morning, after a breakfast for which Delta paid, the stranger took him aboard a fine steam propeller that lay at one of the wharves advertised to sail for Buffalo at noon that day. Leaving the boy on deck, he went below, and after a while returned with a man in a blue coat and brass buttons, who, after a glance at Delta, gave him a paper to sign. Then the two went below again, and when the stranger reappeared he told the boy that he had persuaded the chief engineer to take him as a sort of an assistant, but that he would have almost no work to do, and was in for a delightful voyage to Buffalo. He also said that Delta would have just time to run back to the hotel and get his bag and the let-

ter in the safe, for which he now handed him the receipt, before the steamer sailed. He was sorry that he could not go too, but important business called him in another direction.

Delta thanked him for all his kindness, which the stranger politely begged him not to mention, and then started for the hotel, thinking that he was getting along pretty nicely after all. His pleasant thoughts were, however, doomed to suffer a speedy change, for when he reached the hotel he was presented with a bill for lodging and drinks which *his father* had left unpaid. Getting his letter from the safe, he found to his dismay that the twenty-dollar bill was gone from it, and was told that *his father* had taken it out that morning. At last, when he returned penniless and with a heavy heart to the steamer, he discovered that he had shipped as a coal-passer for the voyage to Buffalo, and that *his father* had drawn in advance the five dollars of wages that he would have otherwise received.

At last Delta's eyes were opened to the fact that the plausible stranger whom he had trusted was nothing more nor less than a sharper who had robbed him without mercy.

CHAPTER II.

A FIGHT AND A FRIEND.

UPON going on board the steamer, Delta was shown to his bunk in the forecastle, and told that he would not be called upon to work for an hour or so. When he was left alone with his own sorrowful reflections, he became so filled with anger at the stranger who had cheated and robbed him, and with himself for having been so easily taken in, that his thoughts were in a perfect turmoil.

"That comes of taking father's advice and being charitable!" he exclaimed, and then in his heart he began to blame his father for all his troubles. After a while, as he became quieter, he opened his bag to get out a pair of overalls that he thought he might need in his new work. In taking them out he dropped from the bag a little old Testament that had been his mother's. It lay on the floor wide open, and as Delta picked it up his eye fell upon these words: "Charity

suffereth long, and is kind. Charity endureth all things."

As he gazed at them a sudden change came over his feelings.

"It is like a message from my mother," he said to himself, "to show me how wickedly I have thought of one of the best fathers in the world. After all, nobody is to blame but myself, and though it has cost me pretty dear, I have got a bit of experience that will be valuable to me all my life."

Having thus reasoned himself into a happier frame of mind, Delta sought out the chief engineer, determined to let him know that the sharper was not his father. Now, although chief engineers of large steamers are not in the habit of holding conversations with their coal-passers, this one happened to be a good-natured man, and in a particularly good humor that morning. He listened patiently to Delta's story, and when it was ended he said,

"You have certainly had a rough bit of experience, my lad, and I'm sorry for you, but your advance money has been paid, and you have

signed the ship's papers, so I do not see that there is anything for you to do but serve out your time with us, and make the best of the situation. Now turn to and go to work, and if you prove willing and industrious I will bear you in mind, and see what I can do for you when we get to Buffalo."

"So the Industrious Be is now to be kept busy," said Delta to himself, after he had thanked the engineer and left his cabin.

Soon afterwards the last of the freight was got on board, and with very little fuss or noise the steamer slipped out of the dock and started on her long voyage. Of what was taking place on deck, Delta Bixby, already black and grimy, busily passing coal down among the roaring furnaces in the steamer's lowest depths, knew as little as though he were in another part of the world. During the afternoon she passed within sight of his native village on the lake shore; but the boy, now weary and aching in every joint with his unaccustomed labors, had no knowledge of the fact. Besides his aches and weariness, he suffered from sea-sickness until he won-

dered if the whole world held any one more miserable than he. Still, he stuck manfully to his work until, at the end of four hours, he was relieved and allowed to go to the forecastle, where, utterly exhausted in body and mind, he threw himself into his rude bunk.

For a week the steamer ploughed the crystal waters of the great chain of inland seas that forms one of the wonders of the American continent. Her course carried her almost the whole length of Lake Michigan, through the Straits of Mackinac, across Lake Huron, by way of the St. Clair River, with its wide-spread marshes, into the little Lake St. Clair, out of it through the swiftly flowing Detroit River into the blue waters of Lake Erie and along the entire length of that magnificent sheet to Buffalo. She might have continued beyond here by way of the Welland Canal around Niagara Falls into Lake Ontario, and from it down the mighty St. Lawrence to the distant ocean.

The first time Delta went on deck after leaving Milwaukee the steamer was passing through the Straits of Mackinac, the wonderful scenery

of which gave him a thrill of pleasure such as he had never before known. He saw what he could of Detroit as the river current bore them rapidly past the city, and at Cleveland, where they stopped for a whole day, he was allowed to go ashore for a short time. Here he walked the entire length of Euclid Avenue, which is called the most beautiful street of America, and from here he mailed his first letter home. In it he asked his father to write to him at New York; for, although he did not know how he was to get to that city, he felt confident that some way would be provided for him to do so.

During the voyage the boy was not once spoken to or apparently noticed by the chief engineer, but when the steamer reached Buffalo, and lay moored at her wharf, that officer sent for him and said,

"Well, Bixby, I suppose you want to leave us here and continue your travels?"

"Yes, sir," replied Delta, "I think I do."

"Very well, then, I suppose I shall have to let you go; but you have been such an industrious fellow, and have performed the dirty work you

were set at so faithfully, that I should be glad to have you stay with us, and would give you a steady job if you would."

Delta's face flushed with pleasure at these unexpected words of praise, but he said,

"I think I would rather see something more of the world first, if you please, sir;" and as he spoke he was somewhat fearful lest the engineer should try and persuade him that it was his duty to stay where he could earn an honest living.

"All right!" laughed the engineer, suspecting the boy's thoughts. "I rather thought you were the kind of a chap to stick to a plan when you had once decided upon it. But how do you expect to get to New York?"

"I haven't an idea, sir."

"Then let me give you one. I have already spoken to an acquaintance of mine, who owns a steam canal-boat that he runs on the Erie. He leaves here to-night with a load of wheat for New York, and will give you a chance to work your passage with him if you want to. It's a slow way of travelling; but it's cheap, and you'll get there some time."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" exclaimed Delta, gratefully.

"Here," continued the engineer, "is a note that will explain to Captain Wise who you are, and you will find the *Lucky Polly* lying at the grain elevator two streets below here."

As Delta took the note, the engineer slipped into his hand with it a five-dollar bill, saying,

"Take this, boy, as a reward for your honesty of purpose, and as a proof that all the strangers you meet in this world are not as bad as your first Milwaukee acquaintance."

Delta was quite overpowered by this kindness; but when he tried to express his thanks the engineer cut him short, saying,

"Oh, that's all right. You'll do as much for some other deserving chap some time. Good-by." With this he turned into his own room and closed the door behind him.

Upon reading the engineer's note, Captain Wise, of the steam canaller *Lucky Polly,* looked keenly at Delta and said,

"If you're half as good at work as this note says you are, I shall be well paid for feeding you

between here and New York. You may begin at once by going into the engine-room and polishing every bit of brass and bright metal you find there."

The next two weeks of Delta's life were passed in oiling machinery, polishing brass, cleaning windows, washing dishes, and doing, cheerfully and promptly, the thousand and one odd jobs that all hands on board that canal-boat, from captain to cook, found for him. In spite of being kept busy from morning till night, he managed to obtain a pretty good idea of the large cities through which the Erie Canal passes, such as Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, and Troy, as well as of many of the towns and villages of Central New York. From Troy the *Lucky Polly* steamed slowly and heavily down the Hudson, past Albany and the many other cities that line its banks, through its majestic Highlands, where Delta felt repaid for all his trials by a view of the military academy at West Point, close under the precipitous walls of the Palisades, and finally along the miles of docks, piers, and shipping that line the water-front of the great metropolis.

Here the boy traveller was completely bewildered and somewhat alarmed by the multitude of tugs, ferry-boats, and other steam craft that rushed to and fro at full speed on all side of the *Lucky Polly*. He was therefore greatly relieved when that substantial craft, avoiding all these perils, rounded the Battery, and, entering the East River, worked its slow way into a slip that was already occupied by scores of other canal-boats that had just arrived or were just about to depart.

The city was so big, so noisy, and so crowded that it terrified the country-bred boy, and he was thankful when Captain Wise told him that he might sleep aboard the canal-boat as long as she remained in that slip, which would probably be for several days.

With his lodging thus provided, Delta began to look about the city. He found his way to the post-office, where a letter from home awaited him, walked across the great Brooklyn Bridge, and took a ride on the elevated railway; but most of his time was spent in walking slowly along the South Street wharves, and gazing earnestly

at the vessels moored beside them. He was trying to make up his mind what part of the world he should visit, in what manner of craft he should travel, and to whom he should apply for permission to work his passage. At length, on the third day of his search, all these questions were decided for him by an accident.

He was standing close to a large building on South Street, watching with interest the warping in to her dock of a bark that was evidently just in from a long foreign voyage, when suddenly his feet were almost knocked from under him by a small dog that rushed violently between his legs and cowered, whimpering and trembling, behind him. The next instant a crowd of street boys, several of whom were quite as large as Delta, all armed with sticks or stones, came tearing around the corner in hot pursuit, yelling,

"Mad dog! Mad dog! Kill der mad dog!"

Now, Delta was fond of all animals, but especially of dogs, and was not the boy to stand tamely by and see one of them ill-treated. So, when one of the biggest of the boys who now surrounded him said, in an ugly tone,

"Get out der way, young feller, an' let us have der dog," he asked,

"What do you want to do to him?"

"None of yer business what we want ter do ter him," was the answer; while others shouted,

"We want ter kill him! he's mad."

"Oh, I don't believe he's mad," said Delta, stooping to look at the frightened little animal.

As he did so he received a blow on the side of the head that would have knocked him over had not the building saved him from falling. Although staggered and dizzy, he recovered his senses in time to ward off a second blow that was aimed at his face. In another moment the young ruffian who had struck him was sprawling at full length in the gutter, where he had been laid by a well-directed blow from the clinched fist of the sturdy Western lad. At this the entire mob of young savages rushed upon him, and he found himself trying to ward off such a shower of blows from fists, sticks, and stones that he imagined he was about to be killed.

All at once there came a loud cry of "Cheese it! der cop!" The blows ceased to fall upon

him; Delta heard a rush of retreating footsteps, and before he knew what had happened he found himself in the grasp of a big blue-coated policeman, who sternly demanded,

"What do you mean, you young villain, you, by fighting in the public streets?"

"Please, sir, I couldn't help it," gasped poor Delta, with visions of police-courts and prisons rising before him. "They were going to kill the dog, and, when I didn't want 'em to, they all pitched into me."

"Yes, that's so," said a clerk from a neighboring store, who had witnessed the whole affair, and now stepped forward to offer his testimony.

At this point in the proceedings the little dog which had been the innocent cause of all the trouble began to jump up against Delta's legs and try to lick his hands. It was a bright-looking black-and-tan terrier, and around his neck was a silver collar.

Picking the dog up, the policeman read on the collar, "Tiny. John Hobson. Fifth Avenue."

"That must be Mr. John Hobson, the great sugar broker of Burling Slip," he said—and then

to Delta, "Here, boy, take the dog and come along with me."

Five minutes later Tiny had been restored to her master, by whom she was being scolded and petted at the same time; the policeman, with a substantial acknowledgment of his services in his pocket, was again pacing his beat, and Delta, bruised and still breathless, was sitting in the private office of Hobson's Sons & Co., telling Mr. John Hobson, the senior partner of the firm, the whole story of Tiny's peril and rescue. This led gradually to the relation of his own adventures since leaving home, as well as of his hopes and plans, in all of which his listener became much interested.

"So you want to see something of the world, do you, and think you would like to be a sailor?" said Mr. Hobson, when Delta had finished his story.

"I want to travel somehow," answered the boy, "and I think I'd like to try being a sailor for one voyage at least."

"How would you like to go to Cuba?"

"I'd be mighty glad of a chance to go to Cuba."

"Good enough! If that will suit you, I can

easily arrange to have you start for Cardenas to-morrow. You can go as cabin-boy on the brig *Bab Ballad,* which we are going to send out after a cargo of sugar. I'll speak to the captain about it this afternoon, and ask him to have you taught all that is possible on the voyage, and to let you see all there is to be seen wherever the brig touches. How will that suit you?"

"It's simply splendid, sir," answered Delta, his battered face fairly beaming with delight.

"And," continued Mr. Hobson, "if, when you come back, you have had enough of sailoring, we'll try and find something else for you to do that's more to your liking."

"You're awfully good to me," said the boy, gratefully. "And I'm sure I haven't done anything to deserve it."

"Haven't done anything!" exclaimed Mr. Hobson. "Didn't you just now save the life of my dear dead little girl's Tiny? And didn't you stand up like a man and take such a thrashing for her sake that you're all black and blue from it? Thunder and guns, boy! don't tell me you haven't done anything. Come, let's go round to Dorlon's and get some luncheon. Tiny's hungry

and so am I, and if you are not you ought to be."

Two days later the fine brig *Bab Ballad,* Isaac Brace master, passed the Scotland light-ship and laid a course down the New Jersey coast. In a tiny room opening from her cabin pantry sat Delta Bixby, busily overhauling the contents of a small blue sea-chest that, filled with whatever a young sailor could need, had been a present from Mr. Hobson.

Before leaving New York Delta had written a long letter to his father, describing in detail all his adventures since leaving Buffalo, and telling of Mr. Hobson's great kindness. He had also sent a letter by Captain Wise, of the steam canal-boat, back to the chief engineer of the lake propeller.

During their luncheon at Dorlon's Mr. Hobson, who had taken a great fancy to the lad, led him to talk of his home and father. Finally Delta had shown him his father's letter containing the four Be's, with which Mr. Hobson seemed much pleased, and regarding which he said that if Delta followed his father's advice and kept them busy, there was no doubt as to his future success in life.

CHAPTER III.

LOST IN A MANGROVE SWAMP.

IT was the stormy season of the year for the North Atlantic, and for several weeks the brig encountered only head-winds or was buffeted by adverse gales until all on board were exhausted by unceasing labor and constant anxiety. At length a light but fair breeze tempted the captain to keep well in towards the coast and thus escape as much as possible the current of the Gulf Stream. As they entered the Strait of Florida, between the Bahama Islands and the main-land, the breeze grew lighter and lighter, until it finally died out completely, leaving the brig rolling on a long swell within two miles of Cape Florida, on which stands the tall white shaft of an abandoned light-house.

Captain Brace growled a little at what he called the "glistening calm," but on looking at his barometer found that it predicted a change within a few hours. During the heavy gales

through which the brig had just passed several of her water-casks had been broken, and as but very little fresh water remained on board, the captain decided to take advantage of his position and of the calm to replenish his scuttle-butts. He therefore ordered the second mate to go ashore in a boat and procure a fresh supply of water from the old light-house cistern. This was just such an opportunity for visiting a strange land as Delta Bixby had been longing for, and he obtained permission to make one of the boat's crew.

The long sand-pit of Cape Florida forms the southern extremity of a key or island named by its old Spanish discoverers "Key Biscayne." The tall white tower that still marks it was abandoned as a light-house in 1878 upon the completion of a new light-house several miles from it, on the Fowey Rocks, and those who landed from the *Bab Ballad* in search of water found the building formerly occupied by the light-keeper in ruins, but that a small quantity of water still remained in its cistern.

While the others were filling the casks, Delta,

seeing that his services were not needed, and attracted by the novel sight of a grove of cocoa-palms, strolled towards them in order to examine them more closely. As he did so he was almost immediately concealed from his companions by the thick undergrowth into which he plunged. Beyond the palms he noticed other strange trees laden with yellow fruit, and a little farther on some gorgeous flowers, such as he had never before seen, and which interested him greatly. They grew on the edge of a dense mangrove swamp, and in his eagerness to gather them the boy advanced insensibly into its perplexing mazes. When at last he bethought himself that it was time to return to the boat, he was dismayed to find that he had no idea of the direction in which it lay. He was as completely lost as though he had wandered miles instead of only a few rods into the swamp, and his despairing shouts failed to bring any response.

In the mean time the boat's crew had filled their casks and were ready to return to the brig before they discovered his absence. By this time a dark cloud-bank was rising from the seaward

horizon, and spiteful little gusts of wind were tracing black lines across the surface of the water. The recall signal was plainly seen flying from the main rigging of the brig, and the boat's crew knew that if they delayed much longer she must, for her own safety, sail away and leave them.

Once, twice, three times, they shouted in chorus and listened for a reply from the missing boy; but none came.

"It's no use, men," said the second mate at last, "our duty lies with the brig, and to her we must go. The lad's lost somewhere; but on this island he's certain to find his way to the beach before long. It'll be easy then for him to fetch the light-house, and from there he'll soon be taken off by some sponger, or maybe by folks from the main-land."

So the boat's crew rowed away, and after a hard struggle reached the brig just in time to get aboard before she was struck by a furious squall and enveloped in a dense cloud of mist and rain.

The next time the ship's log was written up

Delta Bixby's name was entered in it under the heading of "Lost."

For a long time Delta wandered in the mangrove swamp, often sinking deep in its treacherous mud and again clambering, monkey-like, along the lower branches of those curious trees, that, shooting out at various heights from the main trunk, grow downward and take root. As they in turn send out other branches that act in the same manner, a mangrove-tree soon covers a large area, and collects among its innumerable interlacing stems quantities of drift-matter from high waters. It grows readily on coral rocks in salt water, and, taking up the work of the coral insects where they have left off, proceeds to construct islands upon the solid foundations they have provided. All the southern coasts of Florida, as well as the chain of keys following the line of the great Florida reef, are covered with dense forests of mangrove, which are slowly but steadily and surely filling up the watery places and converting them into dry land.

While Delta was wildly scrambling among the mangroves, and making desperate efforts to

find his way back to the boat, the rain-squall broke upon him in all its fury, and in a minute he was drenched to the skin.

All at once he saw a line of white beach directly ahead, and in another moment found himself clear of the mangroves and standing on the edge of the salt-water. He looked eagerly up and down the beach for his companions and the boat, but saw nothing of them. Neither could he see the old light-house tower. The water, too, was curiously different from what he had last seen it. Then there was quite a heavy surf, that had made the landing very difficult, rolling in on the beach; now the white coral sand was only lapped by the gentlest of ripples. He could hear the wind roaring among the mangroves behind him and lashing their tops; but protected by the dense growth, he could not feel it. Suddenly the true state of affairs became clear to him; he had crossed the key, and was now upon its western or bay side, instead of upon its eastern beach, which is washed by the open sea.

A moment's reflection told him that, as he was facing west and the light-house stood on the southern point of the key, he must turn to the

left and make his way along the beach in order to reach it. He tried to run, but the beach, composed of minute shells and powdered coral, was so soft that his feet sank deeply into it with every step. Thus not only was running almost impossible, but walking was difficult. Upon rounding the point and leaving the sheltering mangroves, which do not grow on the sea side of the key, the boy encountered the full fury of the wind, and was nearly blinded by the rain, which was driven in horizontal sheets directly in his face. His spirits were, however, cheered by seeing the white tower of the old light-house rising in front of him ghost-like through the driving mist, and he pushed on towards it with all possible speed. Finally reaching it, almost exhausted by his efforts, he paused for a minute in its sheltered lee to regain his breath. Then he hurried on to the place where the boat had been left.

The poor boy could hardly believe his senses when he discovered that the boat was gone and that he had been abandoned on that desolate shore. For some time he wandered wildly up and down the beach, heedless now of the wind and rain, shouting until his voice failed him for hoarseness, and gazing seaward through the fast-

gathering gloom in hopes of seeing the brig. At last he realized that he was indeed alone, and that unless he wished to pass the night on the open beach he must speedily find some shelter. With a heavy heart he again made his way to the tower, and after considerable difficulty forced open its heavy iron door, which had rusted on its hinges. Through the narrow doorway he entered a small, round room that was dimly lighted by the open door and one slit-like window cut through the massive wall on the opposite side. Here, seated on the lowest step of the circular iron stair-way that disappeared in the blackness above him, he buried his face in his hands and abandoned himself to the most gloomy and despairing thoughts.

At first he felt very bitter against those who had gone off leaving him in this wretched plight, and called them cruel, hard-hearted, and everything else he could think of. Gradually his thoughts changed, and a vision of the comfortable home he had left rose before him. He wondered if there was the slightest chance of his ever seeing it again. Home suggested his father's letter and its four Be's:

"Be honest."

"Be industrious."

"Be temperate."

"Be charitable."

"Much good they'll do me in this place," said the boy aloud to himself.

Hold on! Was it honest to place all the blame for his present misfortunes upon others, when his own carelessness had clearly brought them upon him?

Was it charitable to accuse his late companions of cruelly deserting him when he knew nothing of the causes that led to their action?

Was he industrious at this moment? Clearly not.

Delta sprang to his feet. His father had told him that the most important thing he would learn was self-reliance. Certainly he must have at last reached the point where he had only himself to rely upon; for, so far as he knew, there was not a human being within hundreds of miles of him, except those in the light-house on Fowey Rocks, far out at sea. What could he do? As he stood thinking he thrust his hands deep into his trousers-pockets. In one he felt his stout jack-knife, and in the other a small water-tight India-rubber box that he knew to be full of

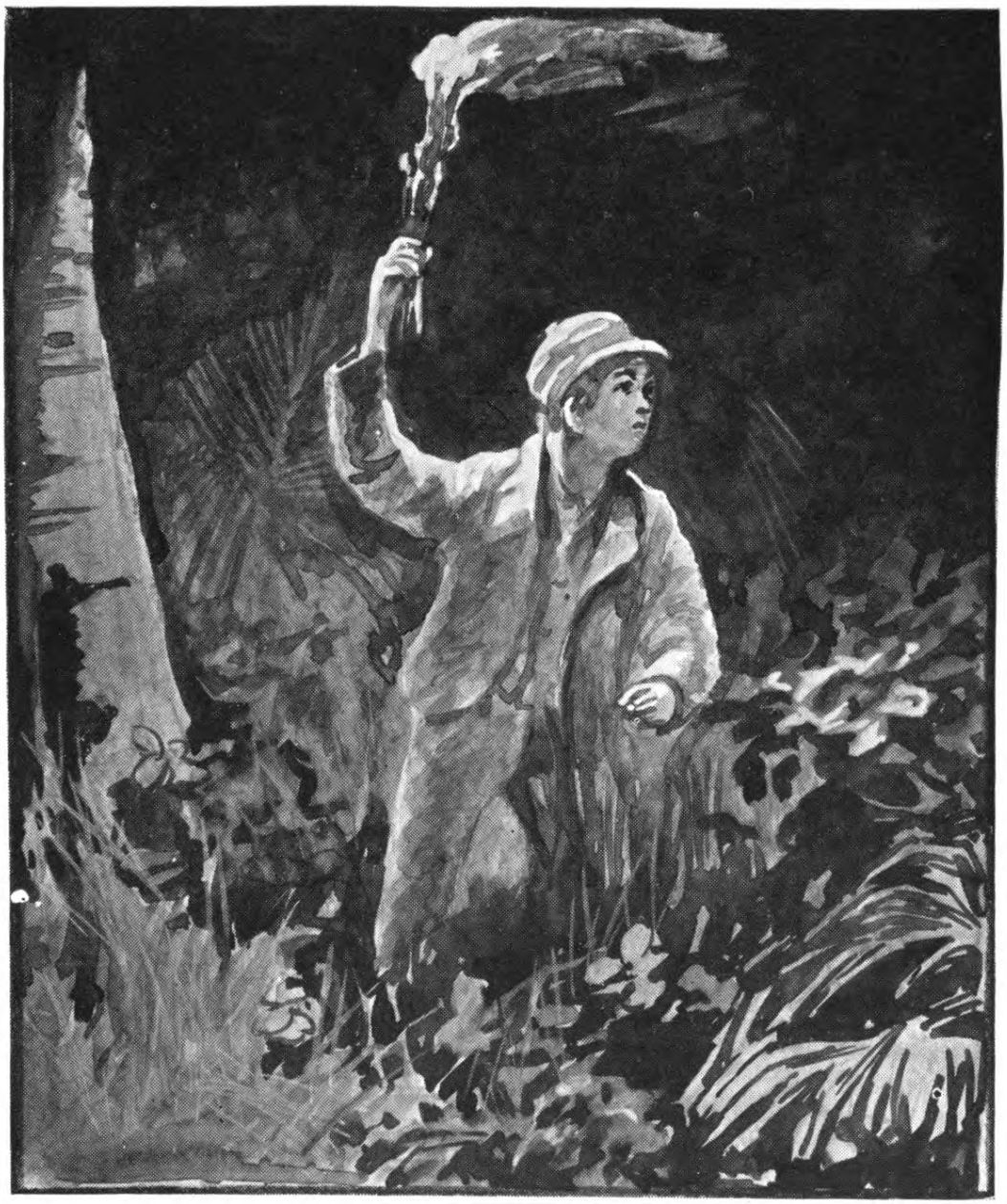
matches. He had used them on board the *Bab Ballad* in lighting the spirit-lamp over which he had heated the captain's coffee during the long stormy night-watches of the voyage. How he wished he had some of that same coffee now! By-the-way, how hungry he was, and wet, and cold, and lonely there in the darkness! Why not have a fire, and something to eat?

In his various trips to and from the beach he had noticed a great pile of drift-wood; and now he started for it to see what material it would yield for a fire. As he stepped out from the tower he found that the rain had ceased and that a few faint stars were attempting to shine, but the wind was still blowing a gale, and the boy shivered until his teeth chattered as it struck through his wet garments and chilled him to the bone. He had some difficulty in finding the drift-pile; but when he did at last stumble across it he was well rewarded for his pains by discovering a plentiful supply of dry wood beneath the wet top layers. Ten minutes later a rousing fire blazed cheerily on the brick floor of the lower room in the old tower; its smoke and sparks were drawn straight up the chimney-like shaft, its light gleamed ruddily out from the

open door-way, and in its welcome heat Delta Bixby turned and steamed himself with great satisfaction.

If only he was not so hungry!

"Hello! what are cocoa-palms for? Cocoa-nuts, of course. Not very nourishing, perhaps, but filling. Possibly this gale has blown some off those tall trees." Thus thinking and talking to himself, Delta cut some fat pine splinters from a stick beside him, lighted a bunch of them, and holding it above his head like a torch, made his way to the cocoa-palm grove. Two big nuts lay on the ground, and a supper was provided for that night at any rate. What a job it was to get the husks off! Delta had no idea they were so thick and tough. When at last this was accomplished, the soft eye at the end of one of the nuts was dug out, and putting his lips to the hole thus made, the boy drained off every drop of the grateful milky fluid that flowed from it. The nuts were cracked by dashing them against the thick walls of the tower; and after eating some of the meat raw, Delta tried roasting it on the shell in a bed of coals. Though it got somewhat burned and smoked, and would not cook very



HOLDING IT UP ABOVE HIS HEAD LIKE A TORCH, HE MADE HIS WAY TO THE COCOA-PALM GROVE

satisfactorily, he declared, as he ate it, that it was not half so bad as it might have been.

After eating this supper the young waif finished the drying of his clothes, and then carefully closing the door and window of his castle, he lay down on the hard floor in the warm firelight, and, with his faded jacket on a block of wood for a pillow, quickly fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

One is not apt to oversleep himself on a brick bed with a log pillow, and by the first streak of dawn our hero was wide awake and trying to straighten out some of the twists and cricks that had got into his neck, his back, his legs, and his arms. How sore, lame, and wretched he felt! But daylight had come, and the sun would soon be up—which was one comfort, at any rate.

But whew! How cold it was! and the last coal of the fire had turned to white ashes. No matter, there was plenty of wood, and in a few minutes more fire number two was blazing on the brick floor. With the genial warmth Delta felt his aches and pains begin to melt away, but at the same time he found that his hunger of the night before had returned with redoubled force. It seemed as though he could eat a cocoanut,

shell and all; and once more he visited the grove.

Now, as on the day before, he noticed beyond the palms the strange trees laden with yellow fruit. While he was wondering whether or not this fruit was good to eat, a flock of little green paroquets settled down on one of the trees and began pecking at it greedily. This was answer enough to his wonderings. What was good for birds certainly must be good for boys, and without further hesitation he gathered a hatful of fine ripe guavas, though it was some time after that before he knew their name. Another addition to his bill of fare was afforded by some wild pawpaws, which the paroquets also taught him were good to eat. When he had carried all these, together with a few more cocoanuts, to the tower, and made a sort of luncheon from them, he strolled down to the beach to see if the ocean could not supply him with something more substantial in the way of edibles. To his great joy he saw a large fish rush into a school of sardines that swarmed by thousands in the edge of the breakers, and so frighten them that numbers of the pretty little fellows leaped from the water and fell upon the wet sand, from which a wave had just retreated. Before another could wash

them back Delta had scooped up a dozen or so in his hands and flung them behind him, beyond reach of the highest waves. By watching carefully the motions of the big fish he was able to repeat this operation several times, and when he finally gathered up the fruits of his toil he found that he had captured about a hundred of the sardines. Finding near the ruins of the keeper's house the wire frame of an old lantern, he made from it a rude broiler. With this he succeeded in cooking about a third of his fish very nicely over a bed of coals; at least, to the famished boy they seemed very nice. What were left he put away for future use.

Feeling greatly refreshed and strengthened by his breakfast, Delta now concluded to climb the winding stair-way to the very top of the tower. From here he would have a good look at the surrounding country, and see what his chances were of escaping from the island, or if there was any way of making himself more comfortable while forced to remain on it.

Although the lamp had long since been removed from the old light-house, the thick glass of its lantern still remained unbroken, and behind this one could obtain a fine view of the sur-

rounding sea and land. A better view was, however, to be had from the narrow iron balcony built around the outside of the lantern, and to this Delta cautiously made his way. Here he was lifted a hundred and fifty feet above the sea-level, and could see for nearly twenty miles in every direction.

On the east, stretching away to the horizon, lay the open sea, flashing and sparkling in the bright sunlight. Its surface was still lashed by the gale, which continued to blow with such force that Delta clung to the iron railing of the balcony with both hands to keep from being hurled from the dizzy height. Several miles away, rising directly from the water, was the slender iron network of the light-house on Fowey Rocks, and the boy felt a sense of companionship in knowing that other human beings were thus close to him, although he could not communicate with them. Between this light-house and Cape Florida columns of spray and foam shooting high into the air every now and then marked the sight of hidden rocks. In noting their position Delta shuddered to think in what peril the *Bab Ballad* must have been when struck by the squall, and no longer wondered that he had been left behind.

CHAPTER IV.

A MYSTERIOUS ARRIVAL.

TO the west, as Delta gazed from his lofty perch on top of the old light-house, lay a magnificent sheet of nearly landlocked water, which the boy knew, from having seen it laid down on the chart, was Biscayne Bay. At this point it is so wide that its western shore presented only an unbroken line of forest, though with a glass Delta would have discovered a few scattered houses close to the water's edge.

On the south, almost at his feet, a broad channel connected the bay with the open sea, and beyond it were several small rocky keys or islands. To the north Key Biscayne stretched its narrow length for five or six miles, and beyond it, in the same direction, lay a similar island known as Virginia Key. On this side the line of white beach, upon which great breakers were thundering, was only lost in a far-distant haze of spray, and its dull monotony was unrelieved

save by a few bleached and broken skeletons of wrecked vessels.

Straight down, almost at the base of the tower, rose the palms out of a thick green undergrowth; but the rest of the key showed only a few sickly shrubs, except where the dark mangrove forest fringed its western shore. Not a sail was in sight; not a human being.

For an hour the boy gazed, now on this side, now on that, without seeing anything to comfort him or that seemed to demand his particular attention. He was about to retrace his steps down the iron stair-way when his eye suddenly fell upon a dark speck a mile or so out at sea, and close to the hidden rocks at which he had shuddered.

Was it a log, or a bit of wreckage, or a boat? Now it was tossed high on the crest of a wave, now hidden in a yawning gulf of water. At first Delta gazed at it with only a slight interest, and wondered if it would be dashed to pieces by the rocky monsters lying in wait for it. Little did he imagine that that tiny, wave-tossed speck was to exercise a controlling influence over his whole future life; but nevertheless it was, and from

that day his fortunes and those which it contained were to run in parallel grooves.

The wind and flooding tide together were bearing it rapidly towards the shore, or rather into the Biscayne Bay channel, and after watching it for five minutes Delta became convinced that it was a boat, but one without mast or sail. He now became intensely interested in its movements, and drew a deep sigh of relief when, in a manner that appeared little short of miraculous, it passed the hidden rocks in safety and entered the smoother waters of the channel.

It was evidently going to pass close to the point of the cape, and Delta's heart beat fast as he thought that he might possibly obtain possession of it.

"No more cocoanut dinners and brick beds then," he said to himself.

It had not occurred to him that anybody would be in that boat, but as it drew nearer he saw that it did contain a confused mass of something. The next few minutes were passed in almost breathless anxiety; then the object seemed to assume a human shape, and he was almost sure that a woman lay in the bottom of the boat with her head resting on one of the thwarts. Then

he left the lantern balcony and tore down the circular iron stair-way with such reckless speed that more than once he very nearly pitched headlong to the bottom. More excited than he had ever been in all his life, the boy made quick time in covering the short distance between the tower and the point past which the boat was drifting. He hoped it would be driven on the beach, but when he again came within sight of it he saw that, unless checked, it would drift on into the bay, and for a moment he was in despair. Then an idea came to him.

"The boat alone is worth trying for," he said to himself, "and I am almost sure there's somebody in it."

Running along the upper edge of the beach until he had got some distance ahead of the boat, he hastily threw off his jacket, trousers, and shoes. The water was very deep, even close to the beach, and for a moment the boy hesitated before plunging in, for he had a wholesome dread of sharks. He scanned the surface of the water anxiously. Not a fin was to be seen. He took the plunge and began swimming rapidly so as to head off the advancing boat.

He was within a few feet of it when a glance

ahead filled him with such horror that he seemed to lose all power of moving hand or foot. One of the wicked-looking, triangular fins that he so greatly dreaded to see, and which had escaped his notice by being on the opposite side of the boat, was cutting swiftly through the water directly towards him. The wily shark to which it belonged was evidently about to cut the swimmer off from his only place of safety.

Delta hesitated only for a second, and then with a sudden impulse born of despair he threw himself forward in the direction of the advancing danger with a loud cry and a tremendous splash. The great fish was an arrant coward, and at the noise instantly sank from sight, as though made of lead. Before he could recover from his fright Delta had reached the boat and was scrambling in over its side. He went sprawling head first under a thwart, and as he drew in his legs the vicious snap of two great jaws within a few inches of them told how narrow had been his escape.

The boy's headlong entrance into the boat was greeted by a frightened cry apparently from a child, and hastily picking himself up, Delta saw a white little face staring at him from a bundle

of wraps that completely enveloped the body to which it belonged. The bundle was tightly clasped in the arms of a black woman who lay in the bottom of the boat either asleep or in a stupor. The boat itself was a peculiar craft built of a dark wood, varnished both outside and in, instead of being painted, and sharp at both ends, like a whale-boat. Both the bow and stern were very high, and in them were large metallic air-tanks. It was very buoyant, but at the same time appeared to be unusually deep in the water, and once inside of it, Delta found that its sides were much higher than he had supposed. He afterwards found that on its keel was a heavy iron shoe. This, together with the weight of its passengers, had kept it from being capsized by the great seas on which it had been tossed all night. At the same time its peculiar construction had allowed but little water to get inside, and rendered it buoyant as a cork.

While Delta was making these observations he was also looking for some means of directing the course of the drifting boat towards shore. The only thing he could find was the blade of a broken oar, but with this he finally succeeded in bringing the boat to land about a quarter of

THE VICIOUS SNAP OF TWO GREAT JAWS TOLD HOW NARROW HAD BEEN HIS ESCAPE

a mile beyond where his clothes had been left. Then he jumped overboard, and wading in water up to his knees, towed it slowly back to the point nearest the light-house.

So long as the boy remained in the boat, the white-faced child, peering from out the bundle of wraps, regarded him with a fixed stare of its great black eyes, but after the first frightened outcry had uttered no sound. When Delta left the boat, and while he was towing it along the beach, the child began to pat the black cheeks of its nurse and to make a pretty little cooing noise. At first this produced no effect upon the woman, but finally her eyes were slowly opened and she heaved a long sigh.

When the excited boy, who had thus succeeded in bringing these strange waifs of the sea to a quiet haven, had slipped on his clothes and was ready to devote his attention to them, he found the woman trying to sit up.

"Let me help you, ma'am," said he, politely, stepping into the boat and offering both hands to the woman.

For answer she only stared at him and clasped the bundle containing the child more closely to her bosom. At the same time she succeeded in

seating herself on the thwart against which her head had rested.

"I don't live here," continued Delta, in nowise rebuffed at her ignoring him, "and was only left by mistake yesterday. I've got a very nice light-house, though, with a fire in it, and if you can only manage to walk to it you will have a chance to dry your wet clothes and get warm."

The woman continued to stare vacantly, but made no answer; and again putting its head out from the wraps, the child also stared at him.

Delta began to feel greatly embarrassed, but decided to make one more attempt at conversation, and, with a pleasant smile, said,

"I guess you're awfully hungry, and if you'll come up to my light-house I've got some fish and cocoanuts and two kinds of yellow apples to eat, and perhaps we can find something else."

As he finished speaking the woman bent her head over the bundle in her arms, and burst into a violent fit of weeping, in which the child joined with shrill cries.

Delta sprang from the boat and stood on the beach watching them, utterly at a loss as to what he should do next.

"She seems kind of loony," he said to him-

self. "I shouldn't wonder if all they've gone through had turned her head."

"Ay! ay de mi! Ay! ay de mi!" sobbed the woman.

After a few minutes the sobs and cries became less violent, and finally ceased altogether. Then the woman, apparently strengthened by her outburst, managed to stand up, and, with the child in her arms, looked hesitatingly about her.

Delta sprang forward and again offered his hand to help her, saying, soothingly,

"You mustn't take it so hard, ma'am. You've had a tough time, I know; but you're all right now, and if you can only walk up to my lighthouse I'll make you so comfortable that you'll forget all about it."

Poor Delta was so delighted at once more having human companions that all his troubles were for the moment forgotten, and he could not imagine how any one else could be unhappy.

This time the woman accepted the aid of the out-stretched hand, and stepped from the boat to the beach; but she no sooner felt the firm earth under her feet than she threw herself on her knees, and, still holding the child in her arms, began to pray. At least Delta thought

from her actions that she must be praying, though not one word of what she said could he understand. For the first time in his life he was listening to West Indian Spanish, but it might have been Choctaw or Hebrew for all that he knew to the contrary.

When the woman had finished her prayer, which had been one of thankfulness for their wonderful deliverance from death, she rose to her feet and looked at Delta inquiringly.

"I guess you must be a foreigner, ma'am," said he.

"Jo no entendez, señor," answered the woman.

"I said I guessed you must be a foreigner," repeated Delta, speaking very loud and distinctly.

"Jo tengo hambre, señor; si, mucha hambre," said the woman, gazing about her, and evidently wondering where this strange young man lived, and whether or not he was going to give them anything to eat.

"No, you can't *see much* from here," replied Delta, eagerly, thinking that he had at last caught a glimpse of her meaning; "but, as I said before, I've got a light-house, a very nice light-house," he repeated so slowly that he was sure

she must understand him, "and if you'll follow me I'll take you to it."

As he had pointed in the direction of the tower while speaking, and now began to walk towards it, the woman followed him. Seeing this, Delta began to think that perhaps they might understand each other and get along nicely, after all.

"I've only got to speak slow enough," he said to himself, and then, turning to the woman, he asked,

"How did you get into such a fix, ma'am? I mean in the boat all alone, you know."

"Si, señor," answered the woman, vaguely.

"What I mean to say is," said Delta, in a loud tone and very slowly, "are you wrecked or were you out for pleasure—just sailing around for fun, you know?"

"Jo no entendez, señor. Tienes usted un poco de pan y leche por esta póbre niña?"

"Well, now, that's a nice sort of an answer to a plain question, isn't it?" said Delta, stopping and looking at the woman in great perplexity. "Perhaps you were a slave, and have run away and brought your master's little girl or boy, I don't which it is, with you, and are afraid to have me find out about it. But you needn't be. It's

none of my business, and I wouldn't be the one to tell on you, anyway."

"Que dijo usted?" asked the woman, meekly, quite bewildered by this torrent of unintelligible words.

"I can understand when you say 'you stay,'" answered Delta, "and as I've said several times, I'm *staying* in a light-house just now, and I think the sooner we get there the better it will be for you and the child."

Thus saying, he started on again towards the tower, and the woman followed him.

When they reached the tower the woman gazed up at it anxiously, and evidently thought it a very queer sort of a dwelling, but she followed Delta inside, and smiled when she saw the bed of hot coals upon which her young guide was throwing some dry sticks. She placed her bundle on the floor, and unwinding wrap after wrap from it, finally revealed a little girl of about three years old, exquisitely dressed and perfectly dry and warm. The child was lifted to her feet, her crumpled dress was straightened by a few pulls and pats, and, while the nurse prepared to dry her own water-soaked skirts, she

stood perfectly still where she had been placed and stared at Delta.

Having made a good fire, the boy proceeded to cook some of the little fish he had caught that morning. Seeing what he was about, the woman gently took the rude broiler from his hand, and raking a few coals to one side, gave him to understand that she would take charge of the culinary operations.

This Delta was more than willing she should do; for, never having had any practice before that morning, he was not at all proud of his skill as a cook. Leaving her thus employed, and going outside, he first went back to the boat, and pulling its bow as high as he could on the beach, made its painter fast to a mangrove root, so that it could not possibly drift away. Then going to his orchard, as he called it, he gathered all that he could carry of guavas, pawpaws, and cocoanuts, and laden with them returned to the tower.

The woman was just cooking the last of the fish, and had a fine lot of them, nicely browned, piled on a large green leaf at her side. Delta handed the little girl a guava, which she looked at a moment and then ate hungrily.

"Have another," said he, stooping to give it to her.

Before taking it the child flung both her arms about his neck and kissed him.

"Chita! Chita, quieta, Isabel," exclaimed the nurse, in a chiding tone, but smiling at the same time.

"Oh, so your name's Isabel, is it?" said Delta, rising hastily and with a very flushed face. "Well, Isabel, I can understand your language at any rate. You say you want us to be friends, and I say, 'All right, so we will from this time on, for always.' "

While he spoke Isabel ate her second guava as demurely as though she had done nothing at all unusual or surprising, but she looked steadily into the boy's face, and he felt sure that she understood him.

Delta was amazed to see how quickly and easily the woman, with the aid of his jack-knife, husked a cocoanut and divided its shell into two equal parts, each of which would make a nice drinking-cup when the meat was removed from it.

When the meal was ready the woman and child so evidently expected him to sit down and

eat with them that he did so, although, remembering his hearty breakfast, he thought he should be able to only make believe eat for the sake of being polite. At first the two guests were so hungry that they ate in silence, but after a while Isabel said something in her pretty, lisping baby Spanish to Delta; the nurse tried to explain to him what it was, and he answered them both in good English, at which, though they didn't understand a word he said, they both laughed heartily. Delta laughed in sympathy, and so the meal proceeded, to the accompaniment of a great deal of unintelligible merriment.

While they thus lingered around the "festive board," as Delta called the large green leaf that served as a fish-platter, he discovered two things. One was that the black woman's name was Josefa. The other was that, even if you fancy you are not hungry, you can eat twice as much in pleasant company as you can when you know you are really very hungry, but are forced to eat alone.

CHAPTER V.

A SIGNAL-LIGHT AND ITS RESULTS.

THE complete disappearance of all the food Delta had provided for himself, during the meal described in the preceding chapter, reminded him that it was his duty to go in search of more for future meals, and thus he began to realize what it is to be the head of a family. He told Josefa that he thought both she and Isabel were sadly in need of rest, and that they had better sleep for an hour or two. This he did by pointing at them both, laying his head on his clasped hands, shutting his eyes, and snoring, all of which seemed to amuse them very much.

He then said, "I am going down-town now, and as I shall have to visit the market, the grocery, the furniture shop, the coal wharf, and several other places, I may be absent for some time. While I am away you will have the whole house to yourselves, and shall not be disturbed." This long speech was made by pointing first to himself, then away up along the beach, and by

finally going outside and closing the door softly behind him.

For the next two hours he was a very busy boy, "keeping both the charitable Be and the industrious Be at work," as he said to himself. First he collected a quantity of dry sea-weed, which he piled in the lee of the tower at one side of the door-way, saying as he did so, "I guess we won't sleep on any more brick beds while there's sea-weed on the beach."

Then he hunted for a mile or more along the water's edge for empty boxes of a certain size, and at length had five, such as he wanted, collected near the door-way of the tower; "a table, three chairs for family use, and an extra one for company," as he expressed it.

He also gathered more fruit and cocoanuts, but could not discover any of the little fish that had been so plentiful earlier in the day. While he was thus engaged his thoughts were also very busy concerning the arrival of the boat and its queer occupants. Where could they have come from, he wondered; and how on earth did a black woman, who can't speak English, and a little girl, happen to be out at sea all alone in an open boat? The more he thought over this

the more he was puzzled, and he finally decided to "give it up," at least until he could teach his new companions English, or they could teach him their language, whatever it was, when, perhaps, the mystery might be solved.

Another question that interested him greatly was, what was to become of them all? The fish seemed to be beyond his reach; the cocoanuts were nearly gone; he did not believe they could live very long on the little yellow apples, and, so far as he knew, there was not anything else to eat on the whole island.

On one of his trips from the beach to the tower Delta brought with him a huge conch-shell that he had discovered in the sand, and which he thought might amuse Isabel. This time he found both his guests standing in the open door-way watching for him. The several shawls and rugs that had been wrapped around the little girl were spread out in the sun to dry, and all the things he had collected during his various journeys to the beach had been carried inside the tower.

"Well, you have been busy!" said Delta, as he looked into the room and saw two beds made of the dried sea-weed, the boxes placed so as to

serve as seats, and the whole place nicely swept and cleaned. One of the beds was made down under the iron stairway that here formed a little alcove, which was afterwards curtained off with a shawl and thus converted into a tiny room by itself for Josefa and Isabel.

Josefa watched his face anxiously as he examined what she had done.

"Bueno?" she said, interrogatively.

"Bueno," said Delta, after her, though he had no idea of what the word meant.

At this she laughed and seemed much pleased.

Isabel was delighted with the beautiful pink and white colors of the conch-shell he had brought her, and Josefa appreciated it as much as she, though in another way.

She made signs to Delta that it, or rather what had once been in it, was good to eat.

"Well, I didn't know that," said the boy, when he at last comprehended her meaning, "but perhaps I can find some more with the animals in them."

With this he started towards the beach to look, and the others followed him. Alone he would have searched long without finding any of the live conchs, but Josefa, going to a long sand-bar

that the ebbing tide had left nearly bare, pointed out a number that he waded in and got. The outside of these shells was of a dirty green color, and they looked like so many small rocks in the water. They were very hard, and had to be crushed with a heavy stone before the mollusks inside, which somewhat resembled large periwinkles, could be got out. The meat looked white and nice, and when Josefa cooked it for supper that night it proved to be fully as nice as it had looked.

Before dark Delta proceeded to put into execution a plan of which he had been thinking all day. It was nothing more nor less than to light up the old lantern at the top of the tower, and thus attract the attention of anybody who might happened to be in that neighborhood. For this purpose he carried a quantity of dry wood up the long stair-way, and as soon as it fell dark made a fine blaze on the iron platform that stood in the centre of the lantern. The ruddy light from that blaze streamed forth far and wide, and so far as attracting attention went, it was a great success; but its immediate results were as unexpected as they were alarming to the three inmates of the old tower.

The light was kept burning for about an hour, and then, concluding that if it had not been seen and understood by that time it would not be at all, Delta let it die down, and rejoined Josefa and Isabel at the foot of the stair-way. In the mean time it had been noticed and had occasioned much excitement in several directions.

The keepers of the light-house on Fowey Rocks had seen and been greatly disturbed by it. They feared it might be the work of unprincipled wreckers or beach-combers who were thus trying to lure some vessel to destruction. They also feared that it might be a signal of distress, denoting that a wreck had already taken place and that the crew were in need of assistance. But for the great seas that, dashing against their own structure, rendered the launching of their boat an absolute impossibility, two of them would have gone over to the cape through the darkness and storm to discover its meaning.

On the main-land, far across the bay, among the few scattered settlers of that wild country, the sudden lighting of the tall beacon that had been dark for so many years caused the greatest commotion. Row-boats, pulled by lusty oarsmen, dashed back and forth along the mile or

more of the little settlement, and hurried consultations were held at the ends of the three or four small wind-shaken, spray-swept wharves. As a result of these, within fifteen minutes after the first appearance of the light, a small but strongly built schooner, under reefed sails, and carrying a crew of half a dozen of the sturdy boatmen of that coast, was buffeting the heavy seas and working a zigzag course across the bay in the very teeth of the gale. To these people the light meant but one thing; and that was a wreck from which not only were lives to be saved but salvage money was to be made, and many useful articles, such as would add greatly to the comfort of their homes, were to be picked up.

As the stanch little schooner fought its way foot by foot against wind and sea, the conversation of those who crouched for shelter in her shallow cockpit, with their eyes fixed on the distant glimmering light, was somewhat after this fashion:

"Perhaps it's another wine wrack, Bill."

"I hope not; we've got enough wine now to last us one while."

"Or a pork wrack," suggested another.

"Well, pork is good in its way, but steady pork

gets monotonous, and we hain't near finished up what we got from the September pork wrack yet. Why, there's enough lard left up to 'Lard Island' to grease the hull settlement."

"All I'm hopin' is that it ain't no timber vessel," said a third, "'cause there's more yaller pine an' mahogany an' cedar on the beach a'ready than we can handle. Cotton would suit me better'n anything."

"Cotton be blowed!" growled the man at the helm, taking a short pipe from his mouth as he spoke. "There ain't no sort of a wrack sent to us by a kind Providence as can lay alongside of a gineral cargo wrack. Them's what'll suit me every time."

From all this it must not be thought that the only object these men had in going to wrecks was to make money out of them. They are an honest, brave, self-respecting set of people, who will venture forth at any time in the wildest storm to help one another or succor those unfortunates who may be driven on their coasts, and they will gladly risk their own lives upon the chance of saving those of others.

Aside from working on the occasional wrecks that occur upon their coast, and to which they

render invaluable assistance, these settlers gain a livelihood by sponging, turtling, and fishing along the reef, growing pineapples, cocoanuts, and bananas, and by raising the earliest of early vegetables for Northern markets. What sponges they get are sent to Key West, one hundred and fifty miles away, where they are sold at auction to the highest bidders. The green turtles find their way, lying on their backs with small wooden pillows under their heads and with their flippers tied together, to the far-distant restaurants of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, while loggerheads are reserved for home consumption.

As there is no ice on Biscayne Bay, nor means of obtaining any, its myriads of fine table-fish, among which are the pompano, red-snappers, Spanish mackerel, kingfish, and hundreds more, are only caught for home use. Its waters also abound in the fierce and gamy tarpon, the savage barracouta, the ugly-looking devil-fish, the huge, ungainly jewfish, the vampire-like stingaree, and in monster eels that are often mistaken for sea-serpents. Here, too, are found the shy manatee, or sea-cow, and the only crocodiles known to exist within the limits of the United States.

Pineapples are raised in great quantities on the keys that lie between the bay and the ocean on the south as well as on the main-land, and these are shipped directly to New York in smacks that run up along the coast in May and June. Within a few years cocoanuts have been planted by the hundreds of thousands on all sides of the bay, and on its western shore are many of these graceful trees in full bearing.

On the southern keys, as well as on the western coast, the land is composed of rocky ridges interspersed with tracts of the richest soil, and among the rocks, which are of decomposing coral, as well as in the black soil, all garden vegetables and tropical fruits grow to perfection.

The high main-land ridge extends back to the Everglades, from five to ten miles distant from the shore of the bay, and it is pierced by a number of small but very beautiful rivers, whose banks are lined with a luxuriant growth of tropical forest foliage. Over this favored region the easterly trade-winds, laden with coolness and health, blow, with but few variations, from December until May. During the summer months, however, the country is so infested with incredibly dense swarms of mosquitoes and other sting-

ing insects that life to human beings, protected as they are by houses and nets, becomes a burden. To cattle and horses this season is a period of such torment as not unfrequently results in death. It was, therefore, very fortunate for the three waifs in Key Biscayne that they became involuntary residents of this coast during the winter instead of in the summer.

As the wreckers' schooner approached Cape Florida and neared the banks on the eastern side of the bay the sea grew smoother, but at the same time the gale increased in strength, until her crew began to fear for the safety of their rigging. Finally they entered a narrow and crooked channel, and in beating through it skimmed close to the submerged banks, first on one side, then on the other, in a manner that, considering the darkness, revealed skilful seamanship and a most intimate knowledge of his bearings on the part of the helmsman.

"Look out, Jim!" shouted one of the crew to him. "You're mighty close to Huckleberry Shoal."

"I know where I am," was the answer. "Ready, about!"

The schooner spun around on her heel, her

sails filled sharply on the new tack, and as she heeled far over before the blast, there was a sudden "crack," and her jib, with parted halyard, came down by the run. Her after-sails instantly threw her into the wind, and before anything could be done to prevent it she had again filled away on her former tack and was driven hard and fast on "Huckleberry Shoal," the most famous, the most treacherous, and the most dreaded on the whole bay. In vain her crew sprang overboard and tried to push her off. She would not budge, and there was nothing for it but to wait as patiently as might be until the rising tide should float her.

The wreckers settled themselves for their long wait as comfortably as circumstances would permit, repaired the broken halyard, lighted their pipes, and indulged in speculations as to the meaning of the light that had led them to this place, but which had now disappeared.

Suddenly a new direction was given to their thoughts by the sound of piercing cries, borne to their ears on the gale from the direction of Cape Florida and the old tower.

Besides these people and those at Fowey Rocks, another group of persons, who were much

nearer the old light-house than either of the others, had been amazed at the appearance of the blazing beacon and were curious as to its cause. These were two families of Seminole Indians, who had come down from the Everglades in their long cypress dugouts for a few days' salt-water fishing. There were about a dozen of them, all told. For two days the four men of the party had been spearing barracouta —a fine large fish that seeks its prey in shallow waters; and the women and children had been kept busy cleaning, drying, and salting the captured fish. They had been ready to return across the bay when the coming on of the gale forced them to remain on the eastern shore in the shelter of the thick mangroves. The day had been spent by them on Key Biscayne, not more than a mile from Delta's lighthouse; but in the evening Coacoochee and Matlo, the heads of the two families, went in a canoe, a short distance from shore, to spear fish by the glare of light-wood torches. As soon as they got beyond the shadow of the mangroves they noticed the light in the old tower, and hurried back to tell the others of it and prepare to go and discover its cause. They knew, as well as the

white settlers on the bay, that if there was a wreck those who reached it first would make the most out of it.

After Delta considered that his beacon had burned sufficiently long and had returned to the room at the foot of the stair-way, he thought how much pleasanter it was to see the figures of his new-found companions in misfortune seated beside the cheerful fire than it was to be there all alone. It really gave to the gloomy old tower quite a home-like appearance, and if only the island were a little better supplied with the necessaries of life he thought it would not be such a bad place to live in after all.

Filled with such fancies, the boy, being of a very sociable turn of mind, seated himself upon a box with his back to the door, and began to talk to Josefa and Isabel. They also talked, or at least Josefa did, for Isabel, held in her nurse's arms, was blinking sleepily in the warm firelight, and wondering why her mamma no longer came to put her in bed as she used to. Just as the conversation—of which neither of the speakers understood a word the other was saying—began to flag for lack of interest, the child suddenly uttered a cry of fear, and sitting bolt upright,

stared at something behind Delta. Her cry was immediately echoed by a frightened exclamation from the nurse, and turning quickly to learn its cause, the boy saw standing in the open door-way, and fully revealed by the firelight, the form of an Indian. Delta could also dimly see another Indian figure in the darkness beyond this one, and his heart seemed to cease its beating as he realized that they had fallen into the hands of a band of savages.

The Indian in the door-way was a tall, fine-looking fellow, and the smooth bronze skin of his naked limbs glistened in the red firelight. He wore a gaudy hunting-shirt belted at the waist, and on his head was a turban of red and yellow shawls. In his belt were a hunting-knife and a number of cartridges for the rifle that rested in the hollow his left arm. If Delta had not been too frightened to observe it closely he would have seen that the face of this handsome savage bore no trace of cruelty, but, on the contrary, was good-natured and pleasant in its expression. And yet this was Coacoochee the Seminole.

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTURED BY SEMINOLES.

COACOOCHEE, the Seminole who stood in the door-way of the old light-house, was a son of that famous chief, Coacoochee, who waged so bitter a warfare in defence of his dearly loved Florida home, and the rights of his people, against the armies of the United States forty years ago. The son had fought in more than one deadly battle by his father's side, and when, through treachery, the chief was delivered into the hands of his enemies, and removed, with most of his tribe, to a distant land, the son and a few others fled to the unassailable fastnesses of the Everglades. Here they have since lived in peace and independence, shunning, so far as possible, intercourse with the few whites who have gradually settled along the sea-coasts of this far Southern country. They occasionally visit the settlement store for the purpose of exchanging furs, venison, alligator hides, the fine vegetables, of which they raise quantities, or

starch, which they make from the wild arrow-root, for sugar, coffee, calico, and other articles of civilization of which they have learned the use. In this way some of them have picked up a little English, and a fair knowledge of the ways of the whites.

Of them all Coacoochee was the wisest counsellor, as well as the most skilful hunter. He could understand English fairly well, and speak it, if he chose, far better than he would acknowledge. He had seen the cities, and realized the power of the whites, and he knew that should their anger against the Indians ever again be aroused to the point of fighting, his people would be swept from the face of the earth. He therefore taught them to bear many insults and outrages, such as the stealing of their cattle, the shooting of their hogs, and even the occasional whipping by South Florida cow-boys of Indians who ventured to protest against these wrongs. When he heard of these things Coacoochee's blood boiled as hotly as that of any of his young men; but still he counselled submission, and his counsels were listened to.

When Coacoochee, standing in the door-way, saw that his presence was discovered, he stepped

into the room and, holding out his hand to Delta, said, "How!" very gravely; then, after looking keenly at each person and object in the room, he sprang up the iron stair-way and made his way rapidly to the top of the tower.

Upon this being left to themselves, Delta's first impulse was to induce his companions to fly with him, and seek a hiding-place from the savages in the thick underbrush outside. This plan was, however, abandoned as soon as it was formed; for, on again looking towards the doorway, he saw framed in it another Indian figure. This time it was that of old Matlo, the war-chief of the Seminoles, who had fought desperately against the whites in former years, and whose scowling features showed the enmity he still bore them.

Seeing that there was no chance of escape, Delta wisely sat still and awaited further developments. But how he did wish that he had not lighted that fire in the lantern! Josefa also sat motionless and dumb, while little Isabel buried her face in her nurse's bosom.

When Coacoochee returned from his visit to the top of the tower his face wore a puzzled expression. He had expected to find somebody

up there. Speaking to Delta he said, pointing upward,

"Your fire?"

"Yes."

"Wreck—where?" and the speaker waved his hand comprehensively towards the beach.

"No wreck," answered Delta. And then, emboldened by the Indian's manner, and the discovery that he understood English, he explained in a few words their presence in the old tower, and wondered if the Indian caught the meaning of what he said.

Apparently Coacoochee understood the whole situation; for, after a few minutes' talk with Matlo, he again turned to Delta and said, slowly and distinctly,

"You stay here; starve! Heap big sleep; die plenty. Holewagus! You go Injun house; eat plenty, plenty; Hindleste! Bimeby you go white man's house—maybe Key Wes'. Find fader—find brudder. Uncah?"

Delta had no difficulty in understanding this proposition, but he took a minute to think over the situation before answering it. He felt almost sure that, as the Indian said, they would starve if they stayed there much longer. He was

not certain that any white men lived in that country, or, if there were any, whether they would come to his rescue. He had often heard his father say that so long as you dealt honestly by an Indian he would deal honestly in turn, and keep any promise he made. If he did not go willingly with these Indians they could easily compel him to do so; therefore he finally concluded to make the best of the situation and yield to their wishes. Having reached this decision, he said to Coacoochee,

"If we go with you now, will you take us to Key West the first chance you get?"

"Uncah. Key Wes', bimeby; uncah," answered the Indian, eagerly.

"Well," said Delta, "I don't know what 'uncah' means, but you seem to be a pretty good sort of an Indian, and I don't believe we'll be any worse off by going with you than we would by staying here. Don't you think, though, we'd better wait here till morning?"

"Go now. Littly way, Injun house," was the answer.

Upon discovering the true state of affairs in the old light-house, and being disappointed of a wreck, Coacoochee's shrewd mind had con-

ceived the idea of caring for these castaways until by some means their friends should learn of their whereabouts and come in search of them; then he should hope to be handsomely rewarded for his kindness to them. He only made the very natural mistake of supposing that they had all been left there by accident, from some passing vessel, at the same time. Having obtained Matlo's consent to his scheme, he was anxious to get them away from the light-house before any of the white settlers on the bay, who he knew must have seen Delta's signal-light, could reach the spot and spoil his plans.

During all this time Josefa sat in a state of terror, clasping the child tightly in her arms and watching every movement of the Indians. When Delta had made up his mind that the best thing to do was to go with them apparently of his own accord, instead of waiting for them to force him to do so, he attempted to convey the same idea by signs to the black woman, but without success. Coacoochee also tried to make her understand, and talked to her both in Seminole and in English, but she only shrank away from him and refused to move. Finally the Indian stooped, snatched the child from her, and

with it in his arms darted through the open doorway.

Like a tigress robbed of her young, the woman sprang after him, uttering wild cries as she disappeared in the darkness. Delta ran after them with his mind full of misgivings; and old Matlo, after gathering up the shawls and rugs, followed more slowly, with a grim smile playing over his swarthy features.

The Indian canoe was drawn up close to where Delta had made the boat fast, and as Coacoochee stepped into it and laid his burden gently down in the bottom Josefa sprang in after him and snatched it up. At the same instant the Indian pushed off and began to pole rapidly up the coast in the shadow of the mangroves. A little later Delta and Matlo followed in the boat, which the latter propelled by means of a long push-pole.

Josefa's cries, borne upon the gale, had been distinctly heard on board the wreckers' schooner, and had greatly excited her crew. When, therefore, an hour or so later, the rising tide floated them off from the shoal, and they effected a landing on the cape, they were greatly bewildered to find the old tower as lonely and de-

serted as ever. The smouldering embers of a fire showed it to have been recently occupied, and the cries they had heard sounded like those of a woman. Their bewilderment became tinged with an indefinable dread, and rather than remain in so mysterious a place they returned to the schooner to wait for daylight.

Coacoochee's keen eyes had detected the approach of the wrecking schooner, and he rejoiced both at the timeliness of his departure and the success that had thus far attended his plans. The little camp on the edge of the mangroves was soon reached, and here, to Delta's great surprise, after a few words from the two Indians who had come with him, preparations were at once begun for a hasty night journey. He was not allowed to leave the boat; but Josefa, still holding her recovered treasure in her arms, and apparently caring for nothing else, was transferred from the canoe to it. The squaws and pickaninnies, the dried fish, and the simple camp outfit were placed in the two canoes, and within five minutes, although the work had been done in total darkness, all was in readiness for departure. Coacoochee and Matlo led the way in the boat, which was followed by the

canoes, each pushed rapidly but silently by one of the younger man and a squaw.

Delta was much interested in this pushing of canoes, for he had supposed that this style of craft was always paddled. He soon discovered that for use in the shallow waters of South Florida the long, slender push-pole, with a sort of a foot or enlargement at the lower end, to prevent its sinking in the sandy bottom, is a much more effective implement than the paddle.

During the rest of the night the little fleet continued on its way up the coast until the red dawn began to paint the eastern sky. The tiny square-sails were hoisted on push-pole masts in the canoes, a blanket was rigged to answer a similar purpose in the boat, and, leaving the shelter of the mangroves, the three craft were headed out into the open waters and stood across the bay, which at this point was not more than a mile wide. Delta had caught snatches of sleep through the night, but he was wide-awake now; and as the boat flew over the choppy seas, dead before the wind, he forgot all his anxieties in a thoroughly boy-like enjoyment of the situation, and was filled with admiration of the manner

in which Coacoochee guided the course of the bounding craft with a light steering-paddle.

Poor Josefa still sat in the bottom of the boat, resting against a thwart in almost the same position she had occupied during the preceding night, when tossed upon the billows of the awful open sea. She still held the child in her arms, and on her face had settled a look of stony despair, while in her eyes was the same expression of fear with which the apparition of Coacoochee in the door-way of the old tower had filled them. The poor thing understood nothing save that she and her precious charge were being carried farther and farther way from their home and friends, and that they were at the mercy of a band of savages. All the tales she had ever heard of the cruelty and treachery of such people were fresh in her mind, and she expected nothing less than death, or at best a life of slavery at their hands. Had they not already tried to steal Isabel from her? and would they not repeat the attempt at the first opportunity? It is no wonder that the black woman was unhappy.

As the boat neared the western shore of the bay Delta thought it was about to be driven among the trees of a thick forest that grew to

the water's edge without any intervening beach. He was bracing himself for the crash, when suddenly a sharp turn to the right revealed an unexpected opening, and in an instant more the boat shot into the calm waters of a narrow river. Now the blanket sail was lowered and the push-poles were again called into requisition to force the boat up-stream against the sluggish current.

For some distance their course lay between forests of dark moss-hung cypress-trees, amid the trunks of which the black waters of a swamp could be seen spreading away for unknown distances. Soon the scene changed, and the cypress trunks were replaced by walls of white rock, colored in many places a delicate pink by a growth of microscopic fungus. The face of these rocks was draped with festoons of vines drooping to the water, some of which bore flowers of brilliant colors. The crowning beauty of the river was a low massive arch of rock that spanned it from bank to bank about a mile from its mouth, and thus formed a wonderful natural bridge. This arch was so low that the occupants of the boat were obliged to crouch in the bottom as it passed underneath, and to Delta it seemed as though the whole structure might at

any moment give way and crush them. A mile or so above the arch the boat was run ashore in the midst of a fleet of canoes that marked the landing-place of an Indian village, and for the present the journeyings of the tired travellers were at an end.

They were welcomed by the vociferous barking of a crowd of lean, flea-bitten dogs, that came tearing down to the landing before they had stepped from the boat, and the dogs were followed by a number of shouting, scantily clad children. These drove away the dogs, and were in turn reduced to silence by the sight of strangers and a word from Coacoochee.

This reception and the surrounding scene were so exactly like those of which Delta had read in descriptions of white captives being carried into Indian villages that for a moment he wondered if, after all, he were not a captive in the hands of these savages, with some awful fate awaiting him. One look at Coacoochee's smiling face quickly dispelled his fears, and he willingly walked up to the village, keeping close beside poor trembling Josefa in order to reassure her.

The village consisted of palmetto huts, several canvas tents, and a number of flat, grass-

thatched roofs supported by poles, that served as shelters from the sun and took the place of the piazzas and porches of more civilized dwellings. Coacoochee led Delta to one of these shelters, beneath which were spread a number of deer-skins, and bade him sit down. The only other occupant of the place was an Indian so lean and shrunken, and bearing marks of such great age, that he looked more like a mummy than a living human being; only his eyes gave him the appearance of life; they were as bright and black as ever, and seeing them fixed inquisitively upon Delta, Coacoochee stooped respectfully beside him and spoke a few words very loudly in his ear. They evidently satisfied the old man, for he said "How" very feebly, and extended a claw-like hand to Delta in token of friendship.

With an air of pride, as if exhibiting some notable curiosity, Coacoochee said, pointing to the venerable Indian,

"Him Old Aleck. Old! old! plenty! plenty! Hundred forty year him."

Delta thought there must be some mistake in this, but, from his appearance, was convinced that the wizened creature beside him must be

one of the very oldest human beings in the world, and accordingly regarded him with great interest and respect.*

In the mean time Josefa and Isabel had been taken into a tent by some of the Indian squaws, who cared for them so kindly that even the black woman's fears began to disappear, and little Isabel's face became wreathed in sunny smiles.

While Delta, with Coacoochee and Matlo, still sat under Old Aleck's shelter, a most welcome breakfast of sofkee, hot venison steaks, coontie (Indian starch, or arrow-root), roasted yams, and small cakes of coarse corn-meal was brought them by some of the women, who had begun cooking it as soon as the boats appeared. To Delta's sharpened appetite this seemed a meal fit for a prince, and he wondered if anybody else in the world had such good things to eat as these Indians. To be sure, he did not greatly relish the sofkee, which he afterwards discovered to be the principal dish of all Seminole meals, and which is composed of coontie,

* Old Aleck died last March (1888), mourned by all the Seminoles of the Everglades. I have been repeatedly assured by some of the most intelligent and trustworthy members of the tribe that he was 141 years old at the time of his death. They declare that he took part in the battle of New Orleans (1814), and was already an old man at that time.—K. M.

meat, fish, potatoes, corn, and whatever else the cook happens to have on hand, all boiled together. It is eaten from the kettle in which it is prepared, and the feasters use a single wooden spoon, or ladle, which is passed from mouth to mouth. After the men have eaten all they can, the women and children attack it with the same wooden spoon, and finally the kettle is turned over to the dogs to lick clean; but it is afterwards washed, for in all their habits the Florida Seminoles are neater and more cleanly than most of the Indians who dwell farther north.

After breakfast, in spite of the novelty of the situation, Delta lay down on a deer-skin bed in one of the palmetto huts, and slept so soundly and so long that when he awoke he found the pine-trees casting long shadows from the west, and that it was again time to eat. During the early evening he tried to sit up with the men who gathered around the camp-fires and gravely smoked their pipes, but drowsiness again overcame him, and again turning in, he slept right through the night. At sunrise he sprang from his couch as full of strength and energy as though he had never felt weariness or endured a hardship.

As he left the hut, almost the first persons he saw were Josefa and Isabel, standing outside their tent. The child seemed overjoyed at the sight of him, and, running to him, she slipped her hand into his and began to talk to him in her baby Spanish. How he wished then that he had studied other things besides geography when he had a chance!—modern languages, for instance.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE EVERGLADES.—LOSS OF THE "SANTA CATALINA."

FOR several weeks Delta enjoyed his life among the Seminoles immensely, it was so full of novelty and constant surprises. He learned to hunt deer, bears, and alligators, and was taught to prepare their skins for use. He began to attain some skill in imitating the calls of wild animals, which some of his young Indian friends could do so perfectly as to deceive the most wary of forest inhabitants. Above all, he learned to respect and admire many traits of character in the people among whom a strange chance had thrown him. He discovered that in all dealings among themselves they were strictly honest, that the men were kind to their women and children and seemed to be very fond of them, that the women were gentle and modest, that old people were held in great respect among them and tenderly cared for, and that both men and women were always industrious and cheer-

ful. They seemed to possess and exercise all his father's Be's except one, which was "Be temperate." They loved liquor, and would drink to excess whenever they could procure it—which, however, was very seldom.

The boy was amazed to see how skilfully the men work out their canoes from huge cypress logs, with no tools but an axe and a hatchet. They cut down a tree, select a log from it of the right length, and hew off its upper surface. On this a rough plan of the proposed boat is drawn in double lines that indicate the thickness of the sides, and the outside of the hull is rudely shaped with an axe. Much of the inside can be hollowed out by fire, but all the nice finishing work is done with a hatchet. In this work Delta's boat-building experience in his father's shop came into play, and he was able to give the Indians some new ideas as to model and rig.

Josefa, too, was busy during this time; for as soon as she discovered that she was treated as a guest rather than as a captive, and that no attempt was made to take Isabel from her, she entered heartily into the work of the Indian women. Although they could do plain sewing

as well as any white seamstress, and were provided with needles, thread, scissors, and thimbles, she was able to teach them a number of new patterns and stitches, with which they were greatly pleased. She in turn learned to make starch from the carrot-like coontie roots that grow wild in the piney woods, to extract bright colors from other roots and barks, and to use certain herbs in certain forms of illness. At the same time the poor woman had many a secret cry, and longed to be restored to her home.

Although little Isabel occasionally cried for her papa and mamma, and begged Josefa to take her to them, she was very happy with her new-found friends, and her merry laughter could be heard at all hours of the day as she played with the Indian children of her own age. With these she seemed to have established a most perfect understanding, and she ruled them like a little queen.

Thus, while Delta sometimes wondered when he was to go to Key West, or whether he would by-and-by turn into a regular Indian, the time passed quickly and pleasantly with the waifs until one evening when Coacoochee returned to the village after an absence of several days. He

appeared anxious, and if Delta could have heard and understood the chief's conversation with Matlo, as the two sat and smoked together by a small camp-fire, he too would have been interested and excited. Long and earnestly did the two chiefs talk that night, and early the next morning Coacoochee said to Delta,

"Me go catch allapatta—one, two, six day. You come 'long?"

Delta readily understood this to be an invitation to go on an alligator hunt that would occupy six days, and gladly accepted it.

Coacoochee appeared much gratified at this readiness on the part of his white guest to accompany him, and saying "hindleste" (good), "come," he at once led to the river-bank, and Delta followed him. The boy was surprised to find that preparations for the hunt had already been made, and that two canoes, in one of which were three young Indians and in the other only one, were ready to start. In each of these canoes, besides the guns of the hunters, their few camp utensils, and a small supply of provisions, was a bag of salt to be used in preserving the alligator hides that they hoped to obtain.

The party started, heading up the river, as

soon as Coacoochee and the white lad had taken their places, the former in the bow and the latter in the middle of the canoe which had contained but one Indian, and in another minute the village was lost to view. The current of the stream was much swifter in this part than below the village, and at last two Indians were obliged to jump overboard from each canoe, and, wading, drag it slowly and laboriously up a long stretch of foaming rapids.

At the upper end of these a short rest was taken on the edge of that vast and mysterious expanse of watery country known as the Everglades. For miles in every direction, except that from which they had just come, they saw only illimitable stretches of tall brown saw-grass, that undulated in the wind like billows of the sea. It was interspersed with a ragged growth of stunted button-wood and custard-apple shrubs, and here and there, showing purple in the distance, rose a few mound-like islands. Except in the very dryest seasons the Everglades are covered with two or three feet of water, in which the saw-grass grows, and which, resting above a rocky bottom, is always clear and fresh. The elevation of the 'Glades has been found, by

actual measurement, to be about twenty feet above the surface of the salt water in Biscayne Bay, to which their fresh waters flow through a dozen small rivers and innumerable underground streams that boil up along the coast in the form of springs. The whole body of saw-grass in the 'Glades is intersected by a perfect mesh of narrow, sluggish water-ways, whose course is marked by a dense growth of large dark-green lily-pads, called in Florida "bonnets." Although a stranger would quickly become bewildered and lost amid the intricacies of these watery lanes, the Seminoles know them as we know the streets of the towns in which we live, and make use of them to visit all parts of the 'Glades, or the big cypress swamp that lies beyond them on the west.

After a short rest, the canoes of Coacoochee's hunting party were forced into one of these 'Glade paths, and, crashing over the broad "bonnets," that rose again with a dripping "swish" after they had passed, they were immediately enclosed by the wall of brown grass that rose higher than the men's heads even when they stood up. All day long the canoes were steadily pushed forward, passing from one waterway to

another, until, shortly before sunset, the distant hummock, or island, from which the hunt was to be conducted was reached. Delta was delighted to step once more on solid ground, or, rather, rock—for the hummock was a great mound of loose coral rock covered with trees—and stretch his limbs while the evening meal was being cooked and a camp prepared.

Here they remained for five days, hunting only at night by the light of fat pine torches, of which a plentiful supply had been brought from the piney woods. The hours of daylight were passed in skinning the alligators shot the night before, in eating, and in sleeping. They met with several adventures, and when, on the sixth day of the trip, the white boy found himself again on the river, and approaching the Indian village that now began to seem very much like home, he felt that his life had been enriched by its most interesting if not its most valuable chapter of experience.

When the returning hunters were within a mile of the camp Coacoochee sent the other canoe ahead while he and those with him stopped on the pretext of spearing a few fish. They delayed thus for about half an hour and then went

on. Matlo was awaiting Coacoochee's arrival, and, drawing him aside as he stepped ashore, he began to talk eagerly to him.

As Delta walked into the village a little Indian girl ran out to meet him, took hold of his hand, began to talk to him in Spanish, and showed the greatest delight at seeing him. The puzzled boy had to look at her twice before he could make out who she was. Then, catching her up in his arms and kissing her, he cried,

"Why, Isabel! What has happened to you? I thought you were a young Indian."

She explained it, but he could not understand, and it was some days before he knew what had caused the change in her appearance.

Soon after being brought to the Indian village from the old light-house, Josefa had put away Isabel's fine clothes and made for her a simple long-skirted dress of dark blue calico like those worn by the little Indian girls. On the morning of the day Delta had started on the alligator hunt, the child had gone to play with her Indian friends. Soon afterwards she came running back, exclaiming in high glee,

"Now I little Injun girl!" or what meant the same thing in Spanish.

Josefa was horrified to find that the milk-white skin of the child, from the top of her head down to her pink little toes and the tips of her tiny fingers, had been stained a deep reddish brown, the exact color of a young Indian. It would not wash off, which fact disturbed Josefa greatly.

That same day a row-boat came slowly up the river, and in it were two of the settlers on the bay, who searched the village in vain for a white boy who, they said, had been lost on Cape Florida about a month before, and was now supposed to be among the Indians.

In order that several of the preceding incidents may be more clearly understood, it is now necessary to look back to the night on which the good brig *Bab Ballad* was struck by a black squall off Cape Florida, and, for her own safety, was obliged to scud before it, leaving Delta Bixby to his fate. While the brig was enveloped in the almost impenetrable veil of mist and rain that accompanied the squall, and was being driven with the speed of a race-horse before the blast, all of a sudden there loomed up, dead ahead of her, and not more than a hundred feet away, the black hull of a steamer.

The hoarse order of "Port your helm! Hard a-port!" on board the brig was so promptly obeyed by the men at the wheel that her course was slightly altered, and instead of crashing into the steamer head on, she struck her a terrible glancing blow on the port bow. Then the brig went grinding and tearing along the iron side the whole length of the great black hull until at last she reached the steamer's stern and broke clear from it. In another moment, swept onward by the mighty breath of the tempest, she had vanished, a sorry-looking wreck, in the thick folds of driving mist.

With the first blow from the brig one of the steamer's iron bow-plates was torn from its fastenings and curled back upon itself like a sheet of card-board. Such a gaping hole was thus left for the mad entrance of the storm-lashed waters that she began almost immediately to settle by the head, and it became quickly apparent to all on board that she could not float many minutes longer.

This steamer was one of a Spanish line plying between Havana and New York, and although she carried a heavy freight, there were but two passengers in her cabin. These were the three-

year old daughter of Señor Alvarez Valoise, a sugar broker of Cardenas, representing there the great New York house of Hobson's Sons & Co., and her nurse. The child's mother, who was an American lady and sister to Mr. John Hobson, had gone to New York some time before, for medical treatment, and now her little Isabel, in charge of the faithful Josefa, was on her way to join her.

Of all the boats carried by the foundering steamer, none offered such chances for safety as the light clinker-built lifeboat that hung from a pair of after-davits. It had belonged to the steam-yacht of Señor Valoise, and had been built for him in New York under the supervision of his brother-in-law, Mr. John Hobson. At the last moment before the steamer's departure from Havana the anxious father, whose business would not allow him to leave Cuba at that time, had begged the captain to exchange one of his own ordinary boats for this life-boat. The only condition that he attached to the exchange was that in case of any disaster during the present voyage the life-boat should be used to save his daughter and her nurse. The captain had accepted the offer gladly, saying that he had by

far the best of the bargain. Then the great ship had steamed slowly out of the beautiful land-locked harbor, and past grim old Moro Castle, never again to return.

The Spanish crew of the steamer were completely demoralized by the suddenness and extent of the disaster that had overtaken them, and in spite of the efforts of their officers were lost to all control. Finding that he could not save his ship, the captain bethought himself of his passengers and of his promise to Señor Valoise.

Josefa and the little Isabel were placed in the new lifeboat, and a quantity of wraps were hurriedly tossed in after them. Then the boat was lowered to the water, where it had been planned that its crew should reach it by sliding down the ropes of the falls. The tackle, adjusted for another boat, was, however, not properly fitted to this one. Thus, no sooner did she touch the water than the hooks loosed themselves, and, before the horrified spectators on the steamer's deck realized what had happened, a huge wave had lifted the light boat like an autumn leaf and borne it from their sight. Five minutes later the great steamer foundered, and the tiny speck, tossed on mountainous billows or sunk in

black, watery valleys through the long hours of the night, was all that remained to tell of its fate.

The stanch *Bab Ballad* did not founder, but was so seriously injured that all that night and all the next day her crew worked for their lives at the pumps. When they were finally driven, on the second day after the collision, so close to the Cuban coast that they were enabled to gain the shelter of the harbor of Havana, they were profoundly grateful for an escape that appeared almost miraculous. From Havana Captain Brace sent the following letter to Mr. John Hobson, in New York:

"RESPECTED SIR,—I have the honor to report that the brig *Bab Ballad,* after leaving New York, made a tedious run against head gales to the latitude of Cape Florida, where it fell calm. Being in need of water, I sent a boat to the cape to procure a fresh supply. In it went Delta Bixby, the lad whom you put aboard. He must have wandered from the party and got lost, for when the boat was ready to come off he had disappeared. As a nasty-looking squall was driving in at the time, I was obliged to look to the safety of the brig and make a run of it. Have no doubt the boy is all right, as I am informed there are white settlers in the vicinity of Cape Florida who would look out for him.

"Two hours later, about latitude 25 degrees north, with

weather very thick, we came into collision with an iron steamer, name unknown, heading north by east. Heard no whistle from her until after we struck. Do not think we injured her, as she apparently continued on her course. Immediately after striking, were driven off again by squall, and at once lost her in the drift and darkness.

"The *Ballad* was damaged to the extent of about one thousand dollars, and I have brought her to this port for repairs. Shall await your orders here, and have the honor to be, "Very respectfully yours,

"ISAAC BRACE, *Master.*"

The receipt of this letter caused Mr. John Hobson to knit his brows, and sit for some time in troubled thought. He was troubled because his vessel was injured, and because of her delay in reaching Cardenas and obtaining a cargo while raw sugar was steadily advancing in price in the New York market. He was troubled on account of her collision with a steamer, and wished he knew the steamer's name and what had become of her. Could it have been the one in which his little niece, Isabel, was on her way to New York? The very thought made him feel sick at heart, for to this child he had transferred all the warm affection once lavished upon his own little daughter. What should he say to his sister, Isabel's mother, who would meet him when he went home that evening with great ques-

tioning eyes that asked what she could not express in words? The steamer was now four days overdue, and each night he found it harder to go home.

Amid all his other anxieties Mr. Hobson did not forget Delta Bixby, the manly boy in whom he had taken so great an interest, and who, as he now learned, had been left alone on a desolate coast. He did not blame Captain Brace for the action he had taken, but he felt that upon himself rested the responsibility of discovering the whereabouts of the boy and of rescuing him from what he feared was a very unhappy situation.

Thus thinking, he dictated a letter to Mr. Hiram Bixby, whose address he had obtained from Delta, telling him what he had learned of the boy's adventures, and saying that whatever could be done to find him should be undertaken at once, and that he would keep Mr. Bixby informed of all movements made and news received. Then calling a clerk, Mr. Hobson bade him go and obtain all possible information relative to the coast and country in the vicinity of Cape Florida, find out the name of the post-

office nearest to it, whether or not there were any Government life-saving stations on that coast, and if any news had been received in the city regarding the missing steamer *Santa Catalina.*

CHAPTER VIII.

COACOOCHEE WINS THE REWARD.

AFTER being absent about an hour the clerk whom Mr. Hobson had sent out after information returned, and reported as follows: "No news of the *Santa Catalina.* Two post-offices in the neighborhood of Cape Florida on Biscayne Bay; namely, Cocoanut Grove and Miami. No life-saving stations on that coast, but five houses of refuge, placed at intervals of twenty miles, nearest one to old Cape Florida light-house fifteen miles from it. All wrecks in that district reported to collector at Key West."

There was nothing particularly cheering or hopeful in all this; but enough to work upon, and Mr. Hobson at once dictated the following letter to his stenographer:

"OFFICE OF HOBSON'S SONS & CO.,
"Burling Slip, New York City.

"SIR,—On the 3d inst. the steamer *Santa Catalina* of the Gomez line sailed from Havana for New York. Although now four days overdue at this port, nothing has been

heard from her since date of sailing. It is feared that she may have been lost in the vicinity of Cape Florida. Do you know of any wreck occurring on that coast about that time?

"Also, on the 4th inst. an American lad about sixteen years of age was left on Cape Florida by the brig *Bab Ballad,* from New York to Cardenas. For his discovery and restoration to his friends a reward of $100 is hereby offered by the undersigned.

"Any other information you may possess, or any suggestions you have to offer regarding either of the above subjects of inquiry, will be gratefully received by,

"Yours very truly, JOHN HOBSON."

Of this letter Mr. Hobson caused a dozen copies to be made, and had one sent to the customs collector at Key West, one to the lighthouse inspector at the same place, one to each of the postmasters on Biscayne Bay, and one to the keeper of each of the houses of refuge on the South Florida coast.

Several weeks of anxious, tedious suspense and waiting followed before answers to these letters began to be received. During this time the poor young mother in John Hobson's house grew thinner and paler with each day that came and passed without news of her lost darling. Her only comforts were the ever-hopeful words of her brother and the daily telegrams that

found their way beneath the sea from her husband in distant Cuba. It was pitiful to see her sitting in the great Fifth Avenue mansion in the dress of deep mourning that she now wore as a sign that she had given up all hope; and honest John Hobson's heart ached for her.

Even when the letters from his unknown correspondents began to arrive, he at first told her nothing of their contents. They contained news of several wrecks on that lonesome coast, of a quantity of floating wreckage that had evidently come from a steamer, and of a crushed ship's boat whose half-obliterated name still showed the letters *"talina."*

Thus his fears of the loss of the *Santa Catalina* received confirmation, and he too began to abandon all hope of ever again seeing the child who was so dear to him.

In regard to Delta he also received some news; for one of his letters from Biscayne Bay described the mysterious light seen in the old tower on Cape Florida, and the cries heard by the wreckers who went over from the main-land to discover its cause. It told of their search by daylight for the originator of the fire, and of their finding in the sand near the tower the

prints of a boy's boot, those of some Indian moccasins, and of a bare foot, supposed to be that of an Indian squaw. The wreckers had also found the remains of an Indian fishing-camp about a mile from the lighthouse, and, by putting all these facts together, had come to the conclusion that the boy concerning whom he had written had fallen in and gone off with a party of Seminoles. The letter went on to say that in the hope of obtaining his offered reward parties of white men were searching all the Indian villages in the vicinity for traces of the missing boy. It closed with a few words copied from a bit of paper, evidently part of a letter picked up by the wreckers in the old tower. These were:

"Be honest."

"Be industrious.

"Be temperate."

"Be charitable."

"That settles who the boy was," said Mr. Hobson to himself, for Delta had shown him his father's letter, and he remembered the four Be's. "If I were only down there myself I'd not only find that boy, but in some way or other I'd discover what had become of the *Santa Catalina.* And I might—yes, I might—find the body of—"

Here Mr. Hobson's voice was broken by a sort of a choking sob that would not allow him to complete his sentence.

Just then who should appear at the door of the private office but Capt. Isaac Brace of the brig *Bab Ballad*. The repairing and refitting of the vessel in Havana had been finished, he had returned to New York with a cargo of sugar, and being now ready to sail again, had come to Mr. Hobson for final instructions.

"You're just the man I wanted to see, Brace," exclaimed Mr. Hobson, offering the new-comer his hand with the kindly air which so endeared him to all in his employ. "I have just heard from Biscayne Bay, and I fear our young friend Delta Bixby has fallen into the hands of the Indians who live in the Everglades. Now, I want you to run into this bay on your way down and find that boy. I don't care if it takes you a month to do it; it's our fault he got into such a fix, you know, and somehow or other we must get him out of it."

"All right, sir; I'll find him if he's to be found."

"And," continued Mr. Hobson, "I want you to search diligently for any traces of the *Santa*

Catalina. I am more than ever persuaded, as I said to you the other day, that she was the steamer you were in collision with."

"I begin to fear so myself, sir."

"Well, we won't talk about it," said Mr. Hobson; "it's too awful even to think of. Not that I blame you, captain, for I don't a particle; you did the best you could, and if what we fear is really so, it is because the Lord willed it. I wish I were going with you, though. Somehow, I feel as though you would discover something down there that will greatly lighten this weary burden of ours."

"Why don't you come with us, sir? We can make you as comfortable in the old *Ballad* as though you were in a yacht."

"Why don't I go with you! Why don't I go?" exclaimed the other, starting to his feet in the excitement caused by this new idea. "Thunder and guns, captain! but that's a thought worth considering. I don't know but what I will go. Yes, sir, I believe I will; there's no reason why I shouldn't take a little vacation about this time, and I'd rather be there helping in your search than to be here waiting for news."

So it was settled that the cabin of the *Bab*

Ballad should be put in order to receive a no less distinguished passenger than her owner, and the owner of a dozen more like her. And when he went home that night Mr. Hobson told his sister all the news he had received, and of his intended trip.

She listened quietly, and when he had finished said very gently but firmly,

"If you go, John, I must go too."

In vain did he tell her of the discomforts of the voyage, and explain how very little information regarding their lost dear one he hoped to gain on that far-away coast. She had but the one answer,

"If you go, John, I must go too;" and finally she prevailed.

Thus it happened that when, two days later, the *Bab Ballad* again sailed from New York for Biscayne Bay she carried as passengers in her newly furnished cabin Mr. John Hobson and his sister, Mrs. Valoise.

After Mr. Hobson's letters reached Biscayne Bay every Indian who came into the settlement was questioned concerning his knowledge of any white boy found on the beach. They had, however, all been warned by Coacoochee and Matlo

not to answer such questions, and so no information was gained from them. Even Coacoochee was subjected to a strict cross-examination; but although he smilingly and promptly answered "uncah" (yes) to every question asked of him, he refused to commit himself to any more definite statement.

By listening to the conversation of the white men about the store at Miami he picked up the information that the boy's father had offered a hundred dollars reward for his recovery. When, a few days later, a white man living near the upper end of the bay met and offered him ten dollars if he would tell where the boy was, the Indian only smiled and said,

"Uncah!" White man hundred dol; Injun ten dol; holewagus!" and turning, walked off with an inward chuckle.

He felt convinced that if he only waited patiently, some way would be made clear to him by which he could obtain the whole reward without sharing it with his white neighbors, and he knew that he could afford to wait as well as anybody in the world. He was greatly puzzled about one thing, which was the fact that no mention was made of the little girl whom he had

found in Delta's company. He had decided, to his own satisfaction, that they were brother and sister, who, as he understood the boy's story, had been left on Cape Florida, to be called for at some future and indefinite time. It was, moreover, the richness of her clothing that had suggested to him the advisability of caring for her and those with her until their friends should come for them. From his intercourse with the whites he knew only too well that should they once obtain possession of his guests he might ask in vain for any share of the expected reward for their recovery, and only be laughed at for asking. So he kept his own counsel, showed the castaways every kindness and attention, was careful that they should not know that any white people dwelt in that region, and bided his time. He had learned of the expected visit of the white settlers to his village in time to carry Delta off on a long hunt, and have Isabel's fair skin stained in imitation of those of the Indian children, before they arrived. Thus they had noticed no unusual presence in the village, and had gone away as wise as they came, but no wiser. After this Coacoochee had posted certain of his young men along the bay where they could watch the

white settlements without being noticed, while he himself remained in the village and kept watch over his guests.

At last his patience was rewarded, for one evening one of his scouts came breathlessly into the village and reported the arrival at Cape Florida of a vessel from which men had visited the settlements to make inquiries for a lost white boy.

Coacoochee was not surprised; all had happened as he had expected, and he began to calmly make arrangements for visiting the strange vessel and to take his guests with him when all was ready. He found Delta, and said to him,

"Fader come; big ship Cape Florid. Me go, you go, pickaninny go, hiwahlustee go; bimeby; now; uncah."

Delta did not clearly understand, but by this time the chief's kindness had so won his confidence that he was ready to accompany him anywhere. On this occasion he had no difficulty in persuading Josefa and Isabel to go with him in the boat, for they in turn had learned to have perfect faith in him. As they left the village both he and they were surprised at the warmth of affection exhibited by their simple entertain-

ers, men, women, and children, in bidding them good-by.

The next morning, soon after breakfast had been eaten on board the *Bab Ballad,* anchored just inside of Cape Florida, a lady and gentleman were pacing the after-deck together, talking as they walked, and frequently pointing to the lonely shaft of the old light-house, which rose a short distance inland from the beach. From it their attention was diverted by the appearance of two small boats that seemed to be approaching the brig from under the shadows of the mangrove-bushes that lined the shore. At first they regarded them with a languid curiosity, but suddenly the lady seized the gentleman's arm, and in stifled accents exclaimed,

"That first boat, John! What is it?"

" 'Pon my word," answered the gentleman, adjusting his eye-glass and looking closely, "I don't know. Why, it is—no, it can't be! Yes, it is the very life-boat I had built for Valoise's yacht."

"And, John, don't you see a child in it, a child in a white dress? It's my child! My Isabel; I know it is! Thank God! thank God! Isabel!"

The last word was nearly a shriek, and as she

uttered it the lady sank unconscious into the strong but trembling arms of her brother.

When she recovered she was lying on a sofa in the brig's cabin, while baby arms were clasped about her neck and a baby voice was whispering soft Spanish terms of endearment in her ear.

An hour later Coacoochee and those with him departed, more than satisfied with the liberal gifts showered upon them by the white strangers in addition to the promised reward of one hundred dollars for the recovery of Delta Bixby. Soon afterwards the *Bab Ballad* spread her white wings and sailed for Cardenas, which port she reached in safety two days later.

There Delta now occupies a position in the establishment of Señor Valoise, where he is rapidly acquiring a thorough knowledge of the sugar business, and from which he expects soon to be promoted. He is also learning to speak Spanish so readily that Isabel has no longer any difficulty in making him understand her.

He keeps the four Be's presented to him by his father constantly busy, and with every day discovers that they possess a new value. Of course he sent a long and detailed account of his adventures among the Seminoles back to the little

Wisconsin village on the shore of Lake Michigan as soon as he got to where there was a post-office. Since then he has been in constant correspondence with his father, and the latest letters between them have been full of a new topic. Delta believes the boats built by his father to be greatly superior to those of the native workmen in either Cardenas or Havana. So he is urging Mr. Bixby to leave the home business in charge of his brother Alpha, and to come and see for himself if there is not a fine opening for a Yankee boat-builder in the "Ever Faithful Isle."

Mr. Bixby is very proud of his boy in Cuba, and is never tired of telling his neighbors of how the lad is winning his way to fortune by industry and perseverance. He also throws out hints that he does not know but what he may go out and see the boy before long, and if he likes the country perhaps he may be induced to settle there.

Thus the adventures of the three castaways were ended most happily. To this day, however, the whole affair is an unexplained mystery to the white settlers of Biscayne Bay, and they shake their heads dubiously as they talk it over among themselves. That they heard nothing further

from Mr. Hobson was not that gentleman's fault; for, before sailing from Cape Florida, he intrusted a letter to Coacoochee to be delivered to the correspondent who had written him so fully concerning the lost white boy and the wreck of the *Santa Catalina.* Before it could be delivered to him this man had left that part of the country and removed to a distant State, and the Indian, for reasons only known to himself, saw fit to destroy the letter rather than to deliver it to any other than the person for whom it was intended.

The Indians enjoy keeping their harmless secret, and if any of the readers of this tale were to ask them, not one would admit having ever heard of the waifs of Key Biscayne.

THE END.