

Smith Ruel Perley

**The Rival Campers Afloat: or,
The Prize Yacht Viking**



Ruel Smith

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The Rival Campers Afloat; or, The Prize Yacht Viking

CHAPTER I. DOWN THE RIVER

It was a pleasant afternoon in the early part of the month of June. The Samoset River, winding down prettily through hills and sloping farm lands to the bay of the same name, gleamed in the sunlight, now with a polished surface like ebony in some sheltered inlet, or again sparkling with innumerable points of light where its surface was whipped up into tiny waves by a brisk moving wind.

There had been rain for a few days before, and the weather was now clearing, with a smart westerly breeze that had come up in the morning, but was swinging in slightly to the southward. The great white cloud-banks had mostly passed on, and these were succeeded at present by swiftly moving clumps of smaller and lighter clouds, that drifted easily across the sky, like the sails below them over the surface of the water.

There were not a few of these sails upon the river, some set to the breeze and some furled; some of the craft going up with the tide toward the distant city of Benton, the head of vessel navigation; some breasting the tide and working their way down toward Samoset Bay; other and larger craft, with sails snugly furled, tagging along sluggishly at the heels of blustering little tugs, – each evidently much impressed with the importance of its mission, – and so going on and out to the open sea, where they would sail down the coast with their own great wings spread.

The river was, indeed, a picture of life and animation. It was a river with work to do, but it did it cheerfully and with a good spirit. Far up above the city of Benton, it had brought the great log rafts down through miles of forest and farm land. Above and below the city, for miles, it had run bravely through sluice and mill-race, and turned the great wheels for the mills that sawed the forest stuff into lumber. And now, freed from all bounds and the restraint of dams and sluiceways, and no longer choked with its burden of logs, it was pleased to float the ships, loaded deep with the sawed lumber, down and away to other cities.

There was many a craft going down the river that afternoon. Here and there along the way was a big three or four masted schooner, loaded with ice or lumber, and bound for Baltimore or Savannah. Or, it might be, one would take notice of a trim Italian bark, carrying box-shooks, to be converted later into boxes for lemons and oranges. Then, farther southward, a schooner that had brought its catch to the Benton market, and was now working out again to the fishing-grounds among the islands of the bay.

Less frequently plied the river steamers that ran to and from the summer resorts in Samoset Bay; or, once a day, coming or going, the larger steamers that ran between Benton and Boston.

Amid all these, at a point some twenty miles down the river from Benton, there sailed a craft that was, clearly, not of this busy, hard-working fraternity of ships. It was a handsome little vessel, of nearly forty feet length, very shapely of hull and shining of spars; with a glint of brass-work here and there; its clean, white sides presenting a polished surface to the sunbeams; its rigging new and well set up, and a handsome new pennant flung to the breeze from its topmast.

The captain of many a coaster eyed her sharply as she passed; and, now and then, one would let his own vessel veer half a point off its course, while he took his pipe from his mouth and remarked, “There’s a clean craft. Looks like she might go some.” And then, probably, as he brought his own

vessel back to its course, concluded with the usual salt-water man's comment, "Amateur sailors, I reckon. Humph!"

That remark, if made on this particular occasion, would have been apparently justifiable. If one might judge by their age, the skippers of this trim yacht should certainly have been classed as amateurs. There were two of them. The larger, a youth of about sixteen or seventeen years of age, held the wheel and tended the main-sheet. The other, evidently a year or two younger, sat ready to tend the jib-sheets on either side as they tacked, shifting his seat accordingly. The yacht was beating down the river against the last of a flood-tide.

"We're doing finely, Henry," said the elder boy, as he glanced admiringly at the set of the mainsail, and then made a general proud survey of the craft from stem to stern and from cabin to topmast. "She does walk along like a lady and no mistake. She beats the *Surprise*— poor old boat! My, but I often think of that good little yacht I owned, sunk down there in the thoroughfare. We had lots of fun in her. But this one certainly more than takes her place."

"Who would ever have thought," he continued, "when we saw the strange men sail into the harbour last year, with this yacht, that she would turn out to be a stolen craft, and that she would one day be put up for sale, and that old Mrs. Newcome would buy her for us? It's like a story in a book."

"It's better than any story I ever read, Jack," responded the other boy. "It's a story with a stroke of luck at the end of it – and that's better than some of them turn out. But say, don't you think you better let me take my trick at the wheel? You know you are going to teach me how to sail her. I don't expect to make much of a fist of it, at the start; but I've picked up quite a little bit of yacht seamanship from my sailing with the Warren boys."

"That's so," conceded the other. "You must have got a pretty good notion of how to sail a boat, by watching them. Here, take the wheel. But you'll find that practice in real sailing, and just having it in your head from watching others, are two different things. However, you'll learn fast. I never knew any one who had any sort of courage, and any natural liking toward boat-sailing, but what he could pick it up fast, if he kept his eyes open."

"The first thing to do, to learn to sail a boat, is to take hold in moderate weather and work her yourself. And the next thing, is to talk to the fishermen and the yachtsmen, and listen when they get to spinning yarns and arguing. You can get a lot of information in that way that you can use, yourself, later on."

The younger boy took the wheel, while the other sat up alongside, directing his movements. But first he took the main-sheet and threw off several turns, where he had had it belayed on the cleat back of the wheel, and fastened it merely with a slip-knot, that could be loosed with a single smart pull on the free end.

"We won't sail with the sheet fast until you have had a few weeks at it, Henry," he said. "There are more boats upset from sheets fast at the wrong time, or from main-sheets with kinks in them, that won't run free when a squall hits, than from almost any other cause. And the river is a lot worse in that way than the open bay, for the flaws come quicker and sharper off these high banks."

Henry Bums, with the wheel in hand and an eye to the luff of the sail, as of one not wholly inexperienced, made no reply to the other's somewhat patronizing manner; but a quiet smile played about the corners of his mouth. If he had any notion that the other's extreme care was not altogether needed, he betrayed no sign of impatience, but took it in good part. Perhaps he realized that common failing of every yachtsman, to think that there is nobody else in all the world that can sail a boat quite as well as himself.

He knew, too, that Jack Harvey had, indeed, had by far a larger experience in sailing than he, though he had spent much of his time upon the water.

In any event, his handling of the boat now evidently satisfied the critical watchfulness of Jack Harvey; for that youth presently exclaimed, "That's it. Oh, you are going to make a skipper, all right. You take hold with confidence, too, and that's a good part of the trick."

At this point in their sailing, however, the yacht *Viking* seemed to have attracted somewhat more than the casual attention of an observer from shore. A little less than a quarter of a mile down the river, on a wharf that jutted some distance out from the bank, so that the river as it ran swerved swiftly by its spiling, a man stood waving to them.

“Hello,” said Henry Burns, espying the figure on the wharf, “there’s a tribute to the beauty of the *Viking*. Somebody probably thinks this is the president’s yacht and is saluting us.”

“Well, he means us, sure enough,” replied Jack Harvey, “and no joke, either. He’s really waving. He wants to hail us.”

The man had his hat in hand and was, indeed, waving it to them vigorously.

They had been standing across the river in an opposite direction to the wharf; but now, as Jack Harvey cast off the leeward jib-sheets, Henry Burns put the helm over, and the yacht swung gracefully and swiftly up into the wind and headed off on the tack inshore. Jack Harvey let the jibs flutter for a moment, until the yacht had come about, and Henry Burns had begun to check her from falling off the wind, by reversing the wheel. Then he quickly trimmed in on the sheets, and the jibs began to draw.

“Most beginners,” he said, “trim the jib in flat on the other side the minute they cast off the leeward sheet. But that delays her in coming about.”

Again the quiet smile on the face of Henry Burns, but he merely answered, “That’s so.”

They stood down abreast the wharf and brought her up, with sails fluttering. Jack Harvey, looking up from the side to the figure above on the wharf, called out, “Hello, were you waving to us?”

“Why, yes,” responded the man, “I was. Are you going down the river far?”

“Bound down to Southport,” said Harvey.

“Good!” exclaimed the stranger, and added, confidently, “I’ll go along with you part way, if you don’t mind. I’m on my way to Burton’s Landing, five miles below, and the steamboat doesn’t come along for three hours yet. I cannot get a carriage and I don’t want to walk. You don’t mind giving me a lift, do you? That’s a beautiful boat of yours, by the way.”

The man had an air of easy assurance; and, besides, the request was one that any yachtsman would willingly grant.

“Why, certainly,” replied Harvey, “we’ll take you, eh, Henry?”

“Pleased to do it,” responded Henry Burns.

They worked the yacht up alongside the wharf, and the stranger, grasping a stay, swung himself off and leaped down on to the deck. Then he pushed the boat’s head off with a vigorous shove and advanced, smilingly, with hand extended, to greet the boys. The *Viking* gathered headway and was once more going down-stream.

The stranger was a rather tall, well-built man, light on his feet, and handled himself as though he were no novice aboard a boat. He descended into the cockpit and shook hands with Jack Harvey and Henry Burns.

His voice, as he bade them good afternoon, was singularly full and deep, and seemed to issue almost oddly from behind a heavy, blond moustache. As Henry Burns expressed it afterward, it reminded him of a ventriloquist he had seen once with a travelling show, because the man’s lips seemed hardly to move, and the muscles of his face scarcely changed as he spoke. His eyes, of a clear but cold blue, lighted up, however, in a pleasant way, as he thanked them.

He wore a suit of navy blue, and a yachting-cap on his head.

“This is the greatest luck in the world for me,” he said. “You see, I want to catch the train that will take me down to Bellport, and I can get it at the Landing below. This fine craft of yours will take me – ”

He stopped with strange abruptness. If the attention of Jack Harvey and Henry Burns had, by chance, been directed more closely to him, and less upon the handling of their yacht, they might have observed a surprised and puzzled look come over his face. They might have observed him half-

start up from his seat, like a man that had suddenly come, all unwittingly, upon a thing he had not expected to see.

But the two boys, intent upon their sailing, noticed only that the man had left a sentence half-finished. They turned upon him inquiringly.

“What were you going to say?” asked Henry Burns.

The man settled back in his seat, reached a hand calmly into an inner coat-pocket, and drew forth a cigar-case.

“I dare say you don’t smoke,” he said, offering it to them. “No, well, I didn’t think so. You’re a little bit young for that. Let me see, what was I saying? – oh, yes, I was about to remark that this boat would take me down to the Landing on time. She does walk along prettily, and no mistake.”

With which, he lighted the cigar and began puffing enjoyably. But his eyes darted here and there, quickly, sharply, over the boat. Through a cloud of cigar smoke, he was scrutinizing it from one end to the other.

“You handle her well,” he said. “Had her long?”

“Why, no,” replied Harvey. “The fact is, though we have had other boats – that is, I have – and we have handled others, this is our first sail in this one. You see, we got her in an odd way, last season – just at the close of the season, in fact; and she was not in shape for sailing then. So we had to lay her up for the winter. This is really the first trying out we have given her.”

“Indeed, most interesting,” replied the stranger, arising from his seat and advancing toward the cabin bulkhead, where he stood, apparently gazing off across the river. Then, as he returned to his seat again, he added, “That’s rather an elaborate ornamenting of brass around the companionway.”

“Isn’t it, though!” exclaimed Harvey, proudly. “You don’t see them much handsomer than that often, eh?”

“Why, no, now you speak of it,” replied the man. “You don’t, and that’s a fact.”

“In fact,” he added, stealing a sidelong glance at the two boys, “it’s the only one just like it that I ever saw.”

“Pretty shore along here, isn’t it?” he remarked a few moments later, as they stood in near to where the spruces came down close to the water’s edge, with the ledges showing below. “What’s that you were saying about coming by the boat oddly? She looks to me as though your folks must have paid a good price for her.”

“Why, that’s the odd part of it,” answered Harvey. “The fact is, our folks didn’t pay for her at all. An old lady bought her for us. Made us a present of her. Perhaps you’d like to hear about it.”

“Indeed I should,” replied the stranger. “It will while away the time to the Landing.”

“You tell it, Henry,” said Harvey.

So Henry Burns began, while the stranger stretched his legs out comfortably and listened.

“Well,” said Henry Burns, “this yacht, the *Viking*, was named the *Eagle* when we first saw her.”

The stranger’s cigar was almost blazing with the vigour of his smoking.

“She came into the harbour of Southport – that’s on Grand Island, below here, where we are bound – one day last summer, to pick up a guest at the hotel. There were two men aboard her, and it turned out that these two men, and the man they were after at the hotel, had committed a robbery at Benton. That’s way up the river.

“Well, it’s a long story how they were discovered; but they were, and some jewels they had hidden were recovered. I said they were captured – but one, a man named Chambers, got away in this very yacht. But he came back, later, and set fire to the hotel for revenge.

“That was along toward the end of the summer. Then it happened that Jack, here, – Jack Harvey, – captured the man, Chambers, in this yacht, down in a thoroughfare below Grand Island. Jack’s boat, the *Surprise*, was sunk there, when the two yachts crashed together, bow on.”

“Poor old *Surprise!*” interrupted Jack Harvey.

“Well, then,” continued Henry Burns, “there is a man over at Southport, Squire Brackett, that hates all us boys, just because he is mean. He told Witham, the hotel proprietor, that he had seen us boys in the hotel basement, shortly before the fire; and he and Witham had us accused of setting it, although everybody in Southport was indignant about it. And all this time, Jack was on the right track, because he had seen the man running from the fire and had followed him over to the other shore of the island, and recognized the boat he sailed away in.

“So Jack sailed down the other side of the island, and captured the man, Chambers, in the thoroughfare; that is, Jack and his crew did. And they brought Chambers back just at the right time – and Squire Brackett and Witham were so ashamed they wanted to go and hide away somewhere.”

The man they had taken aboard looked smilingly at Henry Burns.

“That is certainly a remarkable story,” he said, knocking the ashes carelessly from the end of his cigar.

“Yes, but the rest of it is the oddest part of it,” responded Henry Burns. “There was an old lady named Mrs. Newcome, whose life we saved at the fire. She was furious at the squire and Witham for blaming us, and thankful enough when Jack got us out of it.

“Now, when Chambers was tried, he was so bitter against the other two who had got him into trouble, he confessed the yacht did not belong to any one of them. So the yacht was taken over by the sheriff, and advertisements were sent out all around to try to find the rightful owner. But they never did find him, and finally the yacht was condemned and put up for sale. There is where old Mrs. Newcome came in. She has no end of money, and no one to spend it on except herself and a cat. The yacht went cheap, and what did she do but buy it in and give it to us.”

Henry Burns paused, and there was silence for a few moments aboard the *Viking*. The stranger smoked without speaking, apparently lost in his own thoughts.

“That’s all of the yarn,” said Henry Burns, at length.

The man started to his feet, tossed his cigar away, and walked forward, with his hands in his pockets.

“That’s one of the oddest stories I ever heard,” he said. “You’re lucky chaps, aren’t you? Sounds like some novels I’ve read. By the way, isn’t that Burton’s Landing just ahead there?”

He seemed eager to get ashore.

“Yes, that is the Landing,” answered Harvey.

A few moments more and they were up to it, and the stranger was stepping ashore upon the pier.

“Well,” he said, shaking hands with them again, “I’m much obliged to both of you – really more than I can begin to tell you. Perhaps I can return the favour some day. My name is Charles Carleton. Live around at hotels pretty much, but spend most of my time in Boston. Hope I meet you again some day. Perhaps I may be down this way later, down the bay somewhere, if I like the looks of it, and the hotels. Good day.”

“Good day; you’re very welcome,” called out Henry Burns and Jack Harvey.

Again the yacht swung out into the river, gathering headway quickly and skimming along, heeling very gently.

The strange man stood watching her from the pier.

“No,” he said, softly, to himself, “I never saw but one boat just like her before. But who would have thought I should run across them the first thing? That was a stroke of luck.”

CHAPTER II. THE COLLISION

“Pleasant sort of a man, wasn’t he?” commented Harvey, as the *Viking* left the pier astern, and the stranger could be seen walking briskly up the road toward the town.

“Why, yes, he was, in a way,” responded Henry Burns. “Most persons manage to make themselves agreeable while one is doing them a favour. Really, though, he isn’t one of the open, hearty kind, though he did try to be pleasant. I don’t know why I think so, but he seemed sort of half-concealed behind that big moustache.”

Harvey laughed.

“That’s a funny notion,” he said.

“Well,” responded Henry Burns, “of course it wasn’t just that. But, at any rate, he is the kind of a man that has his own way about things. Did you notice, he didn’t exactly ask us to take him into the boat. He said, right out at the start, that he was going along with us – of course, if we were willing. But he was bound to come aboard, just the same, whether we were willing or not.”

“Hm!” said Harvey. “You do take notice of things, don’t you? I didn’t pay any attention to what he said; but, now I think of it, he did have that sort of way. However, we shall probably never set eyes on him again, so what’s the odds?”

They were getting down near to the mouth of the river now, and already, a mile ahead, the bay broadened out before their eyes.

The wind was blowing brisk, almost from the south by this time, and the first of the ebb-tide running down against it caused a meeting between the two that was not peaceful. At the point where river and bay blended, and for some distance back up the river, there was a heavy chop-sea tumbling and breaking in short, foam-capped waves. Farther out in the bay there was considerable of a sea running.

Harvey, lounging lazily on the seat opposite Henry Burns, suddenly sprang up and uttered an exclamation of surprise. Then he pointed on far ahead, over the port bow, to a tiny object that bobbed in the troubled waters of the river, low lying and indistinct.

“What do you make of that, Henry?” he cried.

“Why, it looks like a log from one of the mills up above,” replied the other, after he had observed it with some difficulty. “Oh, no, it isn’t,” he exclaimed the next moment. “There is something alive on it – or in it. Say, you don’t suppose it can be Tom Harris and Bob White, do you? That is a canoe, I believe.”

Without waiting to reply, Jack Harvey dodged quickly down the companionway, and returned, a moment later, from the cabin, holding a spy-glass in one hand.

“Hooray! clap that to your eye, Henry,” he cried, when he had taken a hasty survey ahead with it.

“That’s it!” exclaimed Henry Burns, taking a long look through the glass, while Harvey assumed his place at the wheel. “There they are, two of them, paddling away for good old Southport as hard as ever they can. There are two boys, as I make them out. Yes, it’s Tom and Bob, sure as you live. Won’t it seem like old times, though, to overhaul them? You keep the wheel, Jack. We can’t catch up with them any too soon to suit me.”

“Shall we give them a salute?” cried Harvey.

“No, let’s sail up on them and give them a surprise,” suggested the other. “They know we own the boat, but they haven’t seen her under sail since we have had her. They may not recognize us.”

While the yacht *Viking* was parting the still moderate waves with its clean-cut bows, and laying a course that would bring it up with the canoe in less than a half-hour, the occupants of the tiny craft

were bending hard to their paddles, pushing head on into the outer edge of the chop-sea. They were making good time, despite the sea and the head wind.

“There go a couple of them Indians from away up the river yonder,” sang out a man forward on a stubby, broad-bowed coaster to the man at the wheel, as the canoe passed a two-master beating across the river. The boys in the canoe chuckled.

“Guess we must be getting good and black, Bob,” said the boy who wielded the stern paddle to the other in the bow. “And our first week on the water, at that, for the season.”

“Yes, we’ve laid the first coat on pretty deep,” responded his companion, glancing with no little pride and satisfaction at a pair of brown and muscular arms and a pair of sunburned shoulders, revealed to good advantage by a blue, sleeveless jersey that looked as though it had seen more than one summer’s outing.

“What do you think of the bay, Tom?” he added, addressing the other boy. This youth, similarly clad and similarly bronzed and reddened, was handling his paddle like a practised steersman and was directing the canoe’s course straight down the bay, as though aiming fair at some point far away on an island that showed vaguely fifteen miles distant.

“Oh, it’s all right,” answered Tom. “It’s all right for this evening. Plenty of rough water from now until seven or eight o’clock to-night, but it’s just the usual sea that a southerly raises in the bay. We won’t get into any such scrape as we did last year, when we came down here, not knowing the bay nor the coast of Grand Island, and let a storm catch us and throw us out pell-mell on the shore. We’ll not give our friends, the Warren boys, another such a fright this year. We can get across all right – that is, if you don’t mind a bit of a splashing over the bows.”

“It won’t be the first time, – nor the last, for that matter, I reckon,” responded Bob.

“And I always get my share of it, in the end, too,” said the other boy; “because when it sprays aboard it runs down astern and I have to kneel in it. Well, on we go, then. It’s fifteen miles of rough water, but think how we’ll eat when we get there.”

“Won’t we?” agreed Bob. “Say, now you speak of it, I’m hungry already. I could eat as much as young Joe Warren used to every time he took dinner at the hotel. He used to try to make old Witham lose money – do you remember? – and I think he always won.”

“Hello!” he exclaimed, a moment later, as he looked back for an instant toward the stem. “Just glance around, Tom, and take a look at that yacht coming down the river. Isn’t she a beauty? I wouldn’t mind a summer’s cruise in her, myself.”

“Whew!” exclaimed the other, as he held his paddle hard against the gunwale and glanced back. “She is a pretty one, and no mistake. She’s about as fine as we often see down this way. I don’t recall seeing anything handsomer in the shape of a yacht around the bay last summer, unless it was the one Chambers had – you know, the man that set the hotel afire.

“I believe it is the very yacht,” he continued. “There isn’t another one like it around here. You remember the boys wintered her down the river.”

“Yes, but wouldn’t they hail us?” asked Bob.

“Perhaps not,” answered Tom. “Henry Burns likes to surprise people. They are due down the bay about this time. At any rate, we shall have a chance to see the yacht close aboard, for she is heading dead up for us.”

The yacht *Viking* was indeed holding up into the wind on a course that would bring her directly upon the canoemen, if she did not go about. She kept on, and presently the boys in the canoe ceased their paddling and watched her approach.

“She won’t run us down, will she, Tom?”

“No, they see us, all right.”

There was evidence of this the next moment, for a small cannon, somewhere forward on the deck of the yacht, gave a short, spiteful bark that made the canoemen jump. There followed immediately the deep bellowing of a big fog-horn and the clattering of a huge dinner-bell; while,

at the same time, two yachtsmen aboard the strange craft appeared at the rail, waving and blowing and ringing alternately at the occupants of the canoe. A moment later, the yacht rounded to a short distance up-wind from the canoe, and the hail of familiar voices came across the water:

“Ahoy, you chaps in that canoe, there! Come aboard here, lively now, if you don’t want that cockle-shell blown out of water. Hurry up before we get the cannon trained on you! We know you, Tom Harris, and you, Bob White, and you can’t escape.”

“Well, what do you think!” exclaimed Tom Harris, raising himself up from his knees in the stem of the canoe, with a hand on either gunwale, “if there isn’t that old Henry Burns and Jack Harvey. Say, where in the world did you fellows steal that yacht, and where are you running off to with it? Don’t tell us you own it. You know you don’t.”

“Just hurry up and come alongside here and we’ll show you,” cried Henry Burns, joyfully. “Our ship’s papers are all right, eh, Jack?”

The boys in the canoe needed no urging. A few sharp thrusts with the paddles brought them under the lee of the *Viking*; a line thrown aboard by Bob White was caught by Harvey and made fast; and the next moment, Bob White and Tom Harris were in the cockpit, mauling Henry Burns with mock ferocity – a proceeding which was received by that young gentleman serenely, but with interest well returned – and shaking hands with the other stalwart young skipper, Jack Harvey.

The bow-line of the canoe was carried astern by Harvey and tied, so that the canoe would tow behind; and the yacht was put on her course again.

“You don’t mind taking a spin for a way in the good ship *Viking*, do you?” asked Harvey. “I have hardly seen you since we got this yacht, you know, as my folks moved up to Boston the last of the summer.”

“We will go along a little way till we strike the worst of the chop,” replied Tom Harris. “Our canoe will not tow safely through that. That is, we will, if you allow Indians aboard.”

“Yes, and by the way, before anybody else has the chance to apply,” said Bob White, “you don’t want to hire a couple of foremast hands, do you, off and on during the summer? I’d be proud to swab the decks of this boat, and wages of no account.”

“We’ll engage both of you at eighteen sculpins a week,” answered Henry Burns. “But of course you know that the laws against flogging seamen don’t go, aboard here. Harvey there, he is my first mate; and I make it a rule to beat him with a belaying-pin three or four times a day, regular, to keep him up to his work. Of course you forecastle chaps will get it worse.”

Harvey, surveying his more slender companion, saluted with great deference.

“How do you fellows happen to be up here?” he asked. “Haven’t you gone to camping yet?”

“Yes,” replied Bob. “The old tent is down there on the point. We have had it set up for three days. We had an errand that brought us up here.”

“And the Warren boys?” inquired Henry Burns.

“Oh, they are down there in the cottage, sort of camping out, too; that is, the family hasn’t arrived yet. George and Arthur are working like slaves trying to keep young Joe fed.”

“*He’s* a whole famine in himself,” remarked Henry Burns.

“Say, how is old Mrs. Newcome’s cat, Henry, the one you saved from the fire?” asked Tom Harris.

“Why, the cat hasn’t written me lately,” answered Henry Burns. “But I got a letter from Mrs. Newcome a few weeks ago; said she hoped we would have a good summer in the yacht, lots of fun, and all that.”

“My! but you are lucky,” exclaimed Bob. “I have been as polite as mice to every cat I’ve seen all winter, but I haven’t received any presents for it.”

Renewing old acquaintanceships in this manner, they were shortly in rougher water.

“Here!” cried Tom Harris at length, “we must be getting out of this. That canoe will not stand towing in this chop much longer. We shall have to leave you.”

“Pull it in aboard,” said Jack Harvey.

“No, it would be in the way,” replied Tom Harris. “Just as much obliged to you. We’ll meet you at the camp. Say that you will come ashore and eat supper with us, and Bob will have one of those fine chowders waiting for you; won’t you, Bob?”

“Ay, ay, sir,” replied Bob.

“You mean that you will cook one while we sit by and watch you, don’t you?” asked Harvey. “We shall get there before you do.”

“Perhaps not,” returned Bob. “You have got to beat down, while we push right through. It is four o’clock now, and there’s some fourteen miles to go. We can do that in about three hours, because when we get across the bay we can go close alongshore under the lee, in smooth water; while you will have to stick to the rough part of the bay most of the time.”

“All right,” said Harvey, “we will have a race to see who gets there first. But we’ll do it in half that time.”

So saying, he luffed the *Viking* into the wind, while Bob White drew the dancing canoe alongside. The canoeists and the yachtsmen parted company, the *Viking*’s sails filling with the breeze, as she quickly gathered headway, throwing the spray lightly from her bows; the canoe plunging stubbornly into the rough water, and forcing its way slowly ahead, propelled by the energy of strong young arms.

The *Viking* stood over on the starboard tack, while the canoe made a direct course for the island; and the two craft were soon far apart. In the course of a half-hour the canoe appeared from the deck of the *Viking* a mere dancing, foam-dashed object. But, in the meantime, another boat had appeared, some way ahead, that attracted the attention and interest of the yachtsmen. It was a small sailboat, carrying a mainsail and single jib. The smaller yacht was coming up to them from the direction of Grand Island, and was now running almost squarely before the wind, with its jib flapping to little purpose, save that it now and then filled for a moment on one side or the other, as the breeze happened to catch it.

“There’s a boat that is being badly sailed,” exclaimed Harvey, as the two watched its progress. “Look at it pitch; and look at that boom, how near it comes to hitting the waves every time it rolls. There’s a chap that doesn’t know enough, evidently, to top up his boom when running in a seaway. What does he think topping-lifts are made for, anyway, if not to lift the boom out of the reach of a sea like this?”

“And let me tell you, running square before the wind in a heavy sea, with a boat rolling like that, is reckless business, anyway. It is much better to lay a course not quite so direct, and run with the wind not squarely astern, with the sheet hauled in some. That’s no fisherman sailing that boat.”

“It may be some one caught out who doesn’t know how to get back,” said Henry Burns. “See, there he is, waving to us. He is in some trouble or other. Let’s stand on up close to him and see what the matter is.”

“Well, I’ll take the chance,” replied Harvey. “There, he’s doing better now. He is pointing up a little bit. We’ll keep on this tack and run pretty close to him, and hail him. I’ll just sing out to him about that topping-lift, anyway; and if he doesn’t like our interfering, why he can come aboard and thrash us.”

As the sailboat drew nearer, there appeared to be a single occupant, a youth of about Harvey’s age, perhaps a year older, holding the tiller. His hat was gone and he was standing up, with hair dishevelled, glaring wildly ahead, in a confused sort of way. The boom of the sailboat was well out on the starboard side. Harvey kept the *Viking* on the starboard tack, and near enough to have passed quite close to the other boat.

A little too close, in fact, considering that the youth at the tiller of the oncoming boat had, indeed, completely lost his head. Suddenly, without warning, he put his tiller over so that the sailboat headed away from the *Viking* for an instant. Then, as the wind got back of his sail, and the boat at

the same time rolled heavily in the seas, the boom jibed with terrific force. The sailboat swung in swiftly toward the starboard beam of the *Viking*, and the wind and sea knocked it down so that the water poured in over the side, threatening to swamp it. At the instant, Jack Harvey had thrown the *Viking* off the wind to avoid a crash with the other boat. The boom of the sailboat swept around with amazing swiftness, and then, as the boat careened, threatening to founder, the end of the boom brought up with a smashing blow against the *Viking*'s starboard quarter, breaking off several feet of the boom and tearing the sail badly.

The sailboat, half-filled with water, fell heavily into the trough of the sea and rolled threateningly; while at every pitch the boom struck the waves as though it would break again.

The *Viking*, under Jack Harvey's guidance, stood away a short distance, then came about and beat up in to the wind a rod or two above the wreck.

"Get that mainsail down as quick as ever you can!" shouted Jack Harvey to the strange youth, who had dropped the tiller, and who stood now at the rail, dancing about frantically, as though he intended to jump overboard.

"I can't," cried the youth, tremulously. "Oh, come aboard here quick, won't you? I'm going to sink and drown. This boat's going down. I don't know how to handle her."

"We guessed that," remarked Henry Burns, and added, reassuringly, "Don't lose your head now. You know where the halyards are. Go ahead and get your sail down, and we'll stand by and help you."

Henry Burns's calm manner seemed to instil a spark of courage into the youth. He splashed his way up to the cabin bulkhead, where the halyards were belayed on cleats on either side, and let them run. The sail dropped a little way and then stuck. The youth turned to the other boys appealingly.

"Pull up on your peak-halyard a little," said Jack Harvey, "and let the throat drop first a way. Then the throat won't stick."

The youth made another attempt and the sail came nearly down, hanging in bagging folds.

"Lucky that's not a heavy sail nor a heavy boom," exclaimed Jack Harvey, "or the boat would be over and sunk by this time. I think I could lift the boom inboard if I could only get aboard there."

"Here," cried Harvey, coiling up a light, strong line that he had darted into the cabin after, "catch this and make it fast up forward – and mind you tie a knot that will hold."

He threw the line across, and it was clutched by the boy aboard the smaller boat. The boy carried it forward and did as Harvey had directed.

"Now," said Harvey to Henry Burns, as he made fast the line astern, "the moment we get near enough so that I can jump aboard, you bring the *Viking* right on her course, with a good full, so she won't drift back on to the wreck completely."

He, himself, held the wheel of the *Viking* long enough to allow the yacht to come into the wind a little. Thus it lost headway sufficiently so that the seas caused it to drift back, without its coming about or losing all steerageway. Then, as the *Viking* drifted within reach of the smaller boat, he leaped quickly and landed safely on the deck. At the same time, or an instant later, Henry Burns threw the wheel of the *Viking* over so that the yacht gathered headway again and tautened the rope that connected the two boats.

CHAPTER III. A RESCUE UNREWARDED

Harvey, having landed on the deck of the sailboat, steadied himself by grasping the starboard stay, and took a quick, comprehensive glance over the situation. A foot and a half or so of the boom had split off from the end, and the mainsail was badly torn. The main-sheet had been snapped by the jibing of the boom, but the break in the boom was beyond the point where the sheet was fastened. The broken end of the sheet was trailing in the water. The boat could be got in hand if that were regained.

Seizing the end of the main-sheet that remained in the boat, and casting it loose from the cleat, Harvey found he had still the use of a rope of considerable length. Coiling this up, and hanging it over one arm, he regained the deck, over the small cabin, and took up his position on the port side of the boat. The stay on that side had been saved from carrying away only because the quarter of the *Viking* had arrested the force of the boom. Having this stay, then, to hold fast to, Harvey leaned over the side, as far as he was able, passed an end of the rope about the boom, took a turn, and made it fast.

Carrying the other end aft, Harvey handed it to the youth, who stood gazing at his efforts stupidly, evidently knowing not in the least what to do.

“Now you hold on to that,” said Harvey, “and when I tell you to, you haul as hard as ever you can.”

The youth took the rope silently and sullenly.

Harvey sprang again upon the deck, caught the flying ends of the halyards and ran the mainsail up. It was slow work, for the sail was soaked with water, and the tear in it began to rip more when the strain was brought to bear. When Harvey had hoisted the sail sufficiently so that the topping-lift would have lifted the boom, he started for that; but it had parted, and was of no use.

“Well,” said Harvey, “we’ll get the boom up a little more, with the sail, no matter if it does tear. We can’t help it.”

So he took another pull at the peak-halyard. The boom lifted a little.

“That’s enough,” said Harvey. “Now haul in on that sheet lively, before the sail tears any more. Get that boom in quick!”

The youth, with no great spirit nor heartiness in his movements, did as directed, and the boom came inboard. Then Harvey once more dropped the sail.

He was brim full of life, was Jack Harvey, and now that there was something here worth doing, and necessary to be done quickly, he was eager with the spirit of it.

“Have you got anything aboard here to bail with?” he asked, hurriedly; and, without waiting for the more sluggish movements of the other, he darted forward, through the water in the cockpit, to where he had espied a pail half-submerged under the seat. With this he began bailing furiously, dipping up the pailfuls and dashing them out over the side, as though the boat were sinking and he had but one chance for life in a hundred.

Harvey was working in this way, with never a thought of his companion, when presently there came a hail from the *Viking*. He paused and looked across the water to where Henry Burns was standing at the wheel of the larger craft, with a look of amusement on his face.

“I say, Jack,” called Henry Burns, drawling very slightly, as was his habit at times when other youths of more excitable temperament would speak quickly, “that other chap aboard there is just dying to help bail the boat. Why don’t you let him do his share of it?”

Harvey glanced back astern at his companion of the sailboat. What he saw caused an angry flush to spread over his face. But the next moment the cool effrontery of it made him laugh.

The youth whom Harvey’s surprised gaze rested upon was a rather tall, thin, sallow chap, with an expression on his face that looked like a perpetual sneer. He wore no yachting costume nor clothing

of any sort fit for roughing it. Instead, he was rather flashily dressed, in clothes more often affected by men of sporting propensities than youths of any age. In a scarf of brilliant and gaudy tint he wore a large pin in the form of a horseshoe, with imitation brilliants in it. In fact, his dress and whole demeanour were of one who had a far more intimate knowledge of certain phases of life than he should. A telltale smear upon the fingers of his right hand told of the smoking habit, which accounted for his thin and sallow appearance – and which habit was now in evidence.

It was this latter that particularly angered Harvey, as he paused, perspiring, from his work.

The youth had seated himself calmly on the edge of the after-rail, with an elbow rested on one knee. In this comfortable attitude, and smoking a cigarette, he was aimlessly watching Harvey work.

Harvey glared for a moment in amazement. Then his face relaxed.

“I say!” he exclaimed, throwing down the pail, wiping his brow, and advancing aft toward the other youth, “this seems to be a sort of afternoon tea, or reception, with cigarettes provided by the host.”

“No, thanks,” he added, shortly, as the other reached a hand into his pocket and proffered a box of them. “You’re just too kind and generous for anything. But I don’t smoke them. Some of my crew used to. But I tell little Tim Reardon that that’s what keeps him from growing any. He’s at them all the time. Guess you are, too, by the looks of you.”

Harvey glanced rather contemptuously at the lean, attenuated arm that the other displayed, where he had rolled his cuffs back.

“Well, you don’t have to smoke them if you don’t want to,” said the other, surlily. “But don’t preach. I’m as old as you are. My smoking is my business.”

“Of course it is,” said Harvey. “I don’t care whether you smoke or not. But what I object to is your doing the smoking and letting me do the work. Your smoking is your business, and so is bailing out your own boat your business – that is, your share of it is. Now, if you want any more help from me, you just break up this smoking party and take that pail and go to bailing. I’ve got enough to keep me busy while you are doing that.”

The youth glanced angrily at Harvey, but made no reply. Harvey’s stalwart figure forbade any unpleasant retort. Sullenly, he tossed away the half-finished cigarette, slumped down once more into the cockpit, took up the pail that Harvey had dropped, and went to work.

“He looks like a real man now,” called out Henry Burns.

The youth, with eyes flashing, shot one glance at the smiling face of Henry Burns, but deigned no reply.

Harvey, without further notice of his companion, proceeded to hoist the sail a little so that he could take two reefs in it. This brought the sail down so small as to include the torn part in that tied in. The sail would, therefore, answer for the continuation of the trip.

“Say,” asked Harvey finally, “why didn’t you reef before, when it began to blow up fresh and the sea got a bit nasty? You might have saved all this.”

The youth hesitated, glanced at Harvey sheepishly, and mumbled something that sounded like he didn’t know why he hadn’t.

“Hm!” said Harvey, under his breath. “He didn’t know enough.

“Well,” he continued, after a little time, “you’re all right to start off again, if you think you can get along. That sail is down so small it won’t give you any more trouble, and there is plenty of it to keep headway on the boat; that is, if you are going on up the bay. Where are you bound for, anyway?”

“Up to Springton,” replied the other. “Straight ahead.”

“All right,” said Harvey, “you can get there if you will only be a little more careful. Don’t try to run straight for the town. Keep off either way – do you see?” And Harvey designated how the other could run in safety.

“Run on one course a way,” he said, continuing, “and then put her about and run on the other. But look out and don’t jibe her. Let her come about into the wind. Now do you think you can get along?”

“Yes,” answered the youth, shortly. He had by this time finished his bailing, and the cockpit floor was fairly free of water.

“Well, then, I’ll bid you an affectionate farewell,” said Harvey, who had taken mental note of the fact that the youth had not offered to thank him for all his trouble. “Sorry to leave you, but the best of friends must part, you know. Good day.”

“Good day,” answered the youth, without offering even to shake hands.

Harvey lost little time in regaining the deck of the *Viking*. Henry Burns was still smiling as Harvey took the wheel from him.

“We seem to have made a very pleasant acquaintance,” he said.

“Haven’t we though!” exclaimed Harvey. “If we were only in some nice, quiet harbour, where the water wasn’t very deep, I’d just see whether that young chap can swim or not. He’d get one ducking – ”

“Oh, by the way,” called Henry Burns, as the two boats were separating, “you’re entirely welcome to our assistance, you know. You needn’t write us a letter thanking us. We know your feelings are just too deep for thanks.”

“Little thanks I owe you,” snarled the other boy. “’Twas all your fault, anyway. If you had kept off, my boat wouldn’t have gone over.”

Jack Harvey sprang from his seat and shook his fist in the direction of the disappearing boat.

“Hold on there, Jack,” said Henry Burns, catching him by the arm. “Don’t get excited. Do you know the answer to what he just said? Well, there isn’t any. Just smile and wave your hand to him, as I do. He’s really funnier than Squire Brackett.”

“Oh, yes, it is funny,” answered Jack Harvey, scowling off astern. “It’s so funny it makes me sick. But perhaps you’d think it was funnier still, if you had gone at that bailing the way I did, and had looked up all of a sudden and seen that chap sitting back there at his ease, smoking. I’ll just laugh about it for the rest of the week. That’s what I will.”

Jack Harvey certainly did not appear to be laughing.

“Above all things,” he said at length, “what do you suppose he meant by saying it was our fault? That’s the last straw for me. We didn’t jibe his boat for him.”

“No,” said Henry Burns, “but he probably owns the bay, and was mad to see us sailing on it. He acted that way.”

“Well, it has cost us about an hour and a half good time,” exclaimed Harvey – “though I should not begrudge it if he hadn’t acted the way he did. We won’t win that race in to Southport, by a long shot. It’s about half-past six o’clock, and we cannot make it in less than two hours and a half, even if the wind holds.”

This latter condition expressed by Harvey was, indeed, to prove most annoying. With the dropping of the sun behind the far-distant hills, the wind perceptibly and rapidly diminished. They set their club-topsail to catch the upper airs, but the last hour was sluggish sailing. It was a few minutes to ten o’clock when the *Viking* rounded the bluff that guards the northeastern entrance to the snug harbour of Southport.

“There’s no show for that warm supper to-night, I’m afraid,” said Harvey, as they turned the bluff and stood slowly into the harbour.

The immediate answer to this remark was an “Ahoy, there, on board the *Viking!*” from across the water. The next moment, the familiar canoe shot into sight and Tom Harris and Bob White were quickly on deck.

“We beat you fellows by a few minutes,” said Tom Harris, laughing at Harvey.

“Look out for Jack,” said Henry Burns, with a wink at the other two. “He has been having so much fun that he doesn’t want any more. And, besides, he’s starving – and so am I; and we might eat little boys up if they plague us.”

“Why, what’s the matter?” asked Tom, observing that Harvey was half-scowling as he smiled at Henry Burns’s sally.

“Oh, we have been entertaining a friend up the bay,” answered Henry Burns, “and he didn’t appreciate what Jack did for him. Seriously now, I don’t blame Jack for being furious.” And Henry Burns gave a graphic account of the adventure.

When he had finished, both Tom Harris and Bob White gave vent to whistles of surprise.

“Say,” exclaimed Bob White, “you couldn’t guess who that young chap is, if you tried a hundred years.”

“Why, do you know him, then?” cried Jack Harvey.

“Yes, and you will know him, too, before the summer is over,” replied Bob White. “That’s Harry Brackett, Squire Brackett’s son.”

“Didn’t know he had any,” exclaimed Harvey.

“Neither did we till this summer,” said Bob White. “He dropped in on us one day, early, and wanted to borrow some money. That was up in Benton. He said he must have it, to get right back to Southport; and Tom’s father let him have a little. But we saw him several days after that driving about the streets with a hired rig. So that’s where the money went, and I think Mr. Harris will never see the money again. He’s been off to school for two years, so he says; but if he has learned anything except how to smoke, he doesn’t show it.

“But, never mind that now,” added Bob. “Let’s get the *Viking* in to anchorage and made snug, for you know there’s something waiting for you over to the camp.”

“What! You don’t mean you have kept supper waiting for us all this time?” cried Henry Burns, joyfully.

“Oh, but you are a pair of bricks!” exclaimed Harvey, as Bob White nodded an affirmative. “I can smell that fish chowder that Bob makes clear out here.”

A few minutes later, the four boys, weighting the canoe down almost to the gunwales, were gliding in it across the water to a point of land fronting the harbour, where, through the darkness, the vague outlines of a tent were to be discerned. Soon the canoe grazed along a shelf of ledge, upon which they stepped. Tom Harris sprang up the bank and vanished inside the tent. Then the light of a lantern shone out, illuminating the canvas, and Tom Harris, as host, stood in the doorway, holding aside the flap for them to enter.

Inside the tent, which had a floor of matched boards, freighted down from up the river for the purpose, it was comfortable and cosy. Along either side, a bunk was set up, made of spruce poles, with boards nailed across, and hay mattresses spread over these. There were two roughly made chairs, which, with the bunks, provided sufficient seats for all. At the farther end of the tent, on a box, beside another big wooden box that served for a locker, was an oil-stove, which was now lighted and upon which there rested an enormous stew-pan.

The cover being removed from this, there issued forth an aroma of fish chowder that brought a broad grin even to the face of Jack Harvey.

“Hooray!” he yelled, grasping Bob White about the waist, giving him a bearlike embrace, and releasing him only to bestow an appreciative blow upon his broad back. “It’s the real thing. It’s one of Bob’s best. It is a year since I had one, but I remember it like an old friend.”

“You get the first helping, for the compliment,” said Bob White, ladle in hand.

“And only to think,” said Henry Burns, some moments later, as he leaned back comfortably, spoon in hand, “that that was Squire Brackett’s son we helped out of the scrape. He certainly has the squire’s pleasing manner, hasn’t he, Jack?”

“Henry,” replied Jack Harvey, solemnly, “don’t you mention that young Brackett again to me to-night. If you do, I’ll put sail on the *Viking* and go out after him.”

“Then I won’t say another word,” exclaimed Henry Burns. “For my part, I hope never to set eyes on him again.”

Unfortunately, that wish was not to be gratified.

CHAPTER IV. SQUIRE BRACKETT DISCOMFITED

“But say,” inquired Henry Burns, in a somewhat disappointed tone, as they were about to begin, “where are the fellows? It doesn’t seem natural to me to arrive at Southport and not have them on hand. Didn’t you tell them we were coming?”

“Didn’t have a chance,” replied Bob. “We went up to the cottage, but there wasn’t anybody there. Then we met Billy Cook, and he said he saw all three of them away up the island this afternoon.”

Henry Burns went to the door of the tent and looked over the point of land, up the sweep of the cove.

“They have come back,” he exclaimed. “There’s a light in the cottage. Come on, let’s hurry up and eat, and get over there.”

But at that very moment the light went out.

“Hello!” he said. “There they go, off to bed. Guess they must be tired. Too bad, for I simply cannot stand it, not to go over to the cottage to-night – just to look at the cottage, if nothing more. And I am afraid if I do, I may make a little noise, accidentally, and wake one of them up.”

Henry Burns said this most sympathizingly; but there was a twinkle in the corners of his eyes.

“Come on, Henry,” cried Harvey, “you are missing the greatest chowder you ever saw.”

“Looks as though I might miss a good deal of it, by the way you are stowing it aboard,” replied Henry Burns, reëntering the tent and observing the manner in which Harvey was attacking his dish, while Tom and Bob looked on admiringly.

“Never mind, Henry,” said Bob. “There’s enough. And, besides, Harvey is a delicate little chap. He needs nourishing food and plenty of it.”

Harvey squared his broad shoulders and smiled.

“I’m beginning to get good-natured once more,” he said.

The campers’ quarters were certainly comfortable enough to make most any one feel good-natured. The tent was roomy; the stove warmed it gratefully against the night air, which still had some chill in it; the warm supper tasted good after the long, hard day’s sailing; and Tom and Bob were genial hosts.

Outside, the waves, fallen from their boisterousness of the afternoon to gentle murmurings, were rippling in with a pleasing sound against the point of land whereon the camp stood. The breeze was soft, though lacking the mildness of the later summer, and the night was clear and starlit.

It had passed the half-hour after ten o’clock when the boys had finished eating. They arose and went out in front of the tent.

“It is all dark over yonder at the Warren cottage,” said Tom. “What do you think – had we better go over? The fellows are surely asleep.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Henry Burns. “Why, they would never forgive me if I didn’t go over the first night I arrived here. We can just go over and leave our cards at the front door. Of course we don’t have to wake them up if they are asleep.”

“Oh, of course not,” exclaimed Harvey. “But just wait a moment, and I’ll go out aboard and bring in that fog-horn and that dinner-bell.”

“We’ll get them in the canoe, Jack,” said Bob. He and Harvey departed, and returned shortly, bringing with them a fog-horn that was not by any means a toy affair, but for serious use, to give warning in the fog to oncoming steamers; likewise, a gigantic dinner-bell, used for the same purpose aboard the *Viking*.

“We haven’t anything in camp fit to make much of a noise with,” said Tom, almost apologetically. “We keep our tent anchored in a fog, you know.”

“Who said anything about making a noise?” inquired Henry Burns, innocently; and then added, “Never mind, there’s stuff enough up at the cottage.”

They proceeded without more delay up through the little clump of spruce-trees which shaded the camp on the side toward the village, and struck into the road that led through the sleeping town. Sleepy by day, even, the little village of Southport, which numbered only about a score of houses, clustered about the harbour, was seized with still greater drowsiness early of nights. Its inhabitants, early to rise, were likewise early to bed; and the place, before the summer visitors arrived, was wont to fall sound asleep by nine o’clock.

It was very still, therefore, as the boys went on up the main street. Presently they turned off on a road to the right that led along the shore of the cove, and back of which was a line of summer cottages, now for the most part unopened for the season.

“There’s Captain Sam’s,” remarked Henry Burns, as they passed a little frame cottage just before they had come to the turn of the road. “I’d like to give him one salute for old time’s sake. He’s the jolliest man in Southport.”

“He is not at home,” said Tom. “We asked about him to-day, when we got in. He started up the bay this afternoon. Queer you did not see him out there somewhere.”

“Why, we saw one or two boats off in the distance at the time of the collision,” said Harvey; “but we were pretty much occupied just about that time, eh, Henry? I didn’t notice what boats they were.”

They were approaching the Warren cottage by this time, and their conversation ceased. The cottage was the last in the row that skirted the cove, somewhat apart from all the others, occupying a piece of high ground that overlooked the cove and the bay, and affording a view away beyond to the off-lying islands. This view was obtained through a thin grove of spruces, with which the island abounded, and which made a picturesque foreground.

The cottage itself was roomy and comfortable, with a broad piazza extending around the front and one side. Upon this piazza the boys now stepped, quietly – “so as not to disturb the sleepers,” Henry Burns put in.

“Well, Henry, what’s up? You are master of ceremonies, you know,” said Tom.

“Why, we want to wake them very gently at first,” replied Henry Burns. “You know it is not good for any one to be frightened out of his sleep. They might not grow any more; and it might take away young Joe’s appetite – No, it would take more than that to do it,” he added.

They stepped around cautiously to the front door. As they had surmised, the peacefulness of Southport made locks and keys a matter more of form than usage, and the Warren boys had not turned the key in the lock. They entered softly.

“Hark! what’s that?” whispered Bob.

They paused on tiptoe. A subdued, choky roar, or growl, was borne down the front stairway from above.

“You ought to know that sound by this time,” said Henry Burns. “It’s young Joe, snoring. Don’t you remember how the other boys used to declare he would make the boat leak, by jarring it with that racket, when we had to sleep aboard last summer? Why, he used to have black and blue spots up and down his legs, where George and Arthur kicked him awake, so they could go to sleep.”

The sound was, indeed, prodigious for one boy to make.

“We may as well have some light on the subject,” said Henry Burns, striking a match and lighting the hanging-lamp in the sitting-room. It shed a soft glow over the place and revealed a room prettily furnished; the hardwood floor reflecting from its polished surface the rays from the lamp; a generous fireplace in one corner; and, more to the purpose at present, some big easy chairs, in which the boys made themselves at home.

But first a peep into the Warren kitchen pantry rewarded Bob with a mighty iron serving-tray, and Tom with a pair of tin pot-covers, which, grasped by their handles and clashed together, would serve famously as cymbals.

“Now,” said Henry Burns, when they were all assembled and comfortably seated, “you remember how we used to imitate the village band when it practised nights in the loft over the old fish-house? Well, I’ll be the cornet; Tom, you’re the bass horn – ”

“He is when his voice doesn’t break,” remarked Bob, slyly.

“That’s all right,” replied Henry Burns. “Every musician strikes a false note once in awhile, you know.” And he continued, “You are the slide-trombone, Jack; and you, Bob, come in with that shrieking whistle through your fingers for the flute.”

“Great!” exclaimed Bob. “What shall we try?”

“Oh, we’ll give them ‘Old Black Joe’ for a starter,” said Henry Burns, “just out of compliment to young black Joe up-stairs.”

Presently, there arose through the stillness of the house, and was wafted up the stairway, an unmelodious, mournful discord, that may perhaps have borne some grotesque resemblance to the old song they had chosen, but was, indeed, a most atrocious and melancholy rendering of it.

Then they paused to listen.

There was no answering sound from above, save that the snoring of young Joe was no longer deep and regular, but broken and short and sharp, like snorts of protest.

“Repeat!” ordered Henry Burns to his grinning band.

Again the combined assault on “Old Black Joe” began.

Then they paused again.

The snoring of young Joe was broken off abruptly, with one particularly loud outburst on his part. There was, also, the creaking of a bed in another room, and a sound as of some one sitting bolt upright.

“Here, you Joe! Quit that! What on earth are you doing?” called out the voice of George Warren, in tones which denoted that he had awakened from slumber, but not to full consciousness of what had waked him, except that it was some weird sound.

Then another voice, more sleepily than the other: “What’s the matter, George? Keep quiet, and let a fellow go to sleep.”

“Why, it’s that young Joe’s infernal nonsense, I suppose,” exclaimed the elder brother. “Now, that will be enough of that, Joe. It isn’t funny, you know.”

“That’s it! always blaming me for something,” came the answer from the youngest boy’s room. “You fellows are dreaming – gracious, no! I hear a voice down-stairs.”

It was the voice of Henry Burns saying solemnly, “Repeat.”

“Old Black Joe,” out of time, out of tune, turned inside out and scarcely recognizable, again arose to the ears of the now fully aroused Warren brothers.

There was the sound of some one leaping out of bed upon the bare chamber floor.

“Now you get back into bed there, Joe!” came the voice of George Warren, peremptorily. “Let those idiots, Tom and Bob, amuse themselves till they get tired, if they think it’s funny. We are not going to get up to-night, and that’s all there is about it. Say, you fellows go on now, and let us alone. We’re tired, and we are not going to get up.”

“Too dictatorial, altogether,” commented Henry Burns, softly. “Give them the full band now, good and lively.”

So saying, he seized the huge dinner-bell; Harvey took up the great fog-horn; Tom and Bob, the pot-covers and serving-tray, respectively. A hideous din, that was the combined blast of the deep horn, the clanging reverberation of the tray beaten upon by Bob’s stout fist, the bellowing of the dinner-bell and the clash of cymbals, roared and stormed through the walls of the Warren cottage, as though bedlam had broken loose. The rafters fairly groaned with it.

Down the stairway appeared a pair of bare legs. Then the form and face of young Joe came into view. He stared for a moment wildly at the occupants of the Warren easy chairs, and the next moment let out a whoop of delight.

“Oh, hooray!” he yelled. “Come on, George. Come on, Arthur. Hurry up! Oh, my! but it’s Henry Burns.”

A small avalanche of bare feet and bare legs poured down the stairs, belonging in all to Joe, Arthur, and George Warren. Three sturdy figures, clad in their night-clothes, leaped into the room, whooping and yelling, and descended in one concerted swoop upon the luckless Henry Burns. That young gentleman went down on the floor, where he afforded a seat for two of the Warren boys, while young Joe, with pretended fury, proceeded to pummel him, good-naturedly.

The three remaining boys were quickly added to the heap, dragging the Warrens from off their fallen leader; and the turmoil and confusion that raged about the Warren sitting-room for a moment might have meant the wreck and ruin of a city home, adorned with bric-à-brac, but resulted in no more serious damage than a collection of bruises on the shins and elbows of the participants.

Out of the confusion of arms and legs, however, each individual boy at length withdrew his own, more or less damaged.

“You’re a lot of villains!” exclaimed George Warren. “Wasn’t I sound asleep, though? But, oh! perhaps we are not glad to see you.”

“I tell you what we will do,” cried young Joe. “We will hurry up and dress and go out in the kitchen and cook up a big omelette – ”

The roar that greeted young Joe’s words drowned out the rest of the sentence.

“Isn’t he a wonder, though!” exclaimed George Warren. “Why, he had his supper only three hours and a half ago, and here he is talking about eating.”

“I don’t care about anything to eat,” declared young Joe. “I thought the other fellows would like something.”

“He’s so thoughtful,” said Arthur.

Young Joe looked longingly toward the kitchen.

“Well, we are not going to keep you awake,” said Henry Burns at length, after they had talked over the day’s adventures. “We thought you would like to have us call. We’ll be round in the morning, though.”

But the Warrens wouldn’t hear of their going. There were beds enough in the roomy old house for all, as the rest of the family had not arrived. So up the stairs they scrambled. Twenty minutes later, the fact that young Joe was sleeping soundly was audibly in evidence.

“He can’t keep me awake, though,” exclaimed Harvey. “I have had enough for one day to make me sleep, haven’t you, Henry?”

But Henry Burns was asleep already.

The next afternoon, as the crowd of boys sat about the Warren sitting-room, talking and planning, the tall figure of a man strode briskly up the road leading to the cottage. He was dressed in a suit of black, somewhat pretentious for the island population, with a white shirt-front in evidence, and on his head he wore a large, broad-brimmed soft hat. In his hand he carried a cane, which he swung with short, snappy strokes, as a man might who was out of temper.

George Warren, from a window, observed his approach.

“Hello!” he exclaimed. “Here comes the squire. Doesn’t look especially pleasant, either. I wonder what’s up.”

That something or other was “up” was apparent in the squire’s manner and expression, as he walked hastily across the piazza and hammered on the door with the head of his cane.

“Good morning, Captain Ken – ” began young Joe.

But he got no further. “Here, you stop that!” cried the squire, advancing into the room and raising his cane threateningly. “Don’t you ever call me ‘Captain Kendrick’ again as long as you live. It’s no use for you to say you mistake me for him, for you don’t.”

Young Joe disappeared.

“Confound that Joe!” said Arthur. “He always says the wrong thing.”

Captain Kendrick was the squire's bitterest enemy; and it was a constant thorn in the squire's side that they really did resemble each other slightly.

"Good morning, squire," said George Warren, politely. "Won't you have a seat?"

"No, I won't!" said Squire Brackett, shortly. "I don't need any seat to say what I want to say. I want to talk with those two young scamps over there."

Squire Brackett pointed angrily toward Jack Harvey and Henry Burns.

"What can we do for you, squire?" inquired Henry Burns, quietly.

"Do for me!" repeated the squire, his voice rising higher. "You have done enough for me already, I should say. What do you mean by running down my sailboat in the bay yesterday? Hadn't you done enough to annoy me already, without smashing into the *Seagull* and tearing a brand-new sail and ripping things up generally?"

"What can you do for me, indeed! Well, I'll tell you what you can do: you can pay me forty dollars for a new sail; and you can pay for a new boom to replace the broken one. And there's some rigging that was carried away. That is all I think of now."

The squire paused for breath.

"Yes, I guess that is about all," remarked Henry Burns.

But Jack Harvey was on his feet and facing the angry squire. "See here," he began, "do you mean to say that that young chap we helped out of his scrape blames us for the wreck? Just bring him –"

"Hold on, Jack," said Henry Burns. "Take it easy. We were not to blame, so let's not get into a quarrel with the squire. Perhaps he has not heard just how it did happen."

"Haven't I?" roared the squire. "That's impudence added to injury. Didn't my son, Harry, tell me all about it – how you ran him down; how you steered in on to him when he was trying his best to keep clear of you? Haven't I heard of it, indeed! I have heard all I want to about it. Now, there is only one thing left for you two young men to do, and that is to settle for the damages. That is all I want of you – and no impudence."

"It won't do you any good to try to lie out of it," he added, as he started for the door. "I've got no time to waste listening to denials. You can just come down to Dakin's store and settle to-day or to-morrow, or there will be a lawsuit begun against both of you, or whoever is responsible for you. I guess my son Harry's word is good as a dozen of yours. He's told me all about it. Good morning to you."

The squire swung himself angrily out of the door and strode away down the road, flipping off the grass-tops with his cane.

Harvey and Henry Burns sat back in their chairs in amazement.

"And to think that I helped that young cub bail out his boat!" groaned Jack Harvey.

Henry Burns snickered.

"It's no joke, Jack," he said. "But I can't help thinking of that young Brackett, sitting up there on the rail and watching you work."

"It is a bad scrape, too," he added, more seriously. "It does mean a real lawsuit. The squire is in the mood for it; and, the worst of it, there weren't any witnesses. It is his word against ours. It's a bad start for the summer, and no mistake."

A half-hour later, a procession of sober-faced boys strolled down into the village. Villagers, who had always liked Henry Burns, and had come to like Jack Harvey since he had atoned for many past pranks by gallantry at the end of the last season, greeted the new arrivals cordially.

"See you boys got into a leetle trouble with the squire," remarked one of them. "Well, that's too bad. He's a hard man when it comes to money matters. What's that? You say young Brackett was the one to blame? Pshaw! Well, I do declare. Hm!"

Down in Rob Dakin's grocery store there was the usual gathering of the villagers and fishermen, lounging about, with elbows on counters, half-astiride sugar and cracker barrels, and a few of the more early comers occupying the choice seats about the sheet-iron stove. This inevitable centre of attraction, having done its duty faithfully throughout the winter, was, of course, now cold and not

an object of especial beauty; but it still possessed that magnetic quality that pertains to a stove in a country store, to draw all loungers about it, and make it the common meeting-place.

There was Billy Cook, from over across the cove, who was always barefoot, although a man of forty. There was Dave Benson, from the other side of the island, who had deposited a molasses-jug on the floor in a corner, and who now stood, apparently extracting some nourishment, and at least comfort, from a straw held between his teeth. There was Old Slade, from over on the bluff opposite, slyly cutting a sliver of salt fish from one in the bale upon which he sat. Also a half-dozen or more others.

To this assembled group of his townfolk, the squire, accompanied now by his hopeful son, Harry, was holding forth, as the party of boys entered the door.

“Here they be now, squire,” remarked Dave Benson. “Hello, boys! Ketchin’ any lobsters lately?”

“Yes, here they are, and here they shall pay!” cried the squire, turning upon them.

Jack Harvey advanced toward young Brackett.

“Do you dare say we ran you down?” he inquired, angrily.

“Yes, you did,” answered young Brackett, sullenly, and sidling up close to his father.

“Why, of course they did!” exclaimed the squire. “And it won’t do them any good – ”

But at this point his remarks were interrupted.

A strongly built, heavy-shouldered man entered the store, gave a loud, good-natured “Haw! Haw!” for no apparent reason except that his natural good spirits prompted him to, and bade everybody good evening in a voice that could be heard a quarter of a mile away.

“Why, hello, Cap’n Sam,” said Dave Benson, hailing him as he entered the doorway. “Haven’t seen you much lately.”

Captain Sam Curtis roared out a salutation in return. If there was a voice within a radius of twenty miles about Southport that could equal that of Captain Sam Curtis, no one had ever heard of it. It had a reputation all its own, far and wide.

“Why, hello, squire,” cried Captain Sam. He had failed to notice Harvey and Henry Burns for the moment in the crowd. “Good evening, squire, good evening. Guess you’re glad to get that ’ere boy of yours back again, ain’t yer?”

“Yes,” answered the squire, irritably.

“Well, I guess you better be!” exclaimed Captain Sam. “I thought he was a goner there, yesterday, when I saw the *Seagull* go kerflop.”

“What!” cried the squire. “You saw it? How is that? I thought you said there weren’t any other boats around, Harry.”

The squire turned to his son; but young Harry Brackett was vanishing out the store door.

“See it? I rather guess I did see it,” bawled Captain Sam, warming up to his subject, while the villagers sat up and paid attention. “Why, I had the spy-glass on that ’ere youngster for twenty minutes before he did the trick. He was a-sailing that ’ere boat like a codfish trying to play ‘Home, Sweet Home’ on the pianner.”

“Nonsense!” roared the now infuriated squire, who observed the audience in the store snickering and nudging one another. “Nonsense, I say. He can sail a boat just as good as you can. Why, he told me, only the other day, before I let him have the *Seagull* at all, how he won races last summer in a yacht off Marblehead.”

“Mebbe so, squire,” retorted Captain Sam. “But he was a-sailin’ this ’ere boat of yours like a mutton-head. Haw! Haw! That’s what he was a-doin’, squire.

“Why, sir, squire, he was a-standing up in that boat, with his hat blown off, lookin’ as scared as you was last summer when you and old Witham took that sail down the bay with me. Haw! Haw! And that ’ere boom was a-jumpin’, and that ’ere sail was a-slattin’ around like an old alpacker dress out on a clothes-line.

“‘Gracious goodness!’ says I to myself, ‘that youngster is a-scared out of his wits. He’ll jibe her, as sure as a hen sets.’ And he done it, too. Bang! she went, and the boom slat up against that other boat that was comin’ down ’tother way – and I says, ‘It’s all up with poor Harry.’ And so it would have been if it hadn’t been for the chaps in that other boat —

“Why, hello, Henry Burns! And if there ain’t young Harvey, too,” cried Captain Sam, interrupting himself, as he espied the two boys. “Why, that was your boat, eh? Well, I guess the squire is mightily obliged to you, both of yer.

“Reckon you’ve thanked these young chaps, good and hearty, for saving young Harry, eh?” cried Captain Sam, advancing to the squire.

But, to the utter amazement of Captain Sam, the squire turned upon his heel, with an exclamation of disgust, dashed out of the store, and disappeared in the direction taken shortly before by his son, while a roar of laughter from the assembled villagers followed after him.

CHAPTER V. HARVEY GETS BAD NEWS

Harvey and Henry Burns left the store together in high spirits, surrounded by their companions, loudly jubilant over the turn affairs had taken. It was growing dusk, and Rob Dakin was preparing for the usual illumination of his store with one oil-lamp. Harvey and Henry Burns started for the shore, but were stopped by a hail from George Warren.

“Come on over to the post-office with me,” he said. “You’re in no hurry for supper. It’s my turn to go for the mail, and we are expecting a letter from father up in Benton.”

So the two boys retraced their steps, and the three friends went along up the road together.

“We haven’t a very extensive correspondence to look after, eh, Jack?” remarked Henry Burns; “but we’ll go along for company’s sake. My aunt never writes to me, and I think I never received but two letters in my life. They were from old Mrs. Newcome.”

“I never got any,” declared Harvey. “My dad says to me at the beginning of the summer, ‘Where are you going?’ and I say, ‘Oh, down in the bay,’ or wherever it is I am going. Then he says, ‘Well, take care of yourself,’ and forgets all about me, except he sends money down to me regularly – and more when I ask him.”

The boy’s remark was, in fact, an unconscious criticism of the elder Harvey, and accounted, perhaps, for some of Harvey’s past adventures which were not altogether commendable. Harvey’s father was of the rough and ready sort. He had made money in the Western gold-fields, where he had started out as a miner and prospector. Now he was enjoying it in generous fashion, and denied his family nothing. He had a theory that a boy that had the “right stuff in him,” as he put it, would make his way without any particular care taken of him; and he was content to allow his son, Jack, to do whatever he pleased. A convenient arrangement, by the way, which also left Mr. Harvey free to do whatever he pleased, without the worry of family affairs.

The boys walked through the fields, up a gentle incline of the land, which led to the general higher level of the island, overlooking the bay and the islands in the distance. They gazed back presently upon a pleasing prospect.

There was the cove, sweeping in to the left, along the bluff opposite, which was high and rock-ribbed. At the head of the cove the shores were of clean, fine sand, broken here and there at intervals by a few patches of clam-flats, bared at low water. Out from where the boys stood, straight ahead rolled the bay, with an unbroken view away across to the cape, some five miles off. A thoroughfare, or reach, extended south and eastward from the cape, formed by the mainland and a chain of islands. Then, to the south, the bay extended far, broken only by some islands a few miles away.

At anchor in the cove lay the Warren boys’ sailboat, the *Spray*, and the larger yacht, the *Viking*.

“Well, George,” said Henry Burns, with his right arm over the other’s shoulder, “it looks like some fun, now that the trouble with Squire Brackett is cleared away.”

“Great!” exclaimed George Warren.

The post-office, called such by courtesy, the office consisting of the spare room of whatsoever fisherman or farmer happened to be honoured with Uncle Sam’s appointment, was about a mile from the harbour of Southport. It was, in this case, in the house of one Jerry Bryant, and was about a quarter of a mile, or less, from the western shore of the island, where a small cove made in from that bay.

“Good evening, Mr. Bryant,” said George Warren, as they arrived at the post-office door. “Mail in yet?”

“Be here right away,” replied the postmaster. “I saw Jeff’s packet coming in a moment ago. There he comes now up the lane.”

Jeff Hackett, whose commission it was to fetch the mail across from the mainland in a small sloop daily, now appeared with a mail-sack over his shoulder.

The formality of receiving the attenuated mail-sack and sorting its somewhat meagre contents, being duly observed, Postmaster Bryant threw open a small sliding door, poked his head out, and was ready for inquiries.

“Anything for the Warren cottage?”

“Not a thing.”

“Anything for the neighbours, a few doors below?”

“Nothing for them, either.”

“Looks as though we had come over for nothing,” said George Warren. “Too bad, but you fellows don’t mind the walk, do you?”

“Not a bit,” answered Henry Burns.

They were departing, when the postmaster hailed them.

“Say,” he called out, “who is Jack Harvey? He is the chap that caught Chambers, isn’t he? Doesn’t he stop over near you, somewhere?”

“Here I am,” said Harvey, taken by surprise. “What do you want?”

“Why, I’ve got a letter for you,” said the postmaster. “It has been here three days. I couldn’t find out where you were.”

“Well, that’s odd,” exclaimed Harvey, stepping back and receiving the envelope. “I never got one before. Say, we came over for something, after all.”

He tore open the envelope and read the letter enclosed.

“Whew!” he exclaimed as he finished. “That’s tough.” And he gave a disconsolate whistle.

“What’s the matter? Nothing bad, I hope,” asked Henry Burns.

In reply, Harvey handed him the letter. It was dated from Boston, and read as follows:

“My dear Jack: – Sorry to have to write you bad news, but you are big enough to stand it, I had to work hard when I was a boy, and perhaps you may now, but you’ll come out all right in the end. I don’t know just where I stand, myself. Investments have gone wrong, and Saunders has brought suit in court, claiming title to the land where the mine is. May beat him out. Don’t know. He is a rascal, but may win.

“Now I haven’t got a dollar to send you, and don’t see where I’ll get any all summer for you, as I shall need every cent to pay bills. I have got to go out to borrow money to pay lawyers, too, to fight the case.

“Too bad, but you will have to come home, or shift for yourself for the summer. Let me know, and I’ll send money for your fare, if you are coming.

“Affectionately, your dad,

“William Harvey.”

An hour later, Jack Harvey and Henry Burns sat in the comfortable cabin of the *Viking*, talking matters over. The yacht swung lazily at anchor in the still cove. A fire burned in the little stove, and the smoke wreathed out of a funnel on the starboard side. The boys were superintending the baking of a pan of muffins in a sheet-iron oven, while two swinging-lanterns gave them light.

“I declare I don’t know what to do about it,” said Harvey. “You see, I never thought about getting along without money before. All I have had to do is just ask for it. Now, you see, I’m behind on my allowance. We paid Reed thirty-five dollars, you know, for wintering and painting the boat, and something more for some new pieces of rigging. That, and what I’ve spent for clothes, has cleaned me out.”

“Yes, but I owe you twelve dollars on the boat account, which I’m going to pay as soon as I receive my own allowance from my aunt,” said Henry Burns.

“Well, that won’t go very far,” responded Harvey, gloomily. “We owe – or shall owe – for the freight on that box of provisions that’s coming from Benton; we have got to hire a tender to take the place of the old one I sold last fall. We can’t keep on borrowing this one all summer – ”

“Never mind,” interrupted Henry Burns. “You know it costs us scarcely anything to live down here. We can catch all the fish and lobsters we want, dig clams, and all that sort of thing. All we need to buy is a little meal and flour and coffee and sugar from time to time, and we’ll do that all right on my allowance.”

“That’s kind in you, Henry,” said Harvey, warmly, “but I don’t quite like the idea of living all summer on you.”

“Why not?” demanded Henry Burns, and added, quickly, “You used to provide everything for all your crew last summer, didn’t you?”

“Why, yes, I did,” replied Harvey. “Ha! ha! catch one of them buying anything. But of course they couldn’t buy much of anything, anyway. They hadn’t any money. But somehow this is different. You see, – well – the fact is, I’m not quite used to being hard up. And I don’t exactly like to take it. Of course, I know just how you mean it, too.”

“Yes, but think how small our expenses need be if we are careful,” urged Henry Burns. “We live right aboard here all the time, you know.”

“Yes,” answered Harvey, “but it all counts up more than you think, especially when one is short of money. You can’t run a big boat like this all summer without expense. It’s a rope here and a block there, and a spare anchor we need, and a lot of little things all the time. I know how it was on the *Surprise*.”

Their conversation was interrupted at this point by a voice close alongside. The canoe had glided quietly up, and the next moment Tom and Bob were descending into the cabin.

“My, but you chaps have elegant quarters down here,” exclaimed Tom. “We envy you your summer aboard here, don’t we, Bob?”

Henry Burns and Harvey, somewhat taken aback, made no reply, and looked embarrassed.

“Why, what’s up?” asked Tom, observing something was wrong. “No more trouble, I hope.”

Harvey explained the situation.

“That need not be so bad,” said Tom. “It doesn’t cost but little to live here. We spend scarcely anything, do we, Bob? We can lend you something to help you through. You don’t want to think of giving up the summer.”

“I dare say I could stick it out all right,” said Harvey, “if I was just camping once more. That doesn’t cost much. It is this boat that bothers me. We can’t run it for nothing.”

“Well, then,” exclaimed Henry Burns, vigorously, with more demonstrativeness than was usual with him, “I’ll tell you what we will do. We’ll make the boat work. We will make it pay its own way, and pay us something besides. We’ll fit out and go down among the islands fishing, and take our fish over to Stoneland and sell them, the same as the fishermen do. There won’t be a fortune in it, with a boat no bigger than this, but it will support us, and more too, after paying all expenses.”

“Henry,” cried Harvey, gratefully, “you’re a brick! I thought of that once, and I’d have proposed it if this had been the old *Surprise*; but I didn’t know as you would be willing to do it with this boat. It dirties a craft up so.”

“That doesn’t hurt a boat any,” said Henry Burns. “The fishermen down around Wilton’s Harbour take out sailing parties all summer, and their boats are always handsome and clean, and they don’t smell fishy. And the men always use them for fishing in the fall and spring, when the fishing is at its best. It simply means that we have got to take out all the nice fittings from the cabin, stow them away somewhere on shore, fit out with some tackle, and go ahead. At the end of the summer we will overhaul the *Viking* from deck to keelson, take out every piece of ballast in her, clean it and dry it and put it back, and paint the yacht over after we wash everything inside and out. She will be just as fine as she was before.”

“That’s great!” exclaimed Tom Harris. “You can do it all right, too. I wish we had a boat. We’d go along with you, wouldn’t we, Bob?”

“I’d like nothing better,” answered Bob.

“Then come along with us,” said Harvey. “We really need two more to handle this boat properly. You can fit yourselves out with fishing-tackle, and we’ll all share in the catch.”

“Hooray! we’ll do it,” cried Bob. “But we don’t want a share of the catch. We will be glad enough to go for the fun of it.”

“Yes, but this is part business,” said Henry Burns. “You must have some share in every trip you make with us. How will two-thirds for us and a third for you do, as we own the boat?”

“That is more than fair,” replied Tom.

“Then it’s a bargain, eh, Jack?” said Henry; and, as the other gave hearty assent, he added, “We’ll go about it right away to-morrow, if the weather is good.”

When George Warren heard of the plan the next day, however, he was not equally elated. “It’s the thing to do, I guess,” he said, but added, “It’s going to keep you away from Southport; that is the only drawback.”

“No, only part of the time,” said Henry Burns. “We are not going to try to get rich, only to support ourselves. We shall be back and forth all summer. We’ll have some fun here, too.”

Then the boys went and hunted up Captain Sam Curtis.

“Yes, you can do it all right,” said Captain Sam, when he had heard of the plan. “But it’s rough work. You can count on that. You want to get right out to big Loon Island – you know, with the little one, Duck Island, alongside. There’s where the cod are, out along them reefs; and you can set a couple of short trawls for hake. May get some runs of mackerel, too, later. I’ll get you a couple of second-hand pieces of trawl cheap. They’ll do all right for one season. But it ain’t just like bay-sailing all the time, you know, though you may not get caught. When it’s rough, it’s rough, though.

“And there’s one thing you’ve got to look out for,” added Captain Sam. “Of course the men around this coast will be fair to you and won’t bother. But there’s a rough crowd that comes up from the eastward. They may not take kindly to a pack of boys coming in on the fishing-grounds. Just keep your weather eye out; that’s all.”

The boys went about their preparations eagerly. Already they had begun removing the fine fittings from the cabin of the *Viking*, carrying them up to the Warren cottage, and putting the yacht in condition for rougher usage. They worked hard all day. At night, however, an unexpected event occurred, which delayed their fishing-trip until the next week.

George Warren came down to the shore that evening with another letter for Jack Harvey, much to the latter’s amazement.

“Hang it!” he exclaimed, as George Warren handed the letter over. “They say troubles never come singly. I wonder if here’s more. I hope things are no worse at home – Hello, it isn’t from Boston. It’s from Benton. Who can have written me from there?”

He tore open the envelope hastily. The letter, badly written in an uncouth scrawl, read thus:

“Dear Jack: – You remember you told us fellows last year that we could come down to the island again this year and live in the tent, the same as we did before you got the boat, and you would see that we got along all right. Me and George Baker have got the money to pay our fares on the boat, and Tim and Allan will work part of their passage. Dan Davis, who’s on the boat, told us you was down there. So we’ll be along pretty soon if you don’t write and stop us.

“So long,

“Joe Hinman.”

“Well, here’s a mess,” said Harvey, ruefully, and looking sorely puzzled. “I’d clean forgotten that promise I made to the crew last year, that they could come down, and I’d take care of them. You

see, I thought I was going to have plenty of money; but I don't know just what to do now. Would you write and tell them not to come?"

"No, let them come," said Henry Burns. "They'll get along somehow. We will help them out, and they'll have your tent to live in."

"All right," said Harvey. "I hate to disappoint them. They don't get much fun at home. I'll send them word to come, as long as you are willing."

So it happened that a few days later there disembarked from the river steamer a grinning quartette of boys. The youngest, Tim Reardon by name, was barefoot; and the others, namely, Joe Hinman, George Baker, and Allan Harding, were not vastly the better off in the matter of dress. This was Harvey's "crew," who had sailed the bay with him for several years, in the yacht *Surprise*, and had camped with him on a point that formed one of the boundaries of a little cove, some three-quarters of a mile down the island from where Tom and Bob were encamped.

The united forces of the boys, including the Warrens, made things comfortable for the new arrivals in short order. Harvey's old tent, which had been stored away in Captain Sam's loft for the winter, was brought out and loaded aboard the *Viking*; and the entire party sailed down alongshore, and unloaded at Harvey's former camping-ground, where there was a grove of trees and a good spring close by. The tent was quickly set up, the bunks fashioned, a share of the *Viking's* store of provisions carried ashore, and everything made shipshape.

"Now," said Harvey, addressing his crew, after he had confided the news of his embarrassed circumstances, "I'll help you out all I can, and you'll get along all right, with fishing and clamming. But, see here, no more shines like we had before. I know I was in for it, too. But no more hooking salmon out of the nets. And let other people's lobster-pots alone, or I won't look out for you."

"Oh, we'll be all right, Jack," cried the ragged campers, gleefully; while little Tim Reardon, standing on his head and hands in an ecstasy of delight, seemed to wave an acquiescence with his bare feet.

"That's your doing," said Harvey, thoughtfully, turning to Tom and Bob. "Since you saved my life the crew really have behaved themselves."

Two days later, the bare feet of Tim Reardon bore him, breathless, to the door of the other tent, where Harvey and Henry Burns sat chatting with Tom and Bob.

"Say, Jack," he gasped out, "you just want to hurry up quick and get down into the Thoroughfare. They're going to raise the *Surprise*. I got a ride on behind a wagon coming up the island this morning, and two men were talking about it. One of them said he heard Squire Brackett say that that yacht down in the Thoroughfare was anybody's property now, as it had been abandoned, and he calculated it could be floated again, and he'd bring it up some day and surprise you fellows. But he hasn't started to do it yet, and so it's still yours, isn't it? If he can raise it, we can, can't we?"

Harvey sprang to his feet.

"Raise it!" he exclaimed. "Why, I've thought all along of trying it some day. Captain Sam said last fall he thought it might be done. But I had this other boat to attend to, and then I was called home. We'll go after it this very afternoon. What do you say, Henry?"

"Yes, and I think I have a scheme to help float her," replied Henry Burns.

Acting on Henry Burns's suggestion then, the boys proceeded to the store, where, in a spare room, Rob Dakin kept a stock of small empty casks which he sold to the fishermen now and then for use as buoys. They hired the whole supply, some twoscore, agreeing to pay for the use of them and bring them back uninjured. These they loaded hastily aboard the *Viking*, having sent word in the meantime to the Warren boys. They, joining in heartily, soon had sail on their own boat, the *Spray*, and went on ahead, down the coast of the island.

Completing the loading of the *Viking*, and taking aboard an extra supply of tackle, borrowed for the occasion, Henry Burns and Harvey got up sail and set out after the *Spray*, stopping off the cove below to pick up the others of Harvey's crew. They overhauled the *Spray* some miles down the

coast, later in the afternoon, and thence led the way toward the Thoroughfare. They had the wind almost abeam from the westward, and went along at a good clip in a smooth sea.

That evening at sundown they sailed into the Thoroughfare. This was a stretch of water affording a somewhat involved and difficult passage between the Eastern and Western Bays, the two bays being so designated according to a partial division of these waters by Grand Island. The island was some thirteen miles long, lying lengthwise with its head pointing about northeast and the foot southwest.

The waters of the Thoroughfare were winding, flowing amid a small chain of islands at the foot of Grand Island. The channel was a crooked one, the deeper water lying along this shore or that, and known only to local fishermen and to the boys who had cruised there.

Henry Burns, on the lookout forward, presently gave a shout of warning.

"There she is, Jack," he cried, pointing ahead to where the mast of a yacht protruded above water some three-fourths of its length. "There's the ledge, too. Look out and not get aground."

"Oh, I know this channel like a book," said Harvey, and demonstrated his assertion by bringing the *Viking* to, close up under the lee of the submerged yacht, in deep water.

The yacht *Surprise*, sunken where it had been in collision with the very yacht that had now come to its rescue, lay hung upon a shelving reef, with its bow nearer to the surface than its stern. The tide was at the last of its ebb, and it was clear that by another hour there would be only about two feet of water over the forward part of the boat and about five feet over the stern.

"We are in luck," cried Harvey. "She has worked up higher on the reef, somehow, since last year, either by the tides, or perhaps some ice formed here in the winter and forced her up. She was deep under water when I last saw her."

"But it's a wonder the mast did not go," he added. "The bobstay went when we smashed into the *Viking*; and the mast wasn't any too firm when we last saw it. It wouldn't have stood after we struck if we hadn't let the mainsail go on the run."

Evening was coming on, but the boys lost no time in going to work. Getting into the dory that they had hired for the season as a tender, Henry Burns and Harvey stepped out carefully on to the reef, and made their way down its slippery sides to the bow of the *Surprise*. Then, with trousers rolled up and divested of jackets and shirts, they proceeded, as soon as the tide had fallen, to nail some strips of canvas over the hole smashed in the bow. They fastened it with battens, putting several layers on, one over another.

"It isn't a handsome job," said Henry Burns, finally; "but the water will not run in there as fast as we can pump it out. It's a fair start."

The yacht *Spray* came in now and brought up alongside the *Viking*.

"What are you going to do?" inquired George Warren.

"Why, everybody has got to go in for a swim," answered Henry Burns, setting the example by throwing off his remaining garments. The others, willing enough at all times for that, followed.

Henry Burns next brought forth several coils of rope, which he had busied himself with, on the voyage down, knotting it at regular intervals into loops.

"There," said he, "the *Surprise* lies, luckily, on these irregular rocks. We have got to duck under and pass these ropes underneath the keel, wherever there is a chance. Then we'll bring the ends up on either side and make them fast aboard, wherever there is a thing to hitch to. Then we'll attach the kegs to the loops. See?"

"Good for you, Henry!" cried Harvey, enthusiastically. "You always have some scheme in your head, don't you?"

"Wait and see if it works," said Henry Burns, modestly.

"Ouch!" cried young Joe, as the boys splashed overboard. "This water is like ice."

"Oh, shut up, Joe!" said Arthur Warren. "Just think of that hot coffee we are going to have for supper."

The boys worked eagerly and hurriedly, for the waters of Samoset Bay had not, indeed, fully recovered from their long winter's chill, and the sun had sunk behind the distant hills. The ropes, passed beneath on one side, were grasped by numbed but skilful hands on the other. In a quarter of an hour they had some six or eight of these passed under and made fast, and the empty casks, tightly stopped with cork bungs, tied into the loopholes. This, in itself, was no easy task. The buoyant casks persisted in bobbing up to the surface, escaping now and then from their hands. Two of the boys would seize a cask by the lashings that had been passed about it and fairly ride it below the surface with their united weight. Then, holding their breath under water, they would make it fast to a loop.

It was dark when they had finished; and a hungry, shivering crowd of boys they were, as they danced about the decks and scrambled into their clothes. But the cabins of the *Viking* and the *Spray* were soon made inviting, with warmth and the odours of hot coffee and cooking food. They were only too glad to go below and enjoy both.

“Hello, Henry,” called young Joe from the deck of the *Spray*, some time later, as the boys were hanging their lanterns forward to warn any stray fisherman that might sail through in the night; “the *Surprise* doesn't seem to come up very fast.”

“Well, wait till to-morrow and see,” answered Henry Burns.

They were soon sleeping soundly, weary with the day's hard work.

CHAPTER VI. OUT TO THE FISHING-GROUNDS

While the boys were thus concerned down in the Thoroughfare, at the foot of Grand Island, certain events were happening away over across the Western Bay that might perhaps affect them later.

If a direct line were drawn across the middle of Grand Island, and extended straight across the Western Bay to the neighbouring mainland, it would touch that shore in about the locality of the town of Bellport. This was a little community, dull in winter, and flourishing in summer with the advent of cottagers and visitors from the little city of Mayville, some miles up along the shore of the bay, and from the towns farther north up the river. It was a favourite resort of yachtsmen in a modest way.

On the afternoon that young Harry Brackett had quietly withdrawn from the crowd of villagers in the store at Southport, coincident with the disclosures of Captain Sam regarding his adventure in the squire's sailboat, he had not seen fit to return to the shelter of his father's roof. Instead, he had taken the night boat over to Mayville, and thence, the following morning, made his way to Bellport, where he had some bosom friends after his own heart.

What this meant was that, instead of entering into the healthful sports that made the place of especial attraction, he and they were more often to be found loitering about the office of the principal hotel, the Bellport House, or playing at billiards in a room off the office, or occupying the veranda chairs, with their feet upon the railing.

Young Brackett had been engaged one afternoon, soon following his arrival, in a game of billiards with a companion, when he was accosted by another acquaintance.

"Hello, Brackett," said the newcomer. "You're quite a stranger. How are things over at Southport? Going to stay at home now for awhile?"

This salutation, commonplace as it was, had, it seemed, an effect upon a tall, light-complexioned man, who was seated in a corner of the room, where he had been enjoying his cigar and idly watching the game. For he looked up quickly toward the boy addressed, and, during the continuation of the game, certainly paid more attention to Harry Brackett than to the play itself.

At the conclusion of the game, young Brackett's companions bade him good day and departed. Thereupon the stranger arose and advanced toward Harry Brackett, smiling pleasantly. Stroking a heavy blond moustache with the fingers of his left hand and picking up one of the cues with the other, he said:

"You play a good game, don't you? Shall we have another? I'll be pleased to pay for it, you know. Glad to have some one that plays as well as you do for an opponent."

It being inbred in young Brackett's nature never to decline to enjoy himself at another's expense, he accepted the invitation at once. Moreover, he was pleased at the compliment – which was, perhaps, more in the nature of flattery, as he was but indifferently skilful at best.

"Do you come from around this way?" asked the stranger, as they proceeded to play.

"Yes," answered young Brackett. "My home is at Southport. Harry Brackett is my name. I'm Squire Brackett's son."

"Indeed!" said the stranger, as though the answer was a matter of information, whereas he had distinctly heard the boy's companion refer to him as coming from Southport. "But you are not an islander. You've been about some, I can see."

Most persons would have said that it would have been better for the boy if he had had more of the sturdy qualities of the islanders and less of those manners to which the stranger referred. But young Brackett took the remark as a compliment, as it was intended, and answered, "Oh, yes, I've been about a good deal – up Boston way and that sort of thing – Benton and different cities. But I live at Southport. My father owns a good deal of the place, you see."

“Well, I’m glad to know you, Mr. Brackett,” said the stranger, with a renewed show of cordiality. “My name is Carleton. I come from Boston, too. I am just living around at any place I take a fancy to for the summer. Oh, by the way, I came here to look at some boats. Do you know of a good one over your way that a man might buy?”

“Why, no, I don’t know as I do,” replied young Brackett. “That is, not what you would want. There’s only one elegant boat, and I guess she is not for sale. She belongs to some boys. They’d better sell her, though, if they get the chance. They think they are smart, but they can’t sail her a little bit.”

“Hm!” ejaculated Mr. Carleton, and made a mental note of the other’s evident antipathy to the boys he referred to.

“You don’t mean the *Viking*?” he inquired. “Somebody in the town here was speaking about her the other day.”

“Yes, that’s the one,” replied young Brackett. “But I don’t think you can buy her.”

“Oh, most any one will sell a thing, if you only offer him enough,” said Mr. Carleton, carelessly. “Somehow I think she is about the boat I want. I had a talk with a captain here the other day, and he said she was the best sailer about here.

“Oh, by the way,” he added, apparently intent upon his game and studying a shot with great care, “did you ever hear of anything queer about that yacht – anything queer discovered about her?”

“Why, no!” cried young Brackett, in a tone of surprise. “Is there anything queer about her? Do you know about her? That is a funny question.”

If Mr. Carleton, making his shot unmoved, had got exactly the information he was after, he did not betray the least sign of it. Instead, he laughed and said:

“No, no. You don’t understand. I mean any ‘out’ about the boat. Has she any faults, I mean. Does she sail under? Run her counters under? Knock down in a wind and heavy sea? Carry a bad weather helm – or still worse, a lee helm? You know what I mean. When a man is buying a boat he wants to know if she is all right.”

He said it easily, in his deep, full voice, that seemed to emerge from behind his heavy moustache, without his lips moving.

“Oh, I understand,” said young Brackett. Then he added, mindful of his anger at the owners of the *Viking*, “I guess the boat is good enough – better than the crowd that owns her.”

“Well, I want you to do something for me,” continued Mr. Carleton. “I think I want her. When you return to Southport, I wish you would make them an offer for me. Do you know what they paid for her?”

“Why, I think she brought only about eight hundred dollars,” said young Brackett. “She’s worth twice that, I guess. But there wasn’t anybody to buy her. She went cheap.”

“Tell them you know of a party that will give them fifteen hundred dollars for the boat,” said Mr. Carleton. “And if you buy her for me for that price I will give you two hundred dollars. The boat is worth all of that from what I hear.”

Young Brackett’s eyes opened wide in surprise.

“Oh, I am in earnest,” said the man. “I can afford it. I’m out for a good time this summer. I’ll be much obliged if you will do the business for me. Business is business, and I don’t ask you to go to the trouble for nothing. Here’s something on account.”

He handed young Brackett a ten-dollar bill, which the boy pocketed promptly. It seemed a queer transaction, but he was satisfied.

“And, say, don’t mention my name,” said Mr. Carleton, carelessly. “You see, if a man that has any money is known to be looking for a particular boat, they always put the price up.”

“All right, I won’t,” replied Harry Brackett.

“I hate to tackle that fellow, Harvey,” he thought, as he turned the matter over in his mind. “But it’s worth trying for two hundred dollars.”

Then, in great elation, he proceeded to beat Mr. Carleton at the game; though that person's intimate friends, wherever they might be, would have laughed at his attempts to make poor shots instead of good ones. It pays to be a loser sometimes, was his way of looking at it. At least, he and Harry Brackett parted excellent friends.

The day came in warm and pleasant down in the Thoroughfare, and the boys were early astir.

"Any more swimming to do to-day, Henry?" inquired George Warren, as the fires were building in the cabin stoves, preparatory for breakfast.

"Only a plunge for one of us," answered Henry. "I'll do that. And that reminds me; I'd better do it before breakfast, for one doesn't want to swim right after eating. Just throw us a line and trip your anchor, and we will draw you up close astern of the *Surprise*, opposite us."

The Warren boys did as he requested, and the two boats were soon almost side by side, astern of the sunken yacht. Then Henry Burns, getting George Warren to unhook the tackle from the throat of the mainsail of the *Spray*, did likewise aboard the *Viking*. Taking the two pieces of tackle in hand, while the boys let the halyards run free, he ducked down at the stern of the sunken yacht and hooked in the tackle to one of the stout ropes that had been passed under the boat's keel.

"That will do till after breakfast," he said, coming to the surface and clambering out aboard the *Viking*.

"No, let's have a pull on the thing now," exclaimed Harvey. "I'm eager to see the old *Surprise* above water – that is, if she is going to float."

"All right," said Henry Burns. "Come on, fellows."

The boys on each yacht caught hold of the halyards with a will, and hoisted as they would have done to raise the throat of the mainsail. The tackle, hooked on to the stern of the sunken yacht, was at first as so much dead weight on their hands. Then, of a sudden, it began to yield ever so little, and the halyards began to come home.

"She's coming up, boys!" cried Harvey, gleefully. "Pull now, good and hard."

But the next moment something seemed to have given way. The ropes ran loose in their hands, and the boys that held the ends sprawled over on the decks.

"Oh, confound it! The rope must have slipped off the stern," exclaimed Harvey.

"No, it hasn't," cried Henry Burns, joyfully. "There she comes to the surface. Look! Look! Quick, get in the slack of the ropes and make them fast."

The yacht buoyed by the numerous casks and lifted by the tackle, had, indeed, hung on bottom only for a moment. Then, released by the strain from the ledge and the seaweeds and slime that had gathered about it, it had come to the surface with a rush. Loaded with ballast as it was, however, and with the weight of water still within it, it could not rise above the surface. Its rail showed just at the top of water, and the cabin deck slightly above.

"Hooray! that's great!" cried Harvey, slapping Henry Burns on the shoulder. "That will do now. Let's have some breakfast."

"It's about time," said young Joe.

They spent little time at breakfast, however, for they were eager to resume. With each yacht alongside the *Surprise*, they began bailing that yacht out with pails tied to ropes, which they slung aboard. When they had lightened her sufficiently, two of them sprang over into the cockpit and bailed to better advantage there.

Then, while they took turns at the pump, the others got up a part of the floors, and began lifting out the pieces of pig-iron ballast, passing them aboard the other two yachts. Finally they rigged the tackle on to the mast of the *Surprise* and, with great care so as not to wrench the boat, lifted it clear and lowered it into the water alongside.

Now it would be safe to beach the yacht; and this they did at high tide that afternoon, towing it in on to a beach that made down in a thin strip between the ledges, and drawing it up as far as it would float, where they made it fast with a line passed ashore to a small spruce-tree.

It had been a good job, and Henry Burns surveyed it proudly. But he merely remarked to young Joe, “Well, she’s up, isn’t she?”

The yacht *Surprise* was at present a sorry-looking sight. The bottom was very foul, covered with long streamers of slimy grass and encrusted with barnacles. These had fastened, too, upon the mast and spars; and inside the yacht was in the same condition. The sails were slime-covered and rotten. Everything was snarled and tangled, twisted and broken about the rigging. The bowsprit had been broken off short in the collision of the fall before. This, with the carrying away of the bobstay, necessitated the taking out of the mast now. Rust from the iron ballast had stained much of the woodwork.

“There’s a job,” said Harvey, eying the wreck. “There’s a good week’s work, and more, in scraping and cleaning her, and cleaning that ballast. We wanted to get to fishing, too.”

“Well, you go ahead and leave us to begin the work,” said Joe Hinman, speaking for himself and the crew. “It’s no more than fair that we should do it, seeing as we are to have the use of the yacht this summer. Just leave us a little coffee and some cornmeal and some bread and a piece of pork and one of the frying-pans. We’ll catch fish, and live down here for a week, till you come for us.”

“Where will you stay?” inquired Harvey. “The other yacht is going back to Southport, you know.”

“Up in the old shack there,” replied Joe, pointing back to where there stood a tumble-down shelter that had been used at some time to store a scant crop of hay that the island produced. “Give us a blanket apiece and we’ll get along. You’ve got to go back to the harbour before you go fishing, and you can get ours down at the camp.”

“All right,” said Harvey, “I guess we’ll do it. You can run things, Joe, and there won’t anybody trouble you.”

So with this prophecy – which might or might not hold good – Harvey proceeded to install his crew in temporary possession of the yacht *Surprise*, and of the little island where they had dragged it ashore, which was one of the chain of narrow islands that lay off Grand Island.

Late that afternoon the two yachts sailed out of the Thoroughfare and went on to Southport, leaving the crew masters of their island domain and of the wreck.

The next morning Henry Burns and Jack Harvey were up before the sun, for Harvey had waked and found a light west wind blowing, and this was a fair one for the trip down the bay. They roused the campers in the tent on the point, and soon Tom and Bob, their canoe loaded with blankets and provisions, were paddling out to the *Viking*. They made two trips, and then, leaving the canoe up on shore alongside the tent, fastened that good and snug. Henry Burns took them aboard the *Viking* in the tender.

The mooring which they had put down for the season was slipped, the sail hoisted, a parting toot-toot sounded on the great horn in the direction of the Warren cottage, and the *Viking’s* voyage in search of work had begun.

The course the *Viking* was now shaping was about due south from the harbour they had just left. Far away to the southward, some twenty-two miles distant, lay the islands they were seeking, at the seaward entrance to East Samoset Bay. Some six miles ahead on the course lay a group of small islands, on one of which was erected a lighthouse. Beyond these, to the southwest, a few miles away, lay two great islands, North Haven and South Haven. Off to the eastward from the foot of these, across a bay of some six miles’ width, lay Loon Island, with little Duck Island close adjacent.

As the day advanced, the promise of wind did not, however, have fulfilment. It died away with the burning of the sun, and when they had come to within about a mile of the first group of islands, it threatened to die away altogether. It sufficed, however, to waft them into a little cove making into one of these islands at about two hours before noon.

“Well, we’ve got to Clam Island, anyway,” said Harvey. “We’ll load up our baskets, and be in time to catch the afternoon’s southerly.”

Clam Island well merited its name. Its shores were long stretches of mud-flats, corrugated everywhere with thousands of clam-holes. It would not be high tide until three in the afternoon, and the flats were now lying bare.

Equipped with baskets and hoes, the boys set to work, with jackets off and trousers rolled up. In two hours' time, each one of them had filled a bushel basket to the brim, for the clams were thrown out by dozens at every turn of a hoe.

"That's enough bait for a start," said Harvey, wiping his forehead. "We can buy more of the fishermen if we run short."

"My!" exclaimed Henry Burns, straightening himself up with an effort. "My back feels as though it had nails driven into it. I don't wonder so many of these old fishermen stoop."

The day was very hot, and the boys went in for a swim. Then, when they had eaten, they stood out of the little harbour; but the wind had dropped almost entirely away, and, with the tide against them, they scarce made headway.

"I'm afraid we won't make Loon Island to-day," said Tom.

"Oh, perhaps so," said Harvey. "See, there's a line of breeze way down below."

A darkening of the water some miles distant showed that a southerly breeze was coming in. They got the first puffs of it presently, and trimmed their sails for a long beat down the bay.

The *Viking* was a good boat on the wind, the seas did not roll up to any great size, as the wind had come up so late in the day, and it was easy, pleasant sailing in the bright summer afternoon. Still, the breeze was too light for any good progress, and they had only reached Hawk Island, on which the lighthouse stood, and which was fifteen miles from Loon Island, by two o'clock.

They were going down a long reach of the bay now that rolled some six miles wide, between North and South Haven on the one hand, to starboard, and a great island on the other. Back and forth they tacked all the afternoon, with the tide, turning to ebb just after three o'clock, to help them.

By six o'clock they were two miles off the southeastern shore of South Haven, with great Loon Island, its high hills looming up against the sky, four miles across the bay.

"Well, shall we try for it?" asked Harvey, eagerly scanning the sky.

It looked tempting, for there had come one of those little, deceptive stirrings of the air that happen at times before sundown when the wind makes a last dying flurry before quieting for the night. The sun, just tipping the crests of the far-off western mountains across the bay, had turned the western sky into flame. Loon Island looked close aboard. So they kept on.

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