

Castlemon Harry

**Frank Nelson in the Forecastle.
Or, The Sportman's Club Among
the Whalers**



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CHAPTER I

A BACKWOODSMAN'S IDEAS

"I DECLARE this is almost like coming into another world, isn't it?"

"Yes, and I, for one, am glad to get back. I like a good horse, and no one enjoys a few days' shooting and fishing better than I do; but when I get tired of the saddle and the woods, I like to see the blue water and feel the solid planks of a yacht's deck under my feet once more. We had a good time though, in spite of all our adventures and mishaps."

"We certainly did. I am like Perk, who, after he had been down into the Cave of the Winds, under Niagara Falls, said he would do it again for no money, but seeing that he *had* been down, he would not sell his experience at any price. I couldn't be hired to make that same trip to Fort Bolton again – being "snowed up" was the worst part of it to me – but since it is all over and we are safely out of it, I am glad we went."

This was a portion of the conversation carried on by our friends Archie, Fred and Eugene, as they sat in the main-cross-trees of the Stranger, swinging their feet in the air and looking out over the shipping anchored off North Point Dock, in the harbor of San Francisco. They had only just arrived that day, their trip across the mountains being happily ended. They had discarded the half-savage, half-civilized costumes they had worn during their sojourn in the wilderness and substituted pea-jackets for their hunting-shirts, light shoes for their high-top boots, and natty tarpaulins for their slouch hats. They looked as though they had just come out of some lady's band-box, and one and all declared that it was most refreshing to find themselves dressed up like white folks once more.

The first thing these three uneasy youngsters did after they had donned their "shore clothes," and put the suits they had worn in the mountains carefully away in their trunks for safe-keeping, was to run all over the vessel, looking into every locker and corner, just as they had done when they first saw her on the stocks at New Orleans, and the next to mount to the cross-trees to survey the harbor. Here they had sat for half an hour, enjoying the prospect spread out before them, and talking over their recent adventures and exploits. The other members of the Club, Walter, Frank Nelson, George Le Dell and the rest, were seated on the quarter-deck with Uncle Dick, talking to Dick Lewis and old Bob Kelly.

Dick and Bob were objects of great interest to the sailors who composed the Stranger's crew. They stared at everything with wide-open eyes, and were as much out of place on the schooner's deck as the jolly tars would have been in the mountains from which the backwoodsmen had just arrived.

The Club had had a varied and eventful experience during the comparatively short time that they had been absent from the Stranger, and even now the hearts of some of them would beat a trifle faster whenever they thought of what they had passed through. Walter drew a long breath every time he recalled his experience in Potter's rancho; Fred and Eugene shivered and drew their collars up around their ears when they thought of the sight presented to their gaze on the day they set out from their camp under the cliffs, to show the Pike and his family the way to Fort Bolton, and imagined that they could see the air filled with driving snow, and could hear the roaring of the wind as it swept the prairie, just as they had seen it and heard it on that long-to-be-remembered afternoon. Archie grew excited and elated whenever he thought of the way he had captured the wild horse, and then exasperated when he remembered how he had lost him before he had had a chance to try even one

race with his cousin. Frank shrugged his shoulders when any of his companions called him "Chinny Billy," as they often did, and thanked his lucky stars that he was well out of the predicament which the genuine Chinny Billy had so nearly got him into, when he denounced him as an impostor and spy in the presence of all the members of Potter's gang; and even Uncle Dick Gaylord, hardened as he was by a long life of adventure, did not like to recall the feelings of anxiety and suspense that he had experienced on more than one occasion, during the journey to Bolton and back. The two trappers were probably the only ones in the party for whom the last few months had no especial interest. Their lives were made up of just such scenes and incidents, and they never thought of them again, unless something happened to bring them vividly to their recollection.

The last night that the friends passed at Fort Bolton was given up to enjoyment. The colonel and major entertained Uncle Dick at their quarters, and the younger officers took charge of the boys. After supper it was noticed that some of the officers and their guests distributed themselves in little groups about the room, that the members of each group carried on a very earnest conversation in a low tone of voice, and that various little keepsakes were passed from one to the other, which each promised to preserve in remembrance of the giver. The gifts that passed between Frank and Lieutenant Gaylord were the most valuable of any. These two young fellows had been fast friends and almost constant companions ever since the night on which the lieutenant recaptured Dick Lewis after his flight from the guard house, and arrested Frank for assisting him to make his escape. Frank had something he knew the lieutenant wanted, and that was the splendid horse which Potter had given him. Frank could not take the animal around the world with him, and besides he was already the happy owner of a steed which was just as handsome and swift, and which held a much higher place in his affections. That was Roderick. It was Uncle Dick's intention to travel on horseback until the party reached a point from which they could continue their journey by stage or railroad, and then sell off their stock – their wagon, which would have been an almost useless encumbrance to them, now that the roads were blocked with snow, having been exchanged for pack mules – Frank would then have no further use for his horse, so he offered him to the lieutenant, who was glad to accept him.

The journey to San Francisco was made without the occurrence of any exciting or noteworthy incidents. Among them all they managed to shoot a few black-tails, and one grizzly bear, whose skin and claws were preserved by the old members of the Club as trophies. They found the snow fully as deep as they expected, the travelling difficult, and the weather extremely cold; but their progress was steady, although slow, until they reached the railroad, and then in a few hours they found themselves in an almost tropical climate.

When they reached the railroad, Dick and Old Bob would have taken leave of them, but the boys would not listen to it. They were determined that, if they could have their own way, the trappers should remain with them for a long time to come. They owed much to these two men, and as they could not repay them in any other way, they would take them around the world, introducing them to scenes and people of which they had never dreamed. Of course this idea originated with rattle-brained Eugene Gaylord, and Uncle Dick, who could not find it in his heart to refuse his nephews anything they asked for, consented to the arrangement, though not without a good deal of grumbling.

"They'll only be in the way, Eugene," said the old sailor. "They just fit the mountains and the prairie – they were made for them; but how will they look on the deck of the Stranger? There isn't room enough aboard our little craft for that giant, Louis."

"O, Uncle, there are two or three empty bunks in the forecastle, and they can sleep there as well as not," replied Eugene.

"But they will be so uneasy that they'll not enjoy themselves in the least," continued Uncle Dick. "They will be frightened to death when they find themselves out of sight of land, and the men will be playing tricks on them all the while."

"But the men mustn't play tricks on them. We won't let them; and besides it would be dangerous. As for being out of sight of land, that need not trouble them. They'll not be in half as much danger

as they were while they were with Potter's gang. Then think of the fun we'll have, Uncle! Didn't you notice how they opened their eyes the other night when Bab was telling them of the elephants we expect to see in India?"

"Well, well! do as you please," said the old sailor. "If they are foolish enough to go, I shall have a fine time of it among you all; I can see that plainly." And then he turned away to hunt up Frank Nelson, to whom he always went when he had anything on his mind.

Eugene having gained his point went straight to Archie and Fred, who declared that it was the best thing they ever heard of. The matter was laid before the trappers with as little delay as possible, and the proposition almost took their breath away. They opened their mouths and eyes and looked wonderingly at each other, but said nothing. Archie thought that was enough for one day, and although his friends wanted an immediate answer, he succeeded in inducing them to retire and leave the trappers to themselves. He thought it best to give them leisure to turn the matter over in their minds (it seemed to be more than they could grasp at once) and go to them for an answer at some future time.

Dick and old Bob seemed to grow timid as they approached the confines of civilization, but they were coaxed on board the train, and when the party reached San Francisco, they were taken off to the Stranger. The matter of the voyage around the world had been brought for up discussion a few times, but Dick had found his tongue at last, and declared that it was not to be thought of. The boys knew better than to press the subject, and hoped that time would accomplish what arguments could never do. A few hours on board the Stranger in the harbor, where vessels were constantly coming and going, might increase their confidence, while it familiarized them in some slight degree with life on ship-board, and perhaps they could then be induced to change their minds. Archie had tried to persuade Dick to follow him and his companions to the cross-trees; but the trapper, after glancing down at his colossal proportions, and then up at the ratlines, which looked no larger than so many threads, declared that the ropes wouldn't bear his weight, and remained below.

"Now, this feels natural!" exclaimed Featherweight swinging back and forth on his dizzy perch with such apparent recklessness that Dick Lewis, who now and then looked up at him, fairly shook in his moccasins; "and I am ready for new adventures and new sights beyond the seas. Our fellows can say, what the books tell us comparatively few American travellers can say, and that is, we have seen the most of the wonders of our own country. I never expect to see anything grander than the Yosemite Valley. I wonder how long it will be before Uncle Dick will hoist the signal for sailing?"

"Just as soon as the stores are aboard," said Eugene. "We may get off to-morrow."

"Will Dick and Bob go with us?"

"No," said Archie. "We might as well give that up. And since I have come to think of it, I don't want them to go unless they are perfectly willing to do so."

"Nor I," said Eugene. "If it frightens them so badly to travel on a railroad train, what would be their feelings when they found the schooner tossing about on such waves as we saw coming around the Horn? I shall urge them no more."

"They have been talking to Frank about it," continued Fred. "They always go to him and believe every word he says – that is, almost every word."

"Ah! yes; I was going to put that in," said Archie. "They don't like to believe that the world is round. They don't say so with their mouths, but they do with their eyes."

"And they don't know what to think about elephants as large as that house of Potter's, and lions and tigers, and snakes twenty feet long," said Fred.

"And a whale bothers them," chimed in Eugene; "and Dick laughed the other day when I told him about a flying-fish."

"What's going on down there?" asked Archie, as the sound of voices in animated conversation came up from the deck.

The boys looked below and saw that the group, which they had last seen scattered over the quarter-deck, were gathered about Dick Lewis, who appeared to be making them a speech. Now and then he illustrated his remarks by pointing to something he had placed at his feet; but the boys could not see what it was, for the Club were crowded about it and hid it from view. They were missing something, that was evident; but they did not intend to miss any more of it, and it was but the work of a few seconds to swing themselves out of the crosstrees on to the ratlines, and descend to the deck. They ran up to the group, and found that the object over which the trapper was holding forth was simply a mess-pan filled with water.

"Them stories you've been a tellin' seems wonderful to me an' ole Bob, who never heard the like afore," Dick was saying as the boys came up. "We don't conspute 'em, 'cause bein' uneducated men, we never had no book larnin', an' don't know nothing outside the mountains an' the prairy. Now, you tell me that thar's three times as much water on the 'arth as thar is ground; that you're goin' to start from Fr'isco an' sail clean around it in this yere little boat, an' that if me an' ole Bob'll go with you, we won't even know that we're sailing round the world. Won't we know when we come to the edge?"

"There isn't any edge to it," said Frank.

"Sho! Thar can't help bein' an edge if the world is round, can thar? This yere," said Dick, pointing to the pan of water, "is the sea; an' this yere," he continued, fumbling in the pockets of his hunting shirt, "is the 'arth."

As he spoke he drew out a piece of hard tack, which he had rudely shaped with his knife to represent his idea of the rotundity of the earth. The corners were cut off, making the biscuit nearly round, and there was a piece clipped out of the side of it, in shape something like a bottle with a very short neck and wide body, to represent the Golden Gate and the harbor of San Francisco. This miniature world Dick placed in the middle of the pan of water, and then straightened up and looked triumphantly at his audience. Eugene glanced at it, choked back a laugh and then rushed off to find the steward, while the trapper went on with his illustration.

"Now, thar's the 'arth," said he, placing his finger on the biscuit, "flat like a pan-cake, as anybody can see it is, that's ever been out on the prairy, an' round like *you* say it is. Here is the sea all around it, an' here's Fr'isco. Now, after you go out of the Golden Gate an' start to sail round the 'arth," said Dick, moving his long finger through the water around the biscuit, "can't you see the edge all the way round? I can understand that, which wasn't so very plain to me a few days ago, but now comes something I can't see into. You say the 'arth turns over onct every day, but that don't by no means stand to reason, 'cause jest see what would happen," – he went on, placing his finger under the biscuit and raising one edge of it out of the water. "If it turned over, one side of it would keep gettin' higher an' higher all the time, an' finally the houses, an' trees, an' mountains, an' folks would get to slidin' an' slidin', an' when they come to the edge, they'd all slip off into the water; an' when the 'arth turned *cl'ar* over" – here he flopped the biscuit up side down in the pan – "whar would we all be?"

None of his auditors had attempted to interrupt the trapper, and the reason was because there was not one among them who could trust himself to speak, not even Uncle Dick. Believing from their silence that he had got the better of all of them, the trapper said he was more firmly convinced than he had ever been before, that all the learning in the world was not to be found in books, and was about to throw the contents of his mess-pan over the side, when Eugene came elbowing his way into the group, carrying an apple in one hand and a small magnet in the other.

"Now, Dick," said he, "let me talk a minute. You haven't quite got the idea. In the first place, that piece of hard tack doesn't represent the shape of the earth, but this apple does, pretty nearly. In the next place, the globe doesn't revolve through water, for the water forms part of the earth and turns with it."

"Sho!" exclaimed the trapper. "It would all spill out."

"Hold on a minute, and I'll show you that it can't spill out. The world revolves through the air. Don't you fellows criticise now," continued Eugene, turning to his companions. "If, when I get

through, you want to explain that the earth really revolves through space, and that the air goes with it, except such portions as are left behind and form the trade-winds, you are welcome to do it; but it is quite beyond me."

Eugene handed the magnet to Archie to hold until he was ready to use it, and with the point of his knife rudely traced upon the apple the shape of the continents and the principal oceans. This done, he went on with his explanation, which was simply a repetition of what every boy learns when he first begins the study of geography. He described the motions of the earth as well as he could, and used the magnet to illustrate the attraction of gravitation. Dick listened attentively, and when Eugene finished, took the apple from his hand and looked at it with a great deal of interest. He turned it over several times, and appeared to be meditating upon something.

"They're goin' to sail round the 'arth this way," said he, moving his finger slowly around the circumference of the apple, and talking more to himself than to the boys standing about, "an' when they get around here" – he stopped and thought a moment, holding the end of his finger under the apple – "when they get around here, they'll be – Human natur'!" he cried suddenly, as if frightened at the discovery he had made. "When you get around here, on the under side of the 'arth, you'll be walkin' with your heads downwards, won't you? Bob can do as he likes, but *I* won't go. Mebbe that little red hoss-shoe aint strong enough to hold the boat fast to the 'arth – don't look as if it was – an' some dark night she'll get to fallin' an' fallin' – Whew! I'm as near that place now as I want to be, an' I'm off fur the mountains to-morrow, bright an' 'arly."

Dick turned away, fairly trembling with excitement, and the boys scattered as if some one had suddenly sent a charge of bird-shot among them.

CHAPTER II

"MAN OVERBOARD."

THE trappers were badly frightened, there could be no doubt about that, and it was a spectacle the Club had never expected to witness. That these two men, who had time and again faced death in almost every shape in which he presents himself on shore, who had lived in the very midst of danger from their youth up, and who sought and delighted in perilous exploits, should be so nearly overcome with terror by hearing of things with which every schoolboy is familiar, was surprising; and there was something so ludicrous in the manner in which they exhibited their alarm, that the boys could scarcely restrain their laughter until they could get out of sight. Old Bob glared wildly about him, seemingly on the point of jumping overboard and swimming ashore, and Dick Lewis leaned against the rail, drawing his breath in quick gasps and looking altogether as if he did not yet fairly understand the startling discovery he had made. Uncle Dick Gaylord took one glance at him and then went to the stern and looked over into the water, while the boys dived down into the cabin and threw themselves into chairs, or leaned up in corners, holding their handkerchiefs over their mouths – all except Archie, who never could control himself when he wanted to laugh. He ran into his state-room, shut the door and buried his head in the pillows. The funny part of it was, that Dick should suppose, that those who attempted the reckless task of sailing around the world, should be obliged to take a magnet with them, in order to keep themselves and their vessel from falling off when they reached the "under side of the earth."

At the end of five minutes Archie made an attempt to come out into the cabin, but he was still bubbling over with laughter, and the sight of him created a fresh explosion, and set Archie himself to going again at such a rate that he was obliged to go back. It is hard to tell how long it would have been before the boys could have controlled themselves sufficiently to talk the matter over, had it not been that a commotion which suddenly arose on deck, drew their attention to other affairs.

"Fore rigging, there," exclaimed Uncle Dick. "What do you see?"

"A man overboard, sir," replied the voice of the boatswain's mate. "He jumped off that whaler, sir."

"And he's swimming this way, sir," said another voice, "and making signals of distress."

"Have the cutter called away, Mr. Baldwin," said Uncle Dick, to his first mate, "and send a crew out to pick him up."

The boys waited to hear no more. They crowded up the companion ladder with such haste that they ran some risk of sticking fast in the narrow passageway, and reached the deck just as the crew of the cutter were tumbling into their boat which lay along side moored to a swinging boom, man-of-war fashion.

"Where is Mr. Parker?" said Uncle Dick, looking around for his second officer.

"O, let me go in charge of the boat, Uncle," exclaimed Eugene, snatching Fred's hat from his head, for he had left his own in the cabin.

"Away you go, then," said the old sailor. "Don't let him sink before you reach him."

"They're sending out a boat from the whaler, sir," said the foremast hand, who was at work in the forward rigging, and who had been the first to discover the man in the water.

"Does he appear to be all right?"

"O, yes, sir. He swims like a duck, but he's waving his hand to us."

"Hold on a minute, Eugene."

Uncle Dick sprang upon the rail and supporting himself by the shrouds looked towards the man, and then toward the boat that was coming out to pick him up, while the boys, all except Eugene, who stood ready to take his place in the cutter at a moment's warning, swarmed up the rigging and looked

on with no little interest. They saw at once that the man had no trouble in keeping afloat, for he swam over the waves as buoyantly as a cork. They saw, too, that he did not want to be overtaken by the whaler's boat, if he could help it, for he looked back at her occasionally to see if she was gaining on him, and then redoubled his efforts to reach the schooner.

"He is trying to desert," said Uncle Dick, "and I think we had better have nothing to do with him."

"Quartermaster, pass up that spy-glass," said Frank.

The petty officer handed the instrument to Featherweight, who happened to be lowest in the shrouds, and he passed it to George Le Dell, who handed it up to Frank. The latter mounted to the crosstrees and levelled the glass at the swimmer. He held it to his eye for a few minutes, and then passing it back to George, said:

"That man has either met with a severe accident, or been roughly handled. His face is bleeding."

"Help! help!" cried a faint voice.

"Go and pick him up," said Uncle Dick.

"Shove off," commanded Eugene, before he was fairly seated in the stern-sheets of the cutter. "Remember, men, that you are racing with a whale-boat, and that you don't want to be beaten."

The cutter swung around with her bow toward the swimmer, and propelled by eight strong oarsmen, who seemed to lift her fairly out of the water at every stroke, flew over the waves like a duck. A boat race was something in which Eugene took especial delight, but the one that came off that morning between the cutter and the whale-boat was not as exciting or as closely contested as he had hoped it would be. In fact it was no race at all; for when the officer, whoever he was, who had charge of the deck of the whaler, saw that the cutter was likely to reach the swimmer first, he hailed his boat, which turned around and went back.

"In bow," commanded the coxswain of the cutter, who was sitting just behind Eugene.

The two sailors who were seated in the bow raised their oars from the water, placed them on the thwarts between them, and then one stood up with the boat-hook in his hand, while the other threw himself flat on his face and extended his arm out over the water.

"Way enough! Toss, and stand by," said the coxswain.

The other oars were all thrown up into the air at the same moment, laid upon the thwarts, and every man leaned over the side to be ready to seize the swimmer as the cutter moved past him. She retained steerage-way enough to carry her within a few feet of him, and then the coxswain, with one movement of the tiller, turned the bow aside, and the boat-hook was thrust out within reach of his hands. It was a matter of some difficulty to haul the rescued man aboard, for he was too nearly exhausted to help himself, and his clothing, being thoroughly saturated with water, was as heavy as so much lead. Besides, his forehead was badly cut and bruised, and no doubt he was suffering from the hurt.

"Did you fall overboard?" asked Eugene, after the man had been pulled into the boat and had taken his seat in the bow.

"No, sir; I jumped overboard on purpose."

"You hit your head against something, didn't you?"

"The cap'n hit it for me, sir. It was a belaying pin that made that mark."

Eugene looked wonderingly at the coxswain, who nodded his head, as if to say that he didn't doubt it at all.

"Why, the officers aboard our vessel don't find it necessary to do such things," said Eugene.

"But all vessels ain't like the Stranger, sir, nor are all shipmasters like Cap'n Gaylord," said the coxswain. "Do you s'pose there's a sailorman aboard of us that would do what this chap has done – try to desert? No, sir, you couldn't kick 'em off if you wanted to. When we get back to Bellville we'll have every man we brought away with us, unless some of 'em are in Davy's locker."

The cutter was soon alongside the schooner, and the rescued man, by dint of hauling from above and pushing from below, was got upon the deck. He was a pitiable object when one came to look at him, and Uncle Dick's first order was: "Take him below, some of you, and give him something fit to put on. Be in a hurry about it."

The sailors were only too glad to obey. They led the dripping man into the forecastle, from which he emerged a few minutes later with a clean face, a suit of dry clothes, and a handkerchief bound about his forehead. In his appearance, which was very much improved, he would have compared favorably with any of the seamen on board the Stranger, and they were the very best that Uncle Dick could find in the port of New Orleans. He had evidently had plenty of time to tell at least a portion of his story, for the faces of the sailors were as black as so many thunder clouds.

The rescued man at once made his way aft, accompanied by the boatswain's mate, who, presuming for this once upon his captain's good-nature, and his own position as ranking petty officer on board the Stranger, took the liberty to go where he knew he had no right except he was in performance of his duties. The men saluted, removed their caps and waited for Uncle Dick to speak to them.

"Well, Lucas, what do you want here?" asked the old sailor.

"I ax your pardon, cap'n, for coming on the quarter-deck at this time without an invite," replied the boatswain's mate, "but I just wanted to say to you, sir, that this man is black and blue from his head to his feet, so he is."

"How did he get that way?" asked Uncle Dick, while the boys ranged themselves behind him so that they could hear all that passed, "and why is he trying to desert?"

The mate stepped back and moved his hand toward the rescued man, as if to say that he would tell his own story, and the latter said:

"I don't want to desert my ship, cap'n. I am an able seaman, know my duty and am ready to do it, if I can only have plenty to eat and am allowed a wink of sleep now and then. I am trying to get ashore for protection ag'in' them tyrants aboard the Tycoon, and I hope you won't send me back to them, sir."

"Go on," said Uncle Dick. "What has happened aboard that ship?"

"She is nearly two years out of Nantucket, on a whaling course, sir," said the man, "and there isn't a foremast hand aboard of her that she brought out with her. They've all deserted. She has to get a new crew at every port, and when she can't get 'em honest, she kidnaps 'em, sir. I shipped aboard of her, along with a lot of others, at Callao. We've been out only four months, and two of the men jumped overboard rather than stand the hard treatment they received. On the first day out the officers began on us and never let up. They kept us at work till we were ready to drop, brought us out of bed at night and made us walk the deck, and if we fell asleep as we walked, they knocked us down with a handspike or belaying-pin. They starved us almost to death, and then, because my boat's crew were too weak to save a whale we made fast to, they put us all in irons and pounded us with ropes' ends till we were insensible."

This was only the introduction to the long story the man had to tell, and to which his auditors listened with breathless interest. According to his account, the Tycoon was a horrible place, and the cruelties that were practised by the officers upon the defenceless seamen, were shocking. The man certainly bore unmistakable evidence of brutal treatment, and added weight to his story by declaring that he was not only willing but anxious to meet his persecutors in a court of justice. Everybody who listened to him was indignant.

"The men on board that vessel have a remedy in their own hands – two of them, if they only knew it," said Frank. "Why didn't they demand an interview with the American consul at the first port at which they touched?"

"It wouldn't have done no good, sir," said the sailor. "The cap'n wouldn't never let 'em see him, sir."

"He couldn't help himself," returned Frank. "The law compels him to allow his men to go ashore at every port at which the ship may touch to lay their complaints, if they have any, before our representative; or, if there is any good reason why the men cannot go ashore, the captain must bring the consul aboard to see them, if they demand it."

If there was anything in which Frank was particularly well posted, it was the law governing the duties of consuls, as some of our representatives in foreign countries are called. The attorney with whom he had been studying in Lawrence, had political aspirations, and had at one time expected to be appointed consul for some port in the Mediterranean. If he had succeeded in his object Frank would have gone with him as assistant and clerk. He did not wish to accept any situation with whose duties and responsibilities he was not familiar, and in order to fit himself for it, he had obtained a copy of the Consular Regulations, which he had thoroughly mastered. It is a part of the consul's duty to care for destitute, discharged and deserting seamen, to stand between foremast hands and tyrannical officers, to protect officers from and punish mutinous sailors, and Frank knew the law bearing upon every case that could possibly arise.

"The consul is obliged to listen to any and all complaints," continued Frank. "He measures them by the law bearing upon them, and he can discharge the crew on complaint of the officers, or he can discharge the officers themselves on a well-founded complaint from the crew."

The sailors opened their eyes and looked at one another. They had never dreamed that they had so many rights, or that there was a law enacted on purpose to protect them.

Just then the whale-boat came in sight again, rounding the stern of the Tycoon. She turned her bow toward the Stranger, and the quartermaster, after looking at her through his spy-glass, said there was a man in the stern-sheets dressed in gray. "That's the cap'n," exclaimed the deserter, in great alarm. "You won't let him take me back, sir?" he added, in a pleading voice.

"I can't prevent your lawful captain from taking you wherever he may find you," answered Uncle Dick; "but hold on, now, till I get through," he added, as the man began to back toward the rail as if he were about to take to the water again. "I'll give you a chance to save yourself. Call away the cutter, Mr. Baldwin, and send this man ashore."

"Thank you, cap'n, thank you," said the sailor gratefully, and with tears in his eyes. "A prosperous and pleasant voyage to you and your mates, sir. What shall I do when I get ashore, sir?" he continued, looking at Frank.

"Go to the nearest justice and take out a warrant against those officers for assault and battery," was the reply.

The boatswain's mate and the rescued man looked as if they did not quite understand. "You must know, sir," said the latter, doubtfully, "that all this beating and pounding was done on the high seas."

"Well, what of it? When one man, without any provocation, handles another as roughly as you have been handled, he is answerable to the law, no matter whether the offence was committed on the high seas or on the land."

"Come now, off you go, my man," said Uncle Dick. "The cutter is ready, and you've no time to lose. Yes, go with him and take charge of the boat, Lucas," he added, anticipating the request that the old boatswain's mate was about to make.

"And whatever you do, don't let those blubber-hunters catch you," said Eugene, in a low voice. He wanted to say it aloud, so that the cutter's crew could hear it; but knowing that Uncle Dick did not allow any interference with his men, he checked himself just in time.

The cutter's crew were all in their places, and there was a determined look on each man's face which said as plainly as words that the "blubber-hunters," even if they succeeded in overhauling them – which was not at all unlikely, seeing that the whale-boat was built for speed, and was pulled by a crew who were kept in excellent training by almost daily practice at the oars – the deserter should never be taken from them. Uncle Dick seemed to read the thoughts that were passing through their

minds, and as he looked at the sturdy fellows, who had thrown off their caps and rolled up their sleeves in preparation for a long, hard pull, he remarked to Frank that he would not care to be in that whale-boat if she succeeded in coming up with the cutter.

CHAPTER III

A SEA LAWYER

THE cutter's bow swung away from the schooner as soon as the boatswain's mate and the rescued man were fairly seated, the oars dropped into the water, and then began a race that promised to be as exciting as even Eugene could have wished it. The boys once more ran up the rigging, so that they could watch both contestants. The whale-boat certainly had the better crew, and, although she was propelled by only five oars to the cutter's eight, she seemed to move two feet to the other boat's one. Especially was this the case when the man in gray, who was standing in the stern-sheets holding the steering-oar, became aware of what was going on. As soon as he saw the cutter moving away from the Stranger he comprehended the situation, and giving utterance to some heavy adjectives, which by the time they came to the boys' ears sounded a good deal like oaths, ordered his crew to "Pick her up and run right along with her." They responded promptly, and sent their boat through the water at such a rate that Uncle Dick became uneasy at the prospect of a collision between her crew and the cutter's.

"I shouldn't think there would be any danger," said Frank. "There are eleven men in our boat, counting the deserter, and only six in his."

"But there is no officer in our boat," said Uncle Dick, "and this man being a captain, will expect our crew to obey his orders. I am really afraid he will be disappointed."

Frank, remembering the savage and determined expression he had seen on the face of every one of the cutter's crew, was quite sure he would be.

In a few minutes the whale-boat came close aboard the schooner, and dashed by under her bows. Her captain was furious, his face showed that. He ran his eye over the men on the Stranger's deck, and picking out Uncle Dick at once as the commanding officer, said, as he nodded his head to him —

"Fine business you're in, sir! helping men to desert. If there is a law on shore I'll see you again, my good fellow!"

Uncle Dick simply smiled and touched his hat, and the whale-boat passed on. As she was going by, the sailors enacted a little pantomime of their own. They had clambered out on the bowsprit to see the race, and when the captain of the whaler was through threatening Uncle Dick, they glanced toward the quarter-deck, to make sure that none of their officers were observing them, and then leaned over and shook their fists at the angry man. One of them hugged his cap under his arm and beat it furiously with his clenched hand, nodding pleasantly to the captain the while, as if to indicate that it would have afforded him infinite satisfaction if the captain's head had been in the place of the cap. The boys, from their lofty perch in the main rigging, saw all that passed, and smiled at one another, but said nothing; for they knew that if the performance came to the ears of Uncle Dick, who was a very strict disciplinarian, every one of the sailors who took part in it would be sent to the mast.

[The "mast" is to a sailor on board ship, what the "library" is to a refractory boy on shore. It is there that culprits are sent to be reprimanded, if their offence be a slight one, or sentenced if they have done something deserving of punishment.]

Although he might laugh over it afterward in the privacy of his cabin, he was not the one to pass lightly over an insult to a shipmaster when in performance of his duty, no matter how great the provocation.

All this while the cutter's crew had been exceedingly busy, and now loud calls were heard from the boys on the cross-trees for their field-glasses. They did not want to miss a single incident of the race. Frank, who up to this time had remained below with Uncle Dick, went into the cabin after the glasses, and mounting the rigging, joined the group on the cross-trees. "Who's ahead?" he asked.

"O, the cutter," replied George Le Dell. "There is more in that crew than I thought. They'll land their man safe enough."

And George was right. The cutter reached the wharf while the whale-boat was yet twenty yards away, and no sooner did she swing broadside to it than the deserter was lifted in the strong arms of the coxswain and boatswain's mate and fairly thrown ashore. He jumped to his feet and disappeared in less time than it takes to tell it. A few seconds later the whale-boat landed and the captain sprang out and started in pursuit, not, however, without saying a few words to the cutter's crew, which he emphasized by shaking his fist at them. If any of the men replied, our young friends at the cross-trees saw nothing to indicate it.

The sailors pulled back slowly, for their long, hard pull had wearied them, and when they reached the schooner and clambered over the side, the boys saw that their faces were flushed, and that some portions of their clothes looked as though they had been dipped in the bay. The boatswain's mate went aft demurely enough to report the safe return of the boat, but when he made his way forward again, and glanced up at the boys, with whom he was an especial favorite, they saw that his jolly countenance was wreathed with smiles, and that his broad shoulders were shaking with suppressed mirth. He and the cutter's crew were proud of the exploit they had performed. The fun and excitement being all over now, the boys seated themselves in a circle on the cross-trees to discuss the incidents that had just transpired.

"Now just listen to me a moment, Frank, and I'll ask you a question," said Perk. "Can that brutal fellow do anything to Uncle Dick for assisting his man to escape?"

"If you should see me assaulted by ruffians who were getting the better of me, and should rescue me from their clutches, could they do anything to you in law?" asked Frank, in reply.

"Certainly not."

"The same law holds good on the sea. Some people have a very mistaken idea of things. They insist on a landsman's right of self-defence, but deny the same to a sailor. Even sailors themselves think that because they follow the sea for a livelihood, they are debarred from exercising the very first law of our nature."

"Hear! hear!" cried Archie.

"Silence in the court-room!" exclaimed Featherweight, assuming a fierce frown. "Hurrah for free trade and sailors' rights, the motto on – on – somebody's flag! Proceed, brother Nelson. State the case to the jury."

Frank laughed as heartily as the rest for a few minutes, and continued:

"Sailors know that resistance to an officer, or even an attempt to spread dissatisfaction among the crew of a vessel, is called mutiny; and they know, too, that men have been hanged in the American navy for that very offence."

"See Cooper's Naval History for an account of the mutiny on board the United States brig-of-war Somers, in 1842," said Bab.

"That was the very circumstance I had in my mind," returned Frank. "Sailors know all this, as I was saying, and consequently they are afraid to call their souls their own. They suffer in silence, unless they are driven to commit suicide during the voyage, and when they get ashore forget it all, or make a feeble attempt to punish their tyrants by process of law, but they soon give it up, for at the very outset they find an insurmountable obstacle in their way. Before they can convict they must prove three things – that the punishment they received was cruel and unusual; that it was inflicted without any just cause; and that the occasion of it was malice, hatred, or a desire for revenge on the part of the officer who punished them. Now, no living being can prove this last accusation against another, for in order to do it he must be able to read his fellow-men as he would an open book, and see what is passing in their minds; and even that would do him no good unless he possessed the power to make the judge and jury who try the case see the matter just as he does."

"Suppose this deserter could prove his complaints against the master of that whaler," said Walter; "what would be the penalty?"

"One thousand dollars fine and five years in the state prison."

"And I hope he will get it all," said Eugene.

"Well, if it is so hard for a seaman to obtain satisfaction at law, what ought he to do when he is abused at sea?" asked Bab. "I understood you to say he had two remedies, and you have given only one."

"Well, there is another," said Frank. "He and his companions ought to club together, take the ship out of the hands of her officers, confine them in the cabin, and make for the nearest port, if they are navigators enough to find their way there."

"Yes," exclaimed Archie, "and swing for it the moment they reach the shore."

"No, sir. The case has been tried in the courts more than once, and would be tried oftener if sailors only knew their rights. As far as any risk I might run is concerned, I would not be afraid to belong to such a crew and take part in just such a proceeding."

"Well, I don't want you to get into any such scrape," said Archie; "I should never expect to see you again."

"I have no desire to win notoriety as a mutineer, I assure you," replied Frank, with a laugh. "As his Honor remarked" – here he waved his hand towards Featherweight, who bowed gravely – "I was only discoursing on sailors' rights."

"There," said George, as the boatswain's whistle rang through the schooner, followed by the order, given in a very hoarse voice, "Away, you gigs, away!" – "the captain is going ashore. Hadn't we better go down and keep Dick Lewis and Bob company? The old fellows will be lonely."

"That means business," said Eugene. "Uncle Dick is going ashore to see about the stores. It will not be long now before we take leave of Fr'isco."

"And what will be our next port?" asked George.

This was something that had not yet been decided, and if one might judge by what the boys said while they were descending to the deck, there was a prospect of a lively debate if the matter were left to them. Eugene wanted to go straight to Alaska. Bab, who had lately been reading "Reindeer, Dogs and Snow-shoes," was in favor of that, provided they could afterward go across to some port in Siberia and stay there long enough to see a little of the wild life in which he had been so much interested. Perk would agree to all that, in case they could stop on the way and give him a chance to try his hand at salmon-fishing in the tributaries of the Columbia river. Fred had seen quite enough of snow and ice, and thought he could have more sport in a warm country. He wanted to go to Japan. Walter said he was strongly in favor of that, for after they had seen all the sights in that country they would probably go to India, and that was what he wanted. He was impatient to ride on an elephant and see the famous Indian jugglers and serpent-charmers. Every boy wanted to go somewhere, but the trouble was that no two of them wanted to go to the same place; and Frank wondered how the matter would be decided. How astonished he would have been to know that the man in gray, who had just gone by in the whale-boat, was destined to decide it for them!

The boys spent the rest of the day in company with the trappers. Nothing more was said on the subject which had for a long time been uppermost in their minds, for the tone in which Dick's answer had been given satisfied them that it was final. The boys were all sorry, for they had become greatly attached to these two good-natured, ignorant fellows. They had been of great service to them – beyond a doubt they had saved Walter's life – and they could not but miss them when they were gone. The cousins especially would have been glad to postpone the parting moment had they possessed the power. It was not at all likely that they would ever see the mountains or the prairie again, and even if they did, the chances that they would find their old friends, the trappers, were not one in a thousand. Their meeting with them had been purely accidental this time, and it was not probable that such a combination of circumstances would ever occur again.

About supper-time Uncle Dick returned and reported that all arrangements had been made. The schooner was to be hauled alongside the dock in the morning, and they would go out with the turn of the tide. Where were they going? He didn't care. The world was before them, and when the

boys had made up their minds what portion of it they wanted to see first, they could come to him with their decision. He wasn't going to bother his head about it, for he had other matters to think of. Eight o'clock the next evening would see the Stranger under way, and if the boys had any business ashore they had better attend to it the first thing in the morning.

Uncle Dick retired at an early hour, as he always did, and the boys had the quarter-deck all to themselves until eleven o'clock – or rather they had it in company with the second mate and the quartermaster on watch. A few "primary meetings" had been held immediately after supper, but they amounted to nothing. Each boy knew upon whom he could rely to second any motion he might make, but he was not so certain of the number of votes he could raise in support of it. During the two hours' conversation that took place after Uncle Dick went to bed, Fred Craven arose six times – that is, once every twenty minutes – and said gravely,

"I move you, Mr. President, that the captain of this schooner be requested to take her directly to some port in Japan."

"I second the motion," said Frank, who was speaking for Walter.

"Gentlemen, you have heard the motion," said Walter. "Are you ready for the question?"

"Mr. President," said Eugene, "I move to amend by striking out Japan and substituting Alaska."

"Second the motion," said Bab.

"You have heard the amendment. Are you ready to take action upon it?"

"Now just listen to me a minute, Mr. President, and I'll tell you what's a fact," said Perk. "I move to amend by striking out Alaska and substituting Astoria in Oregon."

"I second the motion," said George, who, being a devoted disciple of old Izaak Walton, was as fond of fishing as he was of sailing.

"Mr. President," said Archie, "I move to amend –"

"The gentleman is out of order. An amendment to an amendment is proper, but not an amendment of an amendment to an amendment."

When affairs reached this pass a hearty roar of laughter would come up through the open cabin windows, showing that there was an interested and amused listener in the person of Uncle Dick, who having gone to bed, leaving his state-room door ajar, could hear all that was said. Then speeches were made, some long and others witty, and all showing the training the boys had received in their debating societies. Eugene was particularly long-winded. According to Featherweight "he talked all manner of what," and spouted away on subjects that had not the slightest connection with the question under discussion. He talked eloquently about the American eagle, the war of 1812, and the stars and stripes, and dwelt long on the rights of sailors and other free-born citizens. He said afterward that if he couldn't gain his point any other way, he would tire his audience out, and compel them to vote for his amendment just to get rid of him. But the boys listened patiently and without once interrupting him, except by applause when he grew particularly eloquent, and the young orator finally tired himself out and took his seat in disgust. Everything was voted down; so they were no nearer a decision than they were before. There was one point, however, on which they were all agreed when the meeting broke up at eleven o'clock, and that was, that they had enjoyed themselves, and that their jaws and sides would be sure to ache for a week to come.

During the afternoon the boys had held a consultation with the boatswain's mate, who had promised to take the trappers under his especial charge during the night, and to report the first man who attempted to play any tricks upon them. After the meeting broke up the boys went forward with their friends to see them safely stowed away in the forecastle. The sailors were all up and waiting for them – not a man had yet turned in. The best bunks in the forecastle had been given up for their use, and the beds that were made up in them would have looked very inviting to almost anybody except our two backwoodsmen. Having been all their lives accustomed to sleeping on the hard ground, with nothing but a blanket or the spreading branches of some friendly tree for protection, they wanted plenty of air and elbow-room. They hesitated when they looked into the little forecastle, and drew

back and shook their heads when invited to enter. Archie finally effected a compromise by bringing up a couple of blankets and spreading them on the deck near the windlass. This being perfectly satisfactory, the boys bade the trappers good-night, and went away, leaving them to the tender mercies of the sailors.

There was not much sleeping done among those foremast hands that night. They did not play any tricks upon their guests – indeed there were not many among them who would have had the hardihood to attempt it, after taking a good look at the stalwart fellows – but they crammed them "chock-a-block" with such wild stories of the sea that the trappers grew more alarmed than ever, and wondered greatly at the recklessness of the men who would willingly encounter such dangers. They told about mermaids, sea-dragons and serpents; of Vanderdecker's ghostly ship, the Flying Dutchman, which was rushing about the ocean with the speed of a railroad train, running down and sinking every craft that came in her way; of monstrous cuttle-fish which would sometimes arise suddenly out of the depths, and twining their long arms about a ship, sink with it and all the crew to the bottom; and one of the men declared that he had actually met and been swallowed by the same whale that took Jonah in out of the wet, hundreds and thousands of years before, and to prove it, exhibited the tobacco-box which had dropped out of Jonah's pocket when the whale threw him ashore. This is a staple forecastle yarn, and every one who has had an hour's conversation with a sailor, has probably heard it; but it was new to the trappers, who listened with all their ears and with unmistakable signs of terror on their faces. The simple-hearted fellows believed every word, and when the conversation lagged for a moment, spoke of the magnet Eugene had shown them, and the use for which they supposed it was intended.

This started the sailors on a new tack, and the stories that followed were more wonderful than those which had just been told. There was not a sailor on board the Stranger who had not seen some unlucky vessel tumble off the under side of the earth, her magnet proving too weak to sustain her weight; and there were two or three who had belonged to the crews of those very vessels, and who had been saved by a miracle.

The night was passed in this way, and it was daylight before the trappers lay down on their blankets to rest, but not to sleep. They could not sleep after hearing of such wonderful adventures and talking face to face with the men who had taken part in them. If they had not already made up their minds to lose no time in seeking safety among their native mountains, they would have done so now.

CHAPTER IV

"SHANGHAIED."

THE morning broke bright and clear, and all hands were astir at an early hour. The first thing was to hoist the anchor and haul the schooner alongside the dock. This being done, breakfast was served, and the boys having put on their shore-clothes, started out to take a good look at the city which they might never see again, and to make purchases of various articles they needed. Fred and Eugene each wanted a rifle and a brace of revolvers, their own weapons having been stolen from them by the hunters who robbed the Pike. Some of the others needed a few articles of clothing, and Frank's Maynard required some repairs. They set out together, but before an hour had passed, were scattered all over the city. Fred, Archie and Eugene hired a carriage and went for a ride, taking old Bob with them, while Dick Lewis stuck close to Frank and Walter. Knowing that the time for parting was not far distant, he did not seem willing to allow them out of his sight.

A few years before men like Dick were often met with in the streets of the city; but now a genuine trapper was not seen every day, and he created something of a sensation wherever he went. Almost every one he met stared at him and turned to look at him after he had passed; and Dick, finally becoming nettled by the interest and curiosity his appearance excited, begged the boys to take him back to the schooner and leave him there. He would stay on board until she was ready to sail, he said, and then he and Bob would bid a long farewell to civilization, and make the best of their way back to Fort Bolton. He hoped that neither of them would ever see a paved street or a brick house again.

At six o'clock in the evening the boys, and the few sailors who had been allowed shore liberty, began to retrace their steps toward the dock where the Stranger was lying. At seven they were all on board except two – Lucas, the boatswain's mate, and Barton, the coxswain of the cutter. These men had not been seen since noon, and they were to have been back at three o'clock. Preparations were already being made for getting under way, and Uncle Dick began to grow impatient. "I don't see what keeps those fellows," said he to Frank. "I have always found them trustworthy, and I hope they will not fail me now."

"I must go ashore again after my rifle, you know," replied Frank – "it was to be done at half-past seven – and I'll go along the dock and keep an eye out for them."

"All right. Hurry them up, if you see them, and be sure that you are in time yourself."

Frank went ashore accompanied by the trapper – Dick was not afraid of attracting so much attention now that it was growing dark – and hurried away toward the gunsmith's. He followed the wharves as long as they led him in the direction he wanted to go, looking everywhere for the missing sailors, but without finding them. The actions of himself and his companion attracted the attention of two men, who were walking along the dock behind them. They watched them for some time, and then, after whispering together a few minutes, one of them came up and tapped Frank on the shoulder. "Who are you looking for?" said he.

Frank turned and fastening his eyes on the man took a good survey of him before he answered. He was a flashily-dressed person, with a sneaking, hang-dog cast of countenance, and the grimy hand he placed upon Frank's shoulder, and which the latter promptly shook off, was heavily loaded with bogus jewelry.

"Don't be quite so familiar, if you please!" said Frank.

"Beg pardon," said the man, stepping back and straightening up his battered plug hat which he had thus far worn cocked over his left ear. "I thought you belonged to the Stranger."

"And what if I do?" asked Frank.

"I thought maybe you were looking for them two men."

"What two men?"

"Why, one of 'em is a short, thick-set fellow, and carries a silver whistle in the breast pocket of his shirt. The other is tall and slender, wears some kind of a badge on his arm – a petty officer's badge I took it to be – and has light hair and whiskers."

The man gave an accurate description of the missing sailors of whom Frank was in search. No doubt they had got into trouble and found their way into some station-house; and this fellow was some little pettifogger, who hoped to make a few dollars by helping them out.

"I thought maybe you were looking for 'em," continued the man, as he turned to go away; "but seeing you ain't, I am sorry I pestered you."

"One moment, please," said Frank. "Where are these men now?"

"They're aboard my ship."

"O, you're a sailor, are you?" exclaimed Frank, again running his eye over the man, who looked about as much like a sailor as Dick Lewis did. "What is the name of your ship, and where is she?"

"She's the Sunrise, and she is at anchor out here in the bay."

"How came our men aboard of her?"

"Well, you see, they've got some friends and acquaintances among my crew, and when we were lying alongside the dock they came aboard to see them. While they were skylarking about, one of them, the boatswain, fell into the hold and broke his leg. We hauled out into the bay just after that, and did it in such a hurry – you see there was another ship waiting to take our berth at the dock as soon as we were out of it – that we didn't have time to put him ashore. We've had a doctor to see him, and maybe it would be a good plan to get an ambulance and take him back where he belongs."

"I think so too," said Frank, who became interested at once; "that is, if he can bear removal. But whatever we do, must be done at once. Our vessel is all ready to sail."

"I guess he can stand it to be moved. You might come aboard and see – you and your pardner here. I've got a boat close by."

Frank assenting to this proposition, he and Dick Lewis followed the man, who led the way along the wharf, and finally showed them a yawl manned by two oarsmen. They climbed down into it, their companion took his seat at the helm, and the boat was pushed off into the darkness. The man talked incessantly, answering all Frank's questions, and going so fully into the particulars of the accident that had befallen the boatswain's mate, and telling so straight and reasonable a story, that not a shadow of a doubt entered Frank's mind. He remarked that the ship was a long way from the wharf, and that the two men who were pulling the oars looked more like "dock rats" than sailors; but still he scarcely bestowed a second thought upon these matters, for his mind was fully occupied with the injured man to whose relief he was hastening. At last the hull and rigging of a ship loomed up through the darkness, and a hoarse voice hailed the yawl.

"Sunrise!" replied the man at the helm.

The answer was perfectly right and proper. It conveyed to them on board the ship the information that their captain was in the approaching boat; but it seemed to Frank that his presence brought very little show of respect from the officer in charge of the deck, for he ordered no lanterns to light him aboard. Indeed there were no lights to be seen on the deck, as Frank found when he clambered over the side, the only ones visible being those in the rigging, which were placed there to point out the position of the ship, so that passing vessels might not run into her.

The captain, who was the first to board the ship, talked rapidly in a low tone to some one who hurried aft to meet him, and when Frank came up, he said aloud: —

"Take this gentleman into the forecabin and give him all the help he needs to remove that man. This one," he added, pointing to Dick, "can go with a couple of you to get a stretcher."

"Ay! ay! sir," replied a voice. "Step right this way, sir."

Frank followed the speaker toward the forecabin, and when he came within sight of the ladder that led into it, was surprised to see that it was as dark as a dungeon below. Then for the first time the thought that things did not look just right began to creep through his mind. His companion descended

the ladder, but Frank halted at the top. "Look here, my friend," said he; "if you want to get me below there you had better light up first."

"Come on," said the man, in a tone of command.

"Where's that sailor with the broken leg?" demanded Frank.

"Are you going to come on?" asked the man.

"Well, that depends – I want to hear from that man of ours first. If you are down there, Lucas, sing out!"

There was no response. In an instant it flashed upon Frank that he and Dick had been led into a trap. The man in the battered plug hat was no captain at all. Probably he was a shipping-agent. Having persuaded Frank and the trapper to accompany him on board the ship, he made a very plausible excuse for separating them for a moment, so that they could not assist each other, and now they were to be overpowered and confined until the vessel was well out to sea, when they would be brought out and compelled to act with the crew. While Frank was thinking about it, his conductor, who had gone half way down the ladder, turned around and started to come back. Frank's ears told him this and not his eyes, for they were of no use to him in that intense darkness. "Avast, there!" he cried, with emphasis. "If you come a step nearer to me I'll send you down that ladder quicker than you ever went down before. You have picked up the wrong men this time. Where is that scoundrel who called himself the master of this ship?"

"Here I am," replied that worthy, in tones very different from those he had thus far used in addressing Frank.

"Well, if you are wise, you will undo this half-hour's work with the least possible delay. Call away that boat and leave us a clear road to get to it, or –"

Frank was interrupted by the sounds of a fierce struggle which just then arose from the quarter-deck. He heard the sound of stamping and scraping feet, muttered oaths and blows, and then Dick's voice rang out clear above the tumult. "Keep off, the hul on you," said he, "fur I'm a leetle wusser nor a hul parsel of wild-cats!" And then followed a sound such as might be made by somebody's head coming in violent contact with the deck.

"Stand your ground, Dick!" shouted Frank. "I'll be there in a minute!"

With these words he sprang forward, intending to run to his friend's assistance; but before he had made half a dozen steps his heels flew up and he was sent at full length on the deck, which he no sooner touched than two men, whom he had not yet seen, sprang up from behind the windlass and threw themselves across his shoulders. He had been entirely deceived as to the number of enemies with whom he had to deal. He had seen but four men on deck and there proved to be a dozen of them – more than enough to render resistance useless. Almost before he realized the fact he was powerless, a pair of irons being slipped over his wrists and another about his ankles. When he was helped to his feet, he found that the struggle on the quarter-deck had ended in the same way. Dick Lewis was led up, and by the light of a lantern which one of the crew drew from under a tarpaulin, Frank saw that he was ironed like himself.

The man who carried the lantern held it up so that its rays fell full on the prisoners, and gave them a good looking over, bestowing his attentions principally upon their arms and shoulders, as if trying to judge of the amount of muscle they might contain. "They'll do," said he, at last, "and now we're all ready to be off. Can you pull an oar?" he added, flashing his lantern in Frank's face.

"I can," was the reply.

"I can! Is that the way you talk to me? I am mate of this vessel and there's a handle to my name."

"I did not know that you were an officer," replied Frank, "and neither am I aware that I am under any obligations to put a handle to your name."

"Well, you'll find it out pretty sudden. It shall be my first hard work to teach you manners, my fine gentleman. Take 'em below."

The mate handed the lantern to one of the crew, who moved toward the fore-castle, followed by the prisoners, who never uttered a word of complaint or remonstrance. Frank knew it would do no good, and Dick was so bewildered that he could not have spoken if he had tried. He kept as close to his young companion as he could. He seemed to think that Frank, powerless as he was, could in some way protect him. They followed their conductor into the fore-castle, and the latter, after hanging the lantern to one of the carlens, went on deck again, closing the hatch after him.

Frank and the trapper looked about them before they spoke. The very first objects their eyes rested on were the two missing seamen, the coxswain and the boatswain's mate, who lay side by side in one of the bunks, snoring at the rate of ten knots an hour. They were there, sure enough – the bogus captain told the truth on that point – and Frank was glad to see that they were all right, or would be as soon as the effects of the drug they had swallowed had been slept off. There were three other men in the fore-castle, and they were in irons like themselves. They lay in their bunks and looked sullenly at the new-comers. "What's the matter with you?" asked Frank. "What have you been doing to get yourselves in this fix?"

"Trying to desert," growled one of the sailors, in reply. "What's the matter with *you*?"

"Shanghaied," answered Frank. "What ship is this, and where is she bound?"

"She's the Tycoon, and I expect she's off for the Japan station."

Frank's heart seemed to stop beating. His situation was even worse than he had supposed. He recalled the story of the man he had seen desert that same ship on that very day, and shuddered when he thought of what might be in store for him.

"What did you say was the matter with us, Master Frank?" asked the trapper, leaning against a bunk by his friend's side and speaking in a low voice.

"I say we have been shanghaied – that is, kidnapped," replied Frank.

"But what fur?" said Dick, who did not understand the matter at all. "We hain't been a doin' of nothing."

"I know that; but you see – in the first place, Dick, there's no use in denying that we are in serious trouble. You might as well know it first as last and make up your mind to stand it, for there is no way of escape. This is the same ship that that man we picked up to-day deserted from, and that red-faced man in gray whom we saw in the whale-boat is the captain of her. He and his officers treat their men so harshly that they run away every chance they get. The captain must have men to handle his vessel, and as he can't get them in the regular way, he kidnaps them."

"But what do I know 'bout a ship?" exclaimed Dick.

"Nothing whatever; but that is no matter. You have good strong arms, and it will not take long to break you in."

"Whar – whar – "

The trapper could not ask the question he was most anxious to have answered. It seemed to stick in his throat.

"I know what you mean," said Frank. "This man says we are bound for Japan, and that is nearly three thousand miles from here."

Dick was frightened almost out of his senses. His face grew as pale as death, great drops of perspiration stood on his forehead, and he tugged and pulled at his irons with the strength of desperation. But they had been put on him to stay, and all his efforts to free himself were unavailing. Frank knew what he stood in fear of, and he knew, too, that anything he could say would not set the poor fellow's mind at rest. The wrong ideas he had formed of things and the ridiculous stories he had heard in the fore-castle of the Stranger, had made an impression on him so deep and lasting that even Frank, in whom the trapper had every confidence, could not remove it. The real dangers he was likely to encounter would be but small things comparatively; but the imaginary evils which he would look for every day, would cause him much suffering. Frank thought more of his friend than he did of himself. How would Dick behave when he found himself dancing over the waves of the Pacific

in a small boat in pursuit of a whale? What would he think if he saw one of those monsters of the deep – as Lucas, the boatswain's mate, said he had often seen them – come up on a breach, shoot up forty or fifty feet into the air, and then fall down into the water with a noise like the roar of Niagara? No doubt he would refuse duty. No doubt, too, when the captain or his officers attempted to punish him for disobedience there would be a desperate fight – for Dick stood not in fear of anything that walked on two feet – which would not end until the trapper had been severely injured and perhaps permanently disabled.

"Human natur'! What'll I do?" cried Dick, after he had exhausted himself in his efforts to pull off his irons.

"Watch, me and do as I do, as nearly as you can," replied Frank. "We are completely in the power of these men, and there is no way to get out of it. While on our voyage from Bellville, I took particular pains to learn all I could of a seaman's duties, and perhaps I shall be able to be of some assistance to you. What we don't know Lucas and Barton will teach us. But, whatever you do, don't refuse duty or talk back, no matter what is said or done to you. It will only be worse for you if you do."

"And bear another thing in mind," said one of the sailors, who had been listening to this conversation, "and that is, you take rank next below the cap'n's dog, and hain't got no rights of your own!"

The trapper looked toward Frank, and while the latter was explaining that, according to a sailor's creed, those who follow the sea take rank in this way: first the captain, then the mates, then the captain's dog, and lowest of all, the foremast hands – while Frank was explaining this, there was the sound of a commotion on the deck over their heads, and after listening a moment the sailors declared that the vessel was about to be taken to sea. And so it proved. The anchor was hove up, the sails spread one after the other, and finally the prisoners below began to feel the increasing motion of the ship. Just then the hatch was thrown open and the first mate came down the ladder. He walked straight up to Dick, unlocked his irons and slapping him on the back ordered him to go on deck and lend a hand. Even this simple order was Greek to the honest trapper; but he understood the word "go," and he went, delighted to find himself in possession of his liberty once more. Frank would have been glad to go with him, for it was anything but agreeable to his feelings to be confined below like a felon; but the officers wanted to get a little farther away from shore before they allowed too many of their unwilling crew the free use of their hands and feet.

The first order Dick heard when he reached the deck was: "Let fall and sheet home;" and the mate giving him a push by the shoulder and a kick at the same time, commanded him to "Grab hold of that rope and pull as if the sweetheart he left in the backwoods was at the other end of it." Or, we ought rather say that that was the order the mate intended to give, but he never finished it, for he was knocked down so promptly that it seemed as if his foot and the trapper's right arm were both put in motion at the same instant. Dick's hot blood, which was already at fever heat, boiled over completely when he felt the weight of the mate's boot, and he wiped out the insult as soon as it was given.

Of course there was a tumult at once. The second mate caught up a handspike and the captain descended from his quarter-deck, flourishing a rope's end as he came. They advanced upon the trapper from opposite sides, but he was ready and waiting, and they must have been astonished at the rough reception they met at his hands. With one single twist, which was so sudden and powerful that it almost dislocated the second mate's shoulder, Dick wrenched the handspike out of his grasp and threw it to the deck. Then his long arms swung in the air like the shafts of a windmill, one huge clenched hand, as heavy as a sledgehammer, fell full in the captain's face, the other alighted on the top of the mate's head, and both these worthies sank to the deck on the instant.

The first mate by this time recovered his feet, and picking up a handspike looked all around for the trapper; but he was not to be seen anywhere on deck. Nor indeed was he to be found about the ship. He was gone.

CHAPTER V

THE TRAPPER'S ADVENTURE

"WHAT time is it now, Eugene?"

"Just nine o'clock. What do you suppose is the matter, Uncle?"

"I wish I knew. They are all of them old enough and large enough to take care of themselves, but I can't help thinking that there's something wrong."

"I have half a mind to go ashore and look for them."

"I don't know what good that would do. You don't know where to look, and if they should happen to come aboard while you were gone, we should have to send some one in search of you, and that would cause another delay."

The stores were all aboard, the Stranger was ready to sail, and had been for more than an hour, but three of her company were missing, and so was the trapper. Uncle Dick and the boys had been impatient at first, but this gradually gave way to a feeling of uneasiness and anxiety. Everybody had some explanation to offer for Frank's absence, and the prevailing opinion seemed to be that the sailors, having got themselves into trouble during the day, had been arrested, and that Frank was trying to effect their release. Old Bob was more uneasy than the rest, and couldn't make up his mind what to think about it, not knowing the dangers which one might encounter while roaming about the city after dark. His kit and Dick's were packed and lying at the head of the companion-way, and the old fellow was in a hurry to be off. Had they been in the mountains the trapper's absence would have caused him no anxiety. There Dick knew all about things, and was abundantly able to take care of number one; but in the settlements he was like a child, and almost as incapable of looking out for himself. Old Bob was afraid something had happened to him or Frank, and the others began to think so too as the hours wore away and their missing friends did not appear. Uncle Dick finally gave up all hopes of seeing them that night, and ordering one watch below, went to bed himself, leaving instructions with the officer of the deck to call him the moment Frank arrived. The impatient boys remained on deck an hour or two longer; but at last they also grew weary and turned in and went to sleep.

Just at daylight they were awakened by hasty steps on the companion-ladder, and the officer of the watch hurried into the cabin and pounded loudly on the captain's door. "Ay! ay!" replied Uncle Dick.

"That trapper is coming back, sir," said the officer, "and he's having a fuss out there on the dock."

"He is having what?" asked Uncle Dick.

"He's in a rumpus of some kind, sir. He's got somebody on his back and is lugging him along as if he were a bag of potatoes."

"It isn't Captain Nelson or one of the men, is it?" asked Uncle Dick, anxiously.

"O no, sir. It is a landsman and a stranger."

This conversation was carried on in a tone of voice loud enough to be heard by all the boys, who were out on the floor in an instant. It was but a few seconds' work to jump into their trowsers and boots, and catch up their coats and hats, and they were on deck almost as soon as the officer himself. A strange sight met their eyes. A short distance up the dock was Dick Lewis, running at the top of his speed, and carrying on his shoulder a man almost as large as himself, who kicked and struggled in vain to escape from the strong grasp that held him. The load was undoubtedly a heavy one, but the trapper moved with it plenty fast enough to leave behind two ill-looking fellows, who carried bludgeons in their hands, and who were trying to overtake him. About two hundred yards farther up the dock were two more men, one supporting the other, who was limping along half doubled up as if in great pain.

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