

Smith Ruel Perley

**Jack Harvey's Adventures: or,
The Rival Campers Among
the Oyster Pirates**



Ruel Smith

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Jack Harvey's Adventures; or, The Rival Campers Among the Oyster Pirates

CHAPTER I HARVEY MAKES AN ACQUAINTANCE

An Atlantic Transport Line steamship lay at its pier in the city of Baltimore, on a November day. There were indications, everywhere about, that the hour of its departure for Europe was approaching. A hum of excitement filled the air. Clouds of dark smoke, ascending skyward from the steamer, threw a thin canopy here and there over little groups of persons gathered upon the pier to bid farewell to friends. Clerks and belated messengers darted to and fro among them. An occasional officer, in ship's uniform, gave greeting to some acquaintance and spoke hopefully of the voyage.

Among all these, a big, tall, broad-shouldered man, whose face, florid and smiling, gave evidence of abundant good spirits, stood, with one hand resting upon a boy's shoulder. A woman accompanied them, who now and then raised a handkerchief to her eyes and wiped away a tear.

"There!" exclaimed the man, suddenly, "do you see that, Jack? You'd better come along with us. It isn't too late. Ma doesn't want to leave you behind. If there's anything I can't stand, it's to see a woman cry."

The boy, in return, gave a somewhat contemptuous glance toward the steamship.

"I don't want to go," he said. "What's the fun going to sea in a thing like that? Have to dress up and look nice all the time. If it was only a ship –"

He didn't have a chance to finish the sentence.

"Jack Harvey!" exclaimed his mother, eying him with great disapproval through her tears, "why *did* you wear that awful sweater down here, to see us off? If you only knew how you look! I'm ashamed to have folks see you."

Harvey's father burst into a hearty roar of laughter.

"Isn't that just like a woman?" he chuckled. "Crying about leaving Jack, with one eye, and looking at his clothes with the other. Why, Martha, I tell you he looks fine. None of your milk-sop lads for me!" And he gave his son a slap of approval that made even that stalwart youth wince.

"Why, when I was Jack's age," continued the elder Harvey, warming to the subject and raising his voice accordingly, "I didn't know where the next suit of clothes was coming from."

Mrs. Harvey glanced apprehensively over her shoulder, to see who was listening.

"Guess I wasn't much older than Jack," went on the speaker, thrusting his hands into his pockets and jingling the coins therein, "when I was working in the mines out west and wherever I could pick up a job."

"Now, William," interrupted Mrs. Harvey, "you know you've told us all about that a hundred times –"

She, herself, was interrupted.

"You've got just a minute to go aboard, sir," said one of the pier employees, addressing Mr. Harvey. "You'll be left, if you don't hurry."

Jack Harvey's father gave him a vigorous handshake, and another slap across the shoulder. Mrs. Harvey took him in her arms, despoiled sweater and all, and kissed him good-bye. The next moment, the boy found himself alone on the pier, waving to his parents, as the gang-plank was hauled back.

The liner slowly glided out into the harbour, a cloud of handkerchiefs fluttering along its rail, in answer to a similar demonstration upon the pier.

Jack Harvey's father, gazing back approvingly at his son, strove to comfort and cheer the spirits of his wife.

"Jack's all right," said he. "Hang me, if I wasn't just such another when I was his age. I didn't want anybody mollicoddling me. He'll take care of himself, all right. Don't you worry. He'll be an inch taller in six months. He knows what he wants, too, better than we do. He'll have more fun up in Benton this winter than he'd have travelling around Europe. There he goes. Take a last look at him, Martha. Confound the scamp! I kind of wish he'd taken a notion to come along with us."

If Jack Harvey had any such misgiving as to his decision to spend the winter in Maine, with his boon companions, Henry Burns and the Warren boys, and Tom Harris and Bob White and little Tim Reardon and all the others, in preference to touring Europe with his father and mother, he showed no sign of it. He whistled a tune as the liner went down the harbour, watched the smoke pour in black clouds from its funnel, then turned and walked away from the pier.

A glance at the sturdy figure, as he went along, would have satisfied anyone of the truth of the assertion of Harvey's father, that he was able to take care of himself. The black sweater, albeit it rested under the disapproval and scorn of Mrs. Harvey, covered a broad, deep chest that indicated vigorous health; his thick winter jacket hung upon shoulders that were rounded and muscular. He swung along with the ease and carriage that told of athletic training. And the advantage of the sweater to one of his active temperament was apparent, in that, although the air had a somewhat icy tinge, he was unencumbered by any overcoat – an economy of dress that afforded him freedom.

Freedom! His was, indeed, freedom now in all things. It came over him strongly, as he walked alone in the city in which he was a total stranger, how free he was to act as he pleased. His parents, who exercised little restraint over him at the most, were now being borne swiftly down the bay toward the ocean, and he should not see them again for six long months. He, himself, was due to arrive back in Benton as fast as trains would carry him; but the thought of his absolute freedom for the time being exhilarated him strangely. He felt like challenging the first youth he met to box, or wrestle, or race – anything in which he could exert his utmost strength and let loose his pent-up energies.

Harvey's train was due to leave that evening. He spent the afternoon vigorously, walking miles through streets, exploring here and there, seeing the sights all new to him. He was growing just a bit weary, and very hungry, and was thinking of returning to the hotel for supper, when he emerged from a side street upon a street that ran along the water front.

A sight that made his pulses beat faster met his eyes. Almost at his feet, a little more than the width of the street away, lay a fleet of some thirty or forty fishermen, snuggled all in together, close to a large float that intervened between them and the wharf. Himself a good sailor of bay craft, and fond of the water, the picturesqueness of these boats attracted Harvey greatly.

They were of an odd type, for the most part, unlike anything he had ever seen in Maine waters, or anywhere else. They were long, shallow, light draft fellows, with no bulwarks; so that as they lay, broadside to the float, one might walk across from one to another, without difficulty. Most of them were sharp at bow and stern. The masts had a most extraordinary rake to them; and in the two-masters, the rig was more like that of a yawl than the schooners he was accustomed to seeing. In the case of these, the after mast, or what would correspond to the ordinary main-mast, was the smaller and shorter of the two; and it raked aft at an angle that suggested to the eye of a stranger that it was about to give way and go overboard by the stern.

Jack Harvey had heard in the vaguest way of the Chesapeake Bay oystermen; and he surmised at once that this was a part of that fleet. There was little about them at the moment, however, to indicate occupation of any sort. Their decks, which were built flush fore and aft, broken only by the hatches, were swept clean, and their equipment for fishing, or dredging, had been carefully packed away. And, as matter of fact, the vessels Harvey now saw were probably for the most part the carriers for the fishing fleet, that brought the oysters to market; and so carried no dredging outfits.

Moreover, there was a pleasing suggestion of indolence and coziness in the smoke that curled out of many funnels from the cook stoves in the cabins, telling of preparations for supper. A few men were idling about, talking together, on this and that boat, in groups. There seemed to be no one working. Not such a bad sort of existence, thought Harvey.

The fishing boats made, indeed, a most attractive picture. Their lines, though not as fine as yachts, were sweeping and graceful; their rigging, simple and of few ropes, formed a network of sharp angles as they lay, a score deep, by the float; their sloping masts, small and tapering, inclined now all in one direction, like bare trees bending in a breeze. The light that yet remained in the west brought them out in sharp relief against water and sky.

As Harvey stood, watching them, interestedly, a slight accident happened. A screw steamer, docked just at the head of the float, began to revolve its propeller rapidly, preparatory to moving in its berth. The swift current of water excited by the propeller bore down strongly against the bow of one of the fishermen; and, at that most inopportune moment, the bow line by which the latter was moored, frayed with much wear, parted. The bow swung with the current, and the vessel threatened to crash into another lying just below.

The veriest novice might almost have known what was needed; but Harvey was no novice, and certainly did know. He was, moreover, prompt to act. A coil of rope lay at hand upon the float. Snatching up one loose end of this, Harvey quickly gathered a few loops in either hand, swung them and threw the end aboard the vessel to a man that had run forward. Then he took a few turns with the other end about a spiling, and held hard. The vessel brought up, without harm.

“Good for you!” said a voice just behind Harvey. “You saved ’em just in time.”

Harvey turned quickly.

The speaker was a thin, sallow youth, some years older, apparently, than Harvey. His appearance, at first glance, was not wholly prepossessing. His dress, which had a pretence of smartness, was faded and somewhat shabby, but was set off with a gaudy waistcoat and a heavy gold chain adorning its front. His collar was wilted and far from immaculate; but its short-comings found possible compensation in a truly brilliant necktie, tied sailor-fashion, with flying ends. A much worn derby hat was tilted sidewise on the back of his head.

This youth, who was perhaps eighteen or nineteen years of age, had a smart and presuming manner. He laid a hand familiarly on Harvey’s shoulder, and addressed him as though he had known him a life-time.

“You’re all right,” he continued. “You took a hitch there like an old hand. Come on, we’ll step aboard and look ’em over.”

Almost before he knew it, Harvey was being conducted across the float to the deck of the first fisherman. He went willingly enough, for that matter, for it was exactly what he had been wishing – that he might inspect them closer. Yet he knew, without any definite reason forming itself in his mind, that his chance acquaintance was not congenial to him.

“Will they let us go aboard?” he asked.

“Why, of course,” replied the stranger. “They don’t care. I know a few of them, anyway. I’ll show you around.”

From the first boat, they stepped across to the deck of another, alongside.

“Stranger about here?” inquired the youth of Harvey, casually, giving him a quick, sharp, sidelong glance, as he spoke.

“Yes,” replied Harvey; “I am here only for the day. My father and mother just went off on that liner for Europe.”

“Is that so!” responded the other. At the same moment he fell behind Harvey and gave him another sharp, scrutinizing glance from head to foot. Then he added, “So that leaves you all alone, to do as you please, eh?”

Harvey assented. It was his turn to question now.

“You live about here?” he asked; and looked his companion in the face. It was an uncertain glance that met his. The small, dark eyes of the stranger gave him no direct, answering glance, but shifted evasively.

“Oh, yes,” he responded; “lived here all my life. We’re one of the old families here, but – ” and he gave a slighting look at his well worn clothing – “but we’ve had financial embarrassments lately. The fact is, I’ve had to drop out of college for a year – ”

The youth was interrupted for a moment at this point. He and Harvey, walking forward on the vessel, had come upon two men who were sitting on the deck by the forecastle. One of them, looking up, burst into a laugh. Harvey turned, quickly.

Whatever it was that had amused the man was not apparent. As Harvey turned and looked at him, he stopped abruptly and pointed off across the water. Harvey, led by his companion, started aft again.

As the two reversed their steps, the man who had laughed pointed slyly at Harvey’s escort.

“He’s a slick one, is Artie,” he said. “Catches more of ’em, they say, than any runner along the front.”

“Got him, do you think?” inquired the other man, nodding toward Harvey.

“Looks promising.”

“My name is Jenkins,” continued Harvey’s companion; “and, as I was saying, I’m out of college for a year, earning the money to keep on. Don’t know as that interests you any – but never mind. What did you say? Queer rig, these boats have?”

“Why, yes, it strikes me so,” replied Harvey. “It looks odd to me to see big vessels like these with no gaffs and these leg-o’-mutton sails.”

Again the youth gave Harvey one of those quick, shrewd glances, that seemed to take in everything about him from cap to shoes.

“Guess you know something about boats,” he remarked.

“Well, I own a sloop up in Samoset Bay, in Maine – that is, another fellow and I own it together,” replied Harvey, with a touch of pride.

“I knew you were a sailor, the minute I saw you heave that line,” exclaimed the other. And Harvey felt just a bit flattered. Perhaps Jenkins wasn’t such a bad sort, despite his odd attire.

“Do you see that schooner?” inquired young Mr. Jenkins, suddenly, pointing to a craft with a distinctive schooner rig, the outermost of the vessels that comprised the fleet.

Harvey nodded.

“Well,” continued Jenkins, “that’s Captain Scroop’s boat. She’s the best one of them all, and he’s the most obliging and gentlemanly captain that sails into Baltimore. Come on, we’ll go over her.”

They walked across the decks to the side of the schooner, and climbed aboard, over the rail. The schooner seemed deserted, save the presence of a boy of about twelve, who was engaged in chopping a block of stove-wood into kindlings, near the afterhouse.

“Hello, Joe,” said Jenkins.

The boy looked up and nodded, sullenly. He seemed, moreover, to eye Mr. Jenkins with some disfavour.

“Captain Scroop aboard?”

The boy shook his head.

“Well, we’re going to look about a bit,” said Mr. Jenkins, easily.

He conducted Harvey about the deck, forward and aft, explaining one thing and another; then showed the way to the companion that led to the cabin. “Step down,” he said to Harvey. “Nice quarters they have aboard here.” Then, as Harvey descended, he added, “Make yourself comfortable a moment. I’ll be right along.”

Seeing Harvey at the foot of the companion-ladder, he turned quickly, stepped to the side of the boy and cuffed him smartly over one ear.

“Here, you,” he said, “brace up and say something! There’s a dollar in it for you if we land him. Come to life, now!”

Then he darted after Harvey, down into the cabin.

CHAPTER II

THE CABIN OF THE SCHOONER

Jack Harvey stood at the foot of the companionway, for a moment, looking into the cabin, before he entered. There was a lamp burning dimly, fastened into a socket in a support that extended from the centre-board box to the ceiling. Its light sufficed for Harvey to see but vaguely at first, owing to a cloud of tobacco smoke that filled the stuffy cabin. It was warm there, however, for the cook-stove in the galley threw its comforting heat beyond the limits of that small place; and the warmth was decidedly agreeable to one coming in from the evening air.

Harvey entered and stood, waiting for his new acquaintance to join him. He could see objects soon more plainly. He perceived that the person who was emitting the volumes of smoke was a short, thick-set man, who was occupying one of the two wooden chairs that the cabin afforded. He was huddled all up in a heap, with his head submerged below the collar of his thick overcoat, out of which rim the smoke ascended, as though from the crater of a tiny volcano.

He seemed to have fallen almost into sleep there; and it appeared to Harvey that he must be very uncomfortable, bundled in his great coat, with the cabin hot and smoky. Yet he was awake sufficiently to draw at the stem of his pipe, and to glance up at Harvey as he entered. He even made a jerky motion over one shoulder, with his thumb, indicating a bunk that extended along the side of the cabin, and mumbled something that sounded like, "Have a seat."

Harvey, however, turned toward the companion-way, as young Mr. Jenkins entered and rejoined him.

"Now this is what I call comfortable for a vessel," said Mr. Jenkins, briskly; "not much like some of those old bug-eyes, where they stuff you into a hole and call it a cabin. We'll have a bit more air in here, and then we'll sit down and have a bite with Joe. He wants us to. You're in no great hurry, are you?"

"No, I'm not," responded Harvey, congratulating himself that here was a chance at last to see life aboard a real fisherman at close quarters.

Mr. Jenkins opened one of the ports on either side, which cleared the cabin in a measure of the dense cloud of smoke, and made it more agreeable. Then, stooping, he lifted the leaf of a folding table, that was hinged to the side of the centre-board box, turned the bracket that supported it into place, and motioned to Harvey to draw up a chair. He seated himself on a wooden box, close by.

"Joe's got some steamed oysters ready, and a pot of coffee and some corn bread," he said, cheerfully. "You don't mind taking pot luck for once, do you, just to see how they live aboard? Here he is now. Come on, Joe, we're hungry. Joe, this is Mr. — let's see, did I get your name?"

Harvey informed him, wondering at the easy familiarity of his new acquaintance aboard the vessel, but somewhat amused over it, and his curiosity aroused. The boy nodded to Harvey. Stepping into the galley, he returned directly, bringing two bowls filled with steamed oysters, which he set before Harvey and Mr. Jenkins. The corn bread and coffee arrived duly, and young Mr. Jenkins urged Harvey to fall to and eat heartily.

Harvey needed no urging. His long walk about the city had made him ravenously hungry. Moreover, although the coffee was not much like what he had been accustomed to, the oysters and corn bread were certainly delicious. Harvey and Mr. Jenkins ate by themselves, waited on by the youth, who declared he would eat later, with "him," pointing to the drowsy smoker, who had not stirred from his original position, and with Captain Scroop, if the latter should return to supper.

It was in the course of the meal that Harvey, to his surprise, discovered that there was still another occupant of the cabin, of whose presence he had not before been aware. In the forward,

farther corner of the cabin, what had appeared to be a tumbled heap of blankets, on one of the bunks, suddenly gave forth a resounding snore; and the heap of blankets stirred slightly.

"Hello," exclaimed Harvey; "what's that?"

Mr. Jenkins glanced sharply at the sleeper, sprang up and made a closer inspection, and then, apparently satisfied with what he saw, resumed his seat.

"It's one of the mates," he said. "He's had a hard cold for a week; taken something to sleep it off with, I guess."

Harvey went on eating. He might not have had so keen a relish for his food, however, had he known that the sleeper was not only not a mate, but that, indeed, he had never been aboard a vessel before in all his life; that he hadn't known when nor how he did come aboard; that he was utterly oblivious to where he now was; and that he had been seized of an overpowering drowsiness shortly after taking a single glass of grog with the same young gentleman who now sat with Jack Harvey in the schooner's cabin. That had taken place at a small saloon just across from the float.

Perhaps the suggestion was a timely one for Mr. Jenkins; perhaps he did not need it. At all events, he said guardedly, "Scroop sometimes opens that bottle for visitors; do you want to warm up a bit against the night air?"

He pointed, as he spoke, to a half opened locker, in which some glassware of a certain kind was visible.

"No, thanks," replied Harvey, "never."

"Nor I, either," rejoined Mr. Jenkins, emphatically. "A man's a fool that does, in my opinion. But it's hospitality along here to offer it, so no offence."

One might, however, have noted a look of disappointment in his countenance; and he seemed to be thinking, hard.

"Joe's a good sort," he remarked, presently. "I don't know why I should tell you, but it's odd how I come to know him. The fact is, when my folks had money – plenty of it, too – Joe lived in a little house that belonged to our estate, and I used to run away and play with him. What's more, now I'm grown up, I'm going to run away with him again, eh, Joe?"

The boy nodded.

Harvey looked at Mr. Jenkins, inquiringly. The latter leaned nearer to Harvey and assumed a more confidential air.

"Why, the fact is," he said in a low tone, "you might not think it, perhaps, but I'm a college man – Johns Hopkins – you've heard of that, eh?"

Harvey recalled the name, though the mere fact that such an institution existed was the extent of his information regarding it, and he nodded.

"Well," continued Mr. Jenkins, "I'm working my way through, and my folks are so proud they don't want it known. So I'm going a trip or two with Joe and Captain Scroop, just as soon as they have a berth for me, because it's out of the way, where no one will know me, it's easy work, and the pay is high. Isn't that so, Joe?"

One might have caught the suggestion of a fleeting desire to grin, on the features of the boy addressed; but he lowered his gaze and nodded.

"Why, how many more men do you have begging for chances to ship, every voyage, than you have need of?" inquired young Mr. Jenkins, looking sharply at the boy.

"Dunno," answered Joe, doggedly. "Mebbe five or six; mebbe more."

"That's it!" exclaimed Mr. Jenkins, "And the wages are twenty-five dollars a month, and all the good food a fellow can eat, eh?"

"More'n he can eat, mostly," responded the boy. "They gets too much to eat."

"And when are you going to find that place for me to go a voyage – and berth aft here with you and the captain and mate, like a gentleman, and get my twenty-five a month at easy work?"

"We've got it now," said Joe.

Young Mr. Jenkins sprang from his chair, with an exclamation of delight. He stepped up to the boy and seized him by an arm.

“Say!” he cried; “you’re in earnest now – none of your tricks – do you mean it, really?”

The boy nodded.

“We’ve got two chances,” he said.

Young Mr. Jenkins gave a whistle of amazement.

“Two chances open on the same voyage!” he exclaimed. “I never knew of that before, and just before sailing. How do you account for it – somebody taken sick?”

“That’s it,” said the boy.

Young Mr. Jenkins walked slowly back to his seat, looked sharply at Harvey from the corners of his eyes, and spoke earnestly.

“Say, Mr. Harvey,” he said, “I’m not sure, but I believe I could get that chance for you. You played in great luck when I saw you throw that heaving line to the vessel there, this afternoon. I’ll swear to Captain Scroop that you’re all right, and I know you could make good. Do you know I’ve taken a sort of liking to you; and I tell you what, you and I’ll ship for one month and I’ll see you through. Why, they’re all like brothers here, the captain and his men. We’ll have a gorgeous time, see how the fishing is done, come back in a month and have twenty-five dollars apiece to show for it. And then you’ll have had a real sea experience – something to talk about when you get home. It’s the chance of a life-time.”

Taken all by surprise by the offer, and withal against his better judgment, Jack Harvey found a strange allurements in the suggestion. At no time in all his life could it have been held forth so opportunely. He thought of his father and mother, on the ocean, to be gone for six months. He knew, too, what his father would say, when he should tell him of it later; how the bluff, careless, elder Harvey would throw back his head, and laugh, and vow he was the same sort when he was a youth.

How strangely, too, events that had taken place in Benton coincided favourably with his already half-formed intention to take the chance. He recalled, in a flash, the hour of leaving there, with his father and mother, for Baltimore; how Henry Burns’s aunt, with whom he had been boarding, had asked when he would return; how Harvey’s mother had answered that she hoped yet to persuade the boy to accompany them to Europe; and how Miss Matilda Burns had said, then, she should expect him when he arrived – no sooner – and had remarked, smiling, that if he didn’t come back at all she should know he had gone to Europe.

“It’s only for a month, you know,” suggested young Mr. Jenkins, almost as though he had been reading Harvey’s thoughts.

Harvey sat for a moment, thinking hard.

“Isn’t it pretty cold down there in the bay this time of year?” he asked.

“Why, bless you, no,” replied Mr. Jenkins, laughing at the suggestion. “Don’t you know you’re in the South, now, my boy? This is the coldest day, right now, that we’ll have till January. And if we have a touch of winter – which isn’t likely – why, there’s a good, comfortable cabin to warm up in.”

“Are we sure to get back in a month?”

“Joe, when are you due back here?” called Mr. Jenkins.

“Middle of December,” came the reply.

“I’m most inclined to try it,” said Harvey, hesitatingly.

Mr. Jenkins slapped him on the back, then shook his hand warmly.

“You’re the right sort,” he said. “We’ll have a lark.”

And Harvey knew from that moment that, for better or worse, be it a foolish venture or not, he was in for it.

“What do I need to get for the trip?” he asked. “Guess I’d better step up into the town and buy some boots and oil-skins.”

A look of determination came into the face of Mr. Jenkins. It was as if he had made up his mind that Harvey should have no opportunity now of backing out.

“No, you don’t need to,” he said. “The captain’s got all that stuff, and he buys at wholesale, and you can get it cheaper of him. Wait till to-morrow, anyway, and if he can’t fit you, we’ll go ashore.”

Harvey gave a start of surprise. He hadn’t counted on spending this night aboard the schooner.

“Do you mean to stay here to-night?” he asked.

“Why, sure,” responded young Mr. Jenkins. “Good chance to try it on and see how you like it. We’ll just roll up here, and you’ll swear you were never more comfortable in all your life.”

“Well,” answered Harvey, “I’ll try it. You’re sure the captain will ship us, though?”

“Oh, you can take what that boy Joe says for gospel,” answered young Mr. Jenkins. “He knows.”

“Then I’ll step out on deck and bring down that little hand-bag of mine,” said Harvey. “I left it forward by the rail when I came aboard. It’s got a comb and brush and a tooth-brush and a change of underwear in it.”

Harvey ascended the ladder and walked out on deck. It was a glorious night, the sky studded with thousands of stars. The air was chilly, but Harvey was warmly dressed, and the crisp air was invigorating after his stay in the cabin. He went forward, wondering, in his somewhat confused state of mind, what his chums in Benton would think of it if they could know where he was, and what he contemplated doing.

“I only wish Henry Burns was going along,” he thought. “Well, I’ll have something to tell him next time I see him.”

He little thought under what strange circumstances they would next meet.

Hardly had Harvey left the cabin, when young Mr. Jenkins sprang into the galley, leering at the boy Joe, and digging that stolid youngster facetiously in the ribs.

“Oh, that’s rich!” he chuckled. “What do you say, Joey – a pretty hair-brush and comb and a tooth-brush aboard an oyster dredger? You’ll have to tell old Haley to get a mirror – a French-plate, gold-leaf mirror – for Mr. Harvey. Oh, he’d do it, all right. He’ll – ah, ha, ha – oh jimminy Christmas! Isn’t that rich?”

The boy, Joe, turned toward Mr. Jenkins, somewhat angrily.

“You think you’re smart,” he muttered. “You’ll get come up with, one of these days. What did you get him for? He ain’t the right sort. He’s got folks as will make trouble. I’ll bet the old man won’t stand for him.”

“Look here, you,” exclaimed Mr. Jenkins, seizing the boy, roughly, “you shut up! Who asked you to tell me what to do? Don’t I know my business? Don’t I know old Scroop, too, as much as you do? Of course he’ll stand for him – when I tell him a few things. You leave that to me, and don’t you go interfering, or I’ll hand you something you’ll feel for a week.”

The boy shrank back, and relapsed into stolid silence.

“Where’s that pen and ink?” inquired Jenkins.

The boy pointed to a locker.

Taking a faded wallet from his pocket, Mr. Jenkins produced therefrom a paper which he unfolded and spread upon the table. It seemed to be a form, of some sort or other, partly type-written. He got the rusty pen and a small bottle of ink, laid them beside it, and waited for Harvey’s return. Harvey soon reappeared.

“We’ll just sign this agreement,” remarked Mr. Jenkins carelessly. “Scroop had some aboard here. They don’t mean much, with a good captain like him, for he does better than he’s bound to, anyway. I’ll just run it over, so you can get an idea of it.”

Talking glibly, Mr. Jenkins ran his finger along the lines, whereby Harvey, by the dim light, got a somewhat hazy idea of them: to the effect that he, Jack Harvey, twenty-one years of age, was bound to serve for one month aboard the fisherman, *Z. B. Brandt*, whereof the master was Hamilton

Haley, on a dredging trip in Chesapeake bay and its tributaries. Together, with divers conditions and provisions which Mr. Jenkins dismissed briefly, as of no account.

“But I’m not twenty-one years old,” said Harvey. “That’s wrong.”

“Oh, that don’t amount to anything,” responded Mr. Jenkins. “I knew you weren’t quite that, but it’s near enough. It’s all right. No one ever looks at it. We’ll sign, and it’s all over. Then we’ll turn in, and see the captain in the morning. He’s going to be late, by the looks.”

“But I thought you said the captain’s name was Scroop,” suggested Harvey, puzzled.

“So it is,” replied Mr. Jenkins. “This is an old contract, but it’s just as good. Haley used to be captain, and they use the old forms. It don’t matter what the captain’s name is, so long as he’s all right, and he’s got a good boat.”

Harvey, following the example of his companion, put his name to the paper.

It might have been different had he had opportunity to take note, on coming aboard, that the schooner, in the cabin of which he now sat, bore no such name on bow and stern as the “*Z. B. Brandt*.” It might have been different had he seen, in his mind’s eye, the real *Z. B. Brandt*, pitching and tossing in the waters of Chesapeake Bay, seventy odd miles below where the schooner lay in her snug berth. But he knew naught of that, nor that the schooner in which he was about to take up his quarters for the night was no more like the *Z. B. Brandt* than a Pullman is like a cattle-car.

It was with his mind filled with a picture of the voyage soon over and done, and a proud return to Henry Burns and his cronies, that Harvey turned in shortly, on one of the bunks, wrapped himself snugly in a good warm blanket, and went off to sleep. The creaking of rigging, as some craft moved with the current, the noise of some new arrival coming in late to join the fleet at moorings, the tramp of an occasional sailor on the deck of a neighbouring craft, and the swinging of the schooner, did not disturb his sound slumbers. Wearied with the doings of a busy day, he did not move, once his eyes had closed in sleep.

Some time after eleven o’clock, Mr. Jenkins arose softly and stepped cautiously over to where Harvey lay. There was no mistaking the soundness of Harvey’s slumbers. Mr. Jenkins slipped out of the cabin, upon deck. A row-boat soon attracted his attention, coming toward the schooner from somewhere below. There were three figures in it. As the boat came alongside, Mr. Jenkins stepped to the rail and spoke to the man in the stern.

“Hello, Scroop,” he said. “I’ve got another for you. He wouldn’t drink, but he’s a sound sleeper.”

The captain nodded. With the assistance of his companion in the boat, whom Mr. Jenkins called mate, and of Mr. Jenkins, himself, another man was lifted from the small craft to the deck of the schooner. He seemed half asleep, and walked between them like one that had been drugged. They did not take him aft, but assisted him down into the forecastle, and returned presently, without him.

“All right, captain?” queried Mr. Jenkins.

“Yes, cast us off.”

Mr. Jenkins sprang over the rail, to the deck of the craft alongside. He cast off the lines, forward and aft, that had moored the schooner to the other vessel. The captain and mate ran up one of the jibs. Mr. Jenkins pushed vigorously, and the bow of the schooner slowly swung clear. The current aided. The light night breeze caught the jib. The schooner drifted away, with Captain Scroop at the wheel.

Mr. Jenkins, standing on the deck of the vessel to which the schooner had been moored, watched the latter glide away. After a little time the foresail was run up. The schooner was leaving the harbour of Baltimore.

Mr. Jenkins did a little shuffle, thrust his hands into his pockets, and walked briskly across the decks to shore.

“That’s ten dollars easy money for me and Scroop,” he muttered. Then he stopped once and chuckled. “A comb and brush and a tooth-brush aboard old Haley’s bug-eye!” he said. “Oh, my! That’s a good one.”

CHAPTER III

DOWN THE BAY

Jack Harvey's father, awakening next morning in his comfortable state-room aboard the liner, would have been not a little astounded had he known how strangely the facts belied his remark to Mrs. Harvey that Jack must, by this time, be well on his way north. By no possible stretch of fancy could the vision of their son, lying asleep in the crazy cabin of the old schooner, appear to the minds of Harvey's parents. In blissful ignorance of his strange adventure, they sailed away. Miles and miles behind, the schooner followed in the liner's wake.

Jack Harvey was a good sleeper. The sun came up out of the bay and shed its light far and wide upon hundreds of craft, borne lightly by the wind and tide. It penetrated, even, the cabin of the dingy schooner, and it lighted the way for the youthful sleeper to come back from dreams to consciousness.

For some moments, as Harvey lay with half opened eyes, he wondered where he was. Then it all came back to him in a flash: the Baltimore water-front; the picturesque fishermen; the strange young man – and then, the remembrance that he had signed for a month aboard the schooner. For an instant he almost regretted that act, and the thought brought him up quickly on one elbow, to look about him.

One resolve he made at the moment. He would not back out now. He might find that impossible, anyway, since he had signed the paper. But he would send a line to Miss Matilda Burns, letting her know what he was doing. It was no more than fair to her.

The next moment, Jack Harvey leaped to his feet. He was fully awake now. Dressed, as he was, – for he had removed only his shoes and coat, – he sprang to one of the ports. He had sailed too much not to know that the vessel was under weigh, although, on a perfectly smooth sea and with no swell, there was but slight perceptible motion to the schooner.

One glance told him the truth. He waited no longer, but ran up the companion-way on deck. Amazed, he looked about him. Far astern, some fifteen miles, the outlines of the city showed. The nearest shore was a mile away. The schooner, foresail and main-sail set, and winged out, was slowly gliding before the wind down the bay.

Jack Harvey gave a whistle of astonishment. Then a feeling of resentment toward young Mr. Jenkins arose in his breast.

"That's a cool trick!" he exclaimed. "Why didn't he tell me we were going to sail so soon? He said we'd have time to get a few things in the shops before we sailed. I'll tell him what I think of it."

Without waiting to speak to anyone on deck, or scarce take notice of who was there, Harvey darted down the companion-way and hastened to the bunk where he had seen Mr. Jenkins turn in, the night before.

It was empty.

Strangely puzzled, Harvey made his way out on deck. A tall, keen-eyed man, smooth-shaven save for a light blond moustache, sat astride the wheel box, steering. Harvey turned to him, somewhat excitedly.

"Where's that fellow Jenkins?" he asked.

Coolly surveying Harvey, with a pair of steady, blue eyes, the man replied, "You call me 'Mr. Blake,' young feller; I'm mate."

Harvey's face flushed, angrily. A feeling that he had been somehow tricked came over him. Ignoring the man's order, he stepped nearer to him.

"I want to see that chap, Jenkins," he repeated. "He didn't tell me we were going to sail this way in the night. Where is he?"

The lines about the mouth of Mr. Blake, mate, tightened as he looked the boy over from head to foot. Later experience enlightened Harvey as to what would have happened to him had they been

well down the bay. But, as it was, the man merely uttered something softly under his breath. "I'll leave you for Haley to deal with," was what he said. And he added, in a mollifying tone, addressing Harvey:

"Why, it's too bad about that young feller, Jenkins. You see he got left. He slipped up town for some stuff, early this morning – about three o'clock, I guess, and didn't show up when the tide served for starting. Scroop wouldn't wait, and you can't blame him. But he left word for Jenkins to come down on that boat that lay alongside us. She starts to-morrow. We'll pick him up down the bay. It'll be all right. You're the young feller that Joe told about, eh – going a trip with us?"

The man's manner, changing thus suddenly from sharp to kindly, was surprising – and a bit comforting, too. Without a companion, even though Jenkins were a chance acquaintance, the venture seemed to have taken on a somewhat different and less pleasing aspect to Harvey.

"Yes," he said, in answer to the mate's query, "I'm going one trip, just for a month."

"I see," said the mate, quietly. "Well, you'll like it. You're the right sort. I can tell that. Ever shipped before?"

Harvey shook his head, as he explained that he had done some bay sailing. He was about to explain further under what circumstances, but something made him pause. Under the same sudden impulse – he knew not the reason for it, but obeyed it – he became reticent when Mr. Blake, mate, plied him with questions concerning himself and where he was from.

"I'm just knocking around a bit," he replied, and kept his own counsel. A fortunate thing for him, perhaps, in the light of subsequent events.

The conversation was abruptly broken off. Up from the forecastle there burst three men, clinching in a confused, rough-and-tumble fashion, and struggling together. Had Jack Harvey been on deck the night before, and observed the man who had been carried, sleeping, from the cabin to the forecastle, he might perhaps recognize him now as one of these three.

Somewhat recovered from his condition of stupefaction was he; sufficient to gaze about him wildly, wrestle with the two men who attacked him, strike at them furiously, and cry out several times that he was up to their tricks, that he couldn't be trapped like a dog and shanghaied down the bay – and let them come on, if they dared.

That they did dare was quite apparent; for they rushed him almost off his feet the next moment. And then, to Harvey's surprise, he found himself suddenly at service aboard the schooner.

Leaping to his feet, the mate exclaimed, hastily, "Here, you, hold that wheel a minute."

Harvey obeyed. The mate made a few bounds across the deck, took advantage of the opening that offered as the strange man's back was turned to him, and dealt him a blow behind one ear that felled him, half stunned. The next moment, Harvey saw the three lift the vanquished fighter by head and heels and carry him below again.

Harvey's heart sank a little. It was hardly an auspicious beginning of a cruise on a strange craft.

Mr. Blake was back again in a few minutes. He was as cool as though nothing unusual had taken place.

"No, you keep the wheel a moment, while I light my pipe," he said, as Harvey started to relinquish the post. Then he laughed, drew forth his pipe and a piece of tobacco, and proceeded to cut a pipeful with his knife.

"That's Tom Saunders," he said. "Gets foolish drunk the minute he steps on shore; never's sober except when he's afloat. Comes aboard a-boilin' every trip, fights, and makes a mess about being carried off against his will. He'll straighten out tomorrow and be the best man in the crew."

Harvey felt a bit easier. There had come over him, as he watched the struggle, a feeling that perhaps he, too, had been trapped aboard here. It was strange, certainly: the disappearance of Mr. Jenkins, and the words the man had just uttered about being shanghaied. However, he was in for the cruise; and come what would, Harvey resolved to make the best of it.

There came aft, presently, the man Scroop, captain of the schooner, whom Harvey eyed curiously, when the mate addressed him.

“Well?” inquired Mate Blake.

Captain Scroop gave vent to a vigorous expletive. “We’ve fixed him!” he said. “He’ll shut up for a while. Hullo, who’s this?”

“A friend of Jenkins,” replied the mate, giving a sly wink as he spoke.

Captain Scroop looked at Harvey keenly. Harvey eyed him, eagerly, in return. What he saw was not wholly favourable. Scroop, a hard-featured, shifty-eyed man of middle stature, had not been rendered more prepossessing by his recent encounter. A swelling under one eye showed where the stranger’s fist had landed heavily. His woollen shirt was torn open at the neck, wherein the veins were distended from wrath and excitement. He gave one quick, shifting glance at Harvey and said abruptly, “All right. Get below now and tell Joe to give you breakfast.”

Harvey went below.

Captain Scroop turned angrily upon the mate.

“Who got him aboard?” he asked.

“Jenkins – who do you suppose?”

Captain Scroop’s face darkened, and he shook a clenched fist in the direction of Baltimore.

“Won’t he never tell the truth, nohow?” he exclaimed. “Lied to me last night, up and down. Twenty-five years old, or near that, was what he swore. Haven’t I told him not to get these boys? That’s a kid – if he’s seventeen he’s doin’ better’n I think. He’s got to go, though. I’ll put him through, now. But wait till we get back. Won’t I settle with somebody? They’ll have the law on us some day.”

“Pooh! You’ve said all that a million times,” replied the mate, coolly. “What’s the odds? Aren’t we taking chances, every trip we make? Haven’t we had boys before? Look at the lot of ’em we’ve had from New York. What’s it to us? Leave Haley to work it out. And don’t you go to getting down on Artie Jenkins. He knows his lay. He wouldn’t have shipped this fellow unless he knew it was all right. He’s no fonder of trouble than we are.”

Jack Harvey, the innocent subject of the foregoing remarks, was, in the meantime, getting into a better frame of mind. There was no great fault, surely, to be found with the grub aboard the schooner. Nothing that he had ever cooked and eaten at his camp by the shore of Samoset Bay tasted better than the corn flap-jacks handed out from the galley by the boy, Joe. Smeared with a substance, greasy and yellow, but that never was nor ever could be suspected of being butter, and sticky with a blackish liquid that was sweet, like molasses, they were still appetizing to a hungry youth who had never known the qualms of sea-sickness. A muddy compound, called by extreme courtesy coffee, warmed Harvey to the marrow and put heart in him. A few slices of fried bacon tasted better than the best meal he could have had aboard the ocean liner.

Eating heartily, despite his disappointment to find himself forsaken by Mr. Jenkins, Harvey essayed to draw the boy, Joe, into conversation; but the latter was sullen, and chary of his words.

Would Jenkins surely be down by the next vessel? The boy nodded, somewhat blankly. He guessed so. Where would they begin fishing, and how? Harvey would see, later. And so on. There was clearly little to be gotten from him.

Once there came down into the cabin the same, odd individual who had sat, huddled in the cabin, smoking, the afternoon before. He got a dish of the flap-jacks and a pail of the coffee, and started out again. Harvey fired a question at him, as the man waited a moment to receive his grub.

“How do we fish, down the bay, anyway?” asked Harvey.

The man turned a little, stared at Harvey in a surly manner for a moment, and then – apparently not all in sympathy with methods aboard the schooner and in the trade generally – answered, “Hmph! You breaks yer back at a bloody winder.” And with this somewhat enigmatical reply, went about his business.

“Say,” said Harvey, turning to the boy, once more, “what’s a winder?”

“Why, it’s a – a – winder,” responded the boy.

“That’s just what I thought,” said Harvey, smiling in spite of his perplexity. “And what’s it for?”

“You get oysters with it,” replied the boy. “You heaves the dredge overboard, and you winds it in again.”

“Oh, I see,” said Harvey, enlightened by this lucid explanation. “It’s a sort of windlass, eh?”

Joe nodded.

“Hard work?” continued Harvey.

“Naw – easy.”

But Harvey had his misgivings. And again he comforted himself with the thought, at worst, the cruise would be over and done in a month.

“I guess I’m good for that,” he muttered; and went out on deck again.

The schooner’s course had been changed a little, and they were now sailing almost directly south, down Chesapeake bay. The schooner was no longer winged out, but had both booms off to port, getting the wind on the quarter. Fore-staysail and jib and main gaff top-sail, as well, were set, and the old craft was swinging southward at a fair clip. The wind had begun to increase.

This was action after Harvey’s own heart, and he walked forward, toward the gruff sailor, who was stationed near the forecandle. He observed, as he advanced, that there was still another man forward by the jibs; and that these two sailors, the captain and mate and the boy, Joe, were apparently the only ones aboard the vessel, besides himself.

Harvey glanced at the man forward. He was almost dwarfish in stature, thick-set, with unusually broad shoulders. Clearly, this was not the man that Harvey had seen asleep, amid the bundle of blankets, in the cabin. Harvey had not seen the face of the sleeper, but he had noted once, when the man had stirred, that he was a tall man; that the figure stretched out at length took up an unusual amount of room.

It flashed over Harvey that the man he had seen asleep in the cabin, the night before, was missing from there now. Harvey was certain he had not seen him, as he sat eating. To make sure, he went back and looked. The man was not there.

“That’s odd,” said Harvey to himself, as he came on deck again. “I wonder if they’ve lugged him down into the forecandle, too. They must have done it in the night. By jimminy! I wonder how many they’ve got stowed away down there, anyway.”

Somewhat startled at the idea that there might be other men held there, and curious to see for himself, Harvey approached the companion. As he did so, the surly seaman barred his way.

“Keep out ’er there,” he said, roughly. “You can’t go below now. Them’s my orders.”

Harvey stepped back, in surprise. There was a mystery to the forecandle, then, sure enough. He hazarded one question:

“What’s the matter? What’s down there?”

The man made no reply.

Harvey went forward to where the other man stood.

“Say, what’s there to do aboard here?” he asked.

The fellow turned and eyed Harvey for a moment, curiously.

“Nothin’ now,” he replied, finally. “Nothin’ till we get down the bay. We all takes it easy like, till then.”

But further than this, he, too, became uncommunicative when Harvey questioned him about the cruise. It was discouraging, and Harvey gave it up. He seemed likely to have little companionship, if any, aboard the schooner, and the thought was not pleasing. Again he wondered at the strange disappearance of Mr. Jenkins, and hoped it might be true that the young man would rejoin them down the bay.

The day passed somewhat monotonously for the most part. The schooner was holding an almost straight course down the bay, along the western shore. Harvey, having an eye for safety, noted that the coast was almost unbroken for miles and miles, affording no harbour in case of storm. He spoke of it once to the sailor by the forecandle.

“Plenty of harbours down below,” replied the man. “We’re goin’ well; reckon we’ll lie in the Patuxent tonight. There’s harbour enough for you.”

It was a positive relief to Harvey when, some time in the afternoon, it came on to blow very fresh, and the foresail and mainsail were both reefed. He lent a hand at that, tying in reef points with the other two. They seemed surprised that he knew how to do it.

But, with the freshening of the wind, it altered its direction and blew up finally, towards evening, from the eastward; so that they made slower progress, running now on the wind, close-hauled. Rain began falling at twilight, and a bitter chill crept into the air. Harvey thought of the oil-skins he had intended buying in Baltimore, and wished he had them. There was nothing for him to do on deck now, however, and he gladly went below.

He ate his supper alone, for all hands were on deck. The schooner pitched and thrashed about in the short, rough seas. It was gloomy in the dimly lighted cabin, and the boy Joe, at work in the galley, positively declined to enter into conversation. Jack Harvey, left to himself, mindful of his strange situation, of the mysterious fore-castle with its imprisoned men, and depressed by the wretched night, didn’t dare admit to himself how much he wished himself ashore. The confinement of the cabin made him drowsy, not long after he had eaten, and he was glad enough to roll up in a blanket on one of the bunks and go off to sleep.

While he slept, the schooner thrashed its way in past a light-house on a point of land on the western shore, and headed up into the mouth of a broad, deep river. They sailed into this for something like half a mile, Scroop at the wheel, and the mate and two seamen forward, peering ahead through the rain.

Presently the mate rushed aft.

“There she lies,” he said, pointing, as he spoke, to where a lantern gleamed in the fore-mast shrouds of a vessel at anchor.

“I see her,” responded Scroop.

The old schooner, under the guiding hand of Scroop, rounded to and came up into the wind a few rods astern of the other vessel. And now, lying astern, the light from the other’s cabin shone so that the forms of three men could be distinguished vaguely, standing on the deck. The schooner’s anchor went down, the foresail was dropped, and, the jibs having already been taken in, the craft was soon lying snug, with her mainsail hauled flat aft, to steady her. A small boat was launched from the deck, and made fast alongside.

Mr. Blake, mate, pointing toward the cabin, inquired briefly, “Take him first?”

“No,” said Scroop. “Clear out the fore-castle. He’ll make a fuss, I reckon. When we drop him, I want to get out and leave him to Haley.”

Advancing hastily across the deck, the four men, captain and mate and the two sailors, disappeared into the fore-castle. They reappeared shortly, bearing an unconscious burden between them, much as they would have carried a sack of potatoes; which burden, however, showed some sign of animation as the rain fell upon it, and muttered something unintelligible. They deposited the burden in the bottom of the small boat.

Another disappearance into the fore-castle, and a repetition of the performance; another and similar burden being laid alongside the first in the boat.

Then five men emerged from the fore-castle, the fifth man walking upright, held fast by the others. It was the man that Harvey had seen struggling with the two sailors that morning. But he went along quietly now, the reason being apparent in the words of Scroop.

“You go along or you go overboard,” he said. “The first yip out of you and you get that belayin’ pin in the head.”

The boat, with its conscious and unconscious cargo, rowed by the two sailors and guided by Scroop in the stem, put away from the schooner and was soon alongside the other vessel.

“Hello,” said a voice.

“Hello, Haley.”

“How many?”

“Three here and one to come; good men, too – sailors, every one of ’em.”

A snort of incredulity from the man on deck.

“Let you tell it!” he exclaimed. “I’m in luck if there’s one of ’em that hasn’t been selling ribbon over a counter. Well, fetch ’em on.”

A hatch-way forward received the three men; a short, thick-necked, burly individual – the same being Hamilton Haley of the bug-eye *Brandt*– eying them with evident suspicion as they were taken below. After which, the two worthy captains repaired together to the cabin of the bug-eye, and partook of something in the way of refreshment, which was followed by the transfer of forty dollars in greasy bills, from a chest in the cabin to the wallet of Captain Scroop.

“Dredging good?” inquires Scroop.

“Not much. Lost a man day before yesterday – took sick and died. Went overboard in the chop, down below, and I couldn’t get him.”

“Wasn’t near time for his paying off, eh?” suggests Scroop, leering skeptically.

“Never you mind what it was near. It couldn’t be helped, and the mate will swear to it.”

This asserted by Haley, red of face, wrathful of manner, and bringing a heavy fist down hard on the chest.

Some time later, Jack Harvey awoke suddenly from sound sleep. Someone was shaking him. Dazed and hardly conscious of where he was, he recognized the mate.

“What’s the matter?” he asked.

The mate shook him again.

“Get up!” he said. “Get up. We’re going to row ashore. Hurry now, jump into your boots and coat.”

Harvey, blinking and drowsy, did as he was ordered. Escorted by the mate, he went out into the drizzle on deck. It was almost like an unpleasant night-mare, the act of stumbling down into the boat, the short, pitching ride in the rainy night. Then, all at once, the side of the other vessel loomed up. Another moment, Harvey found himself lifted roughly aboard, and, before he knew hardly what had happened, the rowboat was going away and leaving him.

“Here!” he cried, thoroughly frightened. “What are you doing? What are you leaving me here for? This isn’t ashore. Here, you, keep your hands off me.”

But there was no hope for Jack Harvey. In the grasp of two stalwart sailors, seeing in a flash the truth of what had befallen him, knowing, all too late, that he had been tricked and trapped aboard a strange vessel, he found himself dragged across the deck. He was half carried, half thrown down the companion-way. He found himself in a stuffy, ill-smelling fore-castle, not much bigger than a good sized dog-kennel. It was already crowded with men; but there, by lying at close quarters with this forsaken lot of humanity, he might sleep out the rest of the night, if he could.

And thus Jack Harvey was to begin his adventures aboard Hamilton Haley’s bug-eye. Nor would it matter, as he should find, that the satchel containing the articles which had occasioned so much hilarity on the part of young Mr. Jenkins, had been left behind, in the confusion. Jack Harvey surely would not need them aboard the *Z. B. Brandt*.

CHAPTER IV

ABOARD THE BUG-EYE

Jack Harvey stood at the foot of the short ladder leading down into the forecastle, looking anxiously about him. A boat-lantern, wired for protection in handling, hung by the bulkhead, affording a gloomy view of the place. Harvey had, in the course of much roughing it, lived at times in tents, in log cabins, and in odd sorts of shacks, and slept in the cabins of the fishing boats of Samoset Bay in Maine. But never in all his experience had he found himself in such dismal, cramped and forbidding quarters as these.

On either side of the forecastle nearest the ladder was a narrow, shallow bunk, raised a little above the floor, sufficient to tuck a few odds and ends of clothing under; directly above each was a similar bunk, of equal dimensions. All four of these had scarcely any head-room at all – an arrangement whereby one, springing quickly up into a sitting posture, would give his head such a bump as would remind him unpleasantly of the economy of space.

In the lower of these bunks there now lay two men, at least asleep if not resting. They breathed heavily, moaning as though in some unnatural condition of slumber. It was evident to Harvey that they were under the influence of something like a drug; and the recollection flashed through his mind of the offer of young Mr. Jenkins in the cabin of the schooner – which he had fortunately refused. If he were, indeed, a captive, he was at least in no such senseless condition as these men.

The upper bunks held two more occupants. These two slept quietly, even through the disturbance that had been made so recently. Perhaps they were not unused to such occurrences. It was apparent they were sailors, and their sleep was natural. In all likelihood, the two lower bunks had been left vacant for new recruits, the old seamen taking the upper ones.

All this Jack Harvey took in with a few quick glances. What he saw next gave him something of a start.

Forward of the four bunks described were yet two others, the space in the forecastle being arranged “to sleep” six men. These bunks were, if such a thing could be possible, even less comfortable than the others. Curving with the lines of the bows of the vessel, they had scarce length enough for a good sized man to stretch out in. In part compensation for which, however, there being no upper bunks, there was head-room enough so that one could sit upright with some degree of comfort.

In the starboard bunk there sat a man, huddled up, with one arm bracing him from behind, and a hand, clutching one knee. He was staring at the new-comer Harvey, with a look of abject despair.

Harvey, surprised and startled to find himself thus confronting someone who was clearly in his proper senses, returned the man’s gaze, and the two stared wonderingly at each other for a moment, in silence.

With a groan, the man swung himself down to the floor and advanced a step.

“Hullo,” he said, “how in the Dickens did they get you?”

“Same to you,” said Harvey, by way of reply. He had, at the sight of this companion in misery, regained his composure a little. Unconsciously, the fact that here was someone with whom he could share misfortune had raised his courage. For Harvey had taken in the appearance of the man at once. He was well dressed. His clothes were of fine material and of a stylish cut – albeit they were wrinkled and dusty from his recent experiences. A torn place in the sleeve of his coat told, too, of the rough handling he had received. His collar was crumpled and wilted, his tie disarranged. A derby hat that he had worn lay now on the floor, in one corner, with the crown broken. On the little finger of his left hand he wore a ring.

Instinctively, Jack Harvey and the stranger extended arms and grasped hands, with the warmth of sudden friendship born of mutual sympathy.

“Well, I’ll be hanged, if they’re not a lot of scoundrels!” exclaimed the man, surveying Harvey with astonishment. “Why, you’re only a boy. How on earth did they get you? Didn’t drug your drink, did they?”

“No, I don’t drink,” said Harvey. “I signed for a cruise, all right, but not on this craft. I signed to go a month on that schooner that brought me down. Cracky, but it looks as though I’d made a mess of it. A chap named Jenkins got me into this – ”

“Jenkins!” cried the man, bursting out in a fury. “Jenkins, was it? Slim, oily chap, flashy waistcoat and sailor tie?”

Harvey nodded.

The man clenched his fist and raised it above his head.

“Told you he was going to Johns Hopkins when he earned the money – nice family but poor – and all that sort of rot?”

“That’s the chap,” said Harvey.

The man dropped his fist, put out a hand to Harvey, and they shook once more. The man’s face relaxed into a grim smile.

“Well, I’m another Jenkins recruit,” he said. “I’m an idiot, an ass, anything you’re a-mind to call me. There’s some excuse for you – but me, a man that’s travelled from one end of this United States to the other, and met every kind of a sharper between New York and San Francisco – to get caught in a scrape like this!”

“Why, then your name is not Tom Saunders,” exclaimed Harvey, who now recognized in his new acquaintance the man he had seen struggling with the men of the schooner. “They said you were a sailor.” The man made a gesture of disgust. “I hate the very smell of the salt water!” he cried.

There was a small sea chest next to the bulk-head at the forward end of the forecastle, and Harvey and the stranger seated themselves on it. The man relapsed for a moment into silence, his elbows on his knees, his face buried in his hands. Then, all of a sudden, he sat erect, and beat his fist down upon one knee.

“This ends it!” he cried, earnestly. “Never again as long as I live and breathe.”

Harvey stared at him in surprise.

“I mean the drink,” cried the man, excitedly. “Mind what I say, and I mean it. Never another drink as long as I live. I’ve said, before, that I’d stop it, but this ends it. Say, what’s your name, anyway?”

“Jack Harvey.”

“Well, my name’s Edwards – Tom Edwards. Now look here, Harvey, I mean what I say; if you ever see Tom Edwards try to take another drink, you just walk up and hit him the hardest knock you can give him. See?”

Harvey laughed, in spite of the other’s earnestness.

“I won’t have any chance for some time, by the looks of things,” he said. “You won’t need to sign any pledge this month. I reckon there’s no saloon aboard this vessel.”

“I’m glad of it,” exclaimed Edwards. “I wouldn’t walk into one now, if they were giving the stuff away. Look what it’s got me into. Say, how did our Johns Hopkins friend catch you?”

Harvey quickly narrated the events that had followed the departure of his parents for Europe, and the meeting with young Mr. Jenkins. Mr. Edwards, listening with astonishment, eyed him with keenest interest.

“That’s it,” he exclaimed, as Harvey recounted the engaging manner in which Jenkins had assured him he would return in one short month, with a nautical experience that should make him the envy of his boy companions; “put it in fancy style, didn’t he? Regular Tom Bowline romance, and all that sort of thing, eh?”

Mr. Edwards’s eyes twinkled, and he was half smiling, in spite of himself.

“Well,” he continued, noting Harvey’s athletic figure, “I guess you can stand a month of it, all right, and no great hurt to you. And, what’s best, your folks won’t worry. But I tell you, Harvey, it’s going to be tough on me, if I can’t force this bandit to set me ashore again. I’m in an awful scrape. My business house will think I’ve been murdered, or have run away – I don’t know what. And when it comes to work, if we have much of that to do, I don’t know how I’m going to stand it. You see, my firm pays my expenses, and I’m used to putting up at the best hotels and living high. So, I’m fat and lazy. Billiards is about my hardest exercise, and my hands are as soft as a woman’s. See here.”

Mr. Edwards stretched out two somewhat unsteady hands, palms upward; then slapped them down upon his knees. As he did so, he uttered a cry of dismay and sprang to his feet, sticking out his little finger and staring at it ruefully.

“The thieves!” he cried, angrily. “The cowardly thieves! See that ring? They’ve got the diamond out of it. Worth two hundred dollars, if ’twas worth a cent. They couldn’t get the ring off, without cutting it, and I suppose they couldn’t do that easily; so they’ve just pried out the stone.”

Harvey looked at the hand which Edwards extended. The setting of the costly ring had, indeed, been roughly forced, and the stone it had contained, extracted.

“I wouldn’t care so much,” said Edwards, “if it hadn’t been a gift from the men in the store.” Impulsively, he turned to Harvey and put a hand on his shoulder.

“Say, Harvey,” he exclaimed, “when you and I get ashore again – if we ever do – we’ll go and hunt up this young Mr. Jenkins.”

“All right,” replied Harvey; “but it may not be quite so bad as you think. We’ll get through some way, I guess.”

Oddly enough, either by reason of the lack of responsibility that weighed on the spirits of the man, or because of a lingering eagerness for adventure, in spite of the dubious prospects, the boy, Harvey, seemed the more resolute of the two.

“Well,” responded Edwards, “I’m sorry you’re in a scrape; but so long as you’re here, why, I’m glad you’re the kind of a chap you are. We’ll help each other. We’ll stand together.”

And they shook hands upon it again.

“Now,” said Edwards, “here’s how I came here. I’m a travelling man, for a jewelry house – Burton & Brooks, of Boston. I was on the road, got into Washington the other night, and sold a lot of goods there. But one of my trunks hadn’t come on time, and I was hung up for a day with nothing to do. Never had been in Baltimore, and thought I’d run down for a few hours.

“I got dinner at a restaurant and went out to look around. I went along, hit or miss, and brought up down by the water-front. This chap, Jenkins, bumped into me and apologized like a gentleman; we got to talking, and he invited me into one of those saloons along the front. Beastly place, and I knew it; but I was off my guard. He certainly was slick, talked about his family and Johns Hopkins, and pumped me all the time – I can see it now – till he found I wasn’t stopping at any hotel, but had just run in to town for the day.

“That was all he wanted. Saw the game was safe, and then he and the fellow that ran the place must have fixed it up together. I’ll bet he stands in with most of these places on the water-front. He apologized for the place, I remember; said it was rough but clean, and the oysters the best in Baltimore. Well, I don’t remember much after that, until I woke up in that hole on the schooner that brought us down here. I know we had something to drink – and that, so help me, is the last that anyone ever gets Tom Edwards to take. Shake on that, too.”

He had a hearty, bluff way of talking, and a frankness in declaring himself to be the biggest simpleton that was ever caught with chaff, that compelled friendship.

Harvey again accepted the proffered hand, smiling a little to himself, and wondering if it were a habit of the other’s profession to seal all compacts on the spot in that fashion.

“So here I am,” concluded Mr. Edwards, “in the vilest hole I ever was in; sick from the nasty pitching of this infernal boat; the worst head-ache I ever woke up with – thanks to Mr. Jenkins’s

drug – robbed of \$150 in money, that I had in a wallet, a diamond that I wouldn't have sold at any price – and, worst of all, my house won't know what's become of me. You see, I'm registered up in Washington at a hotel there. I disappear, they find my trunk and goods all right, and my accounts are straight. Nobody knows I came to Baltimore. I'm not registered at any hotel there. There's a mystery for 'em. Isn't it a fix?"

Harvey whistled expressively.

"You're worse off than I am, a million times," he said. "Besides, I've got a little money, if it will help us out any. It's twenty-five dollars I had for fare back to Benton, and pocket-money."

"Where's that – where'd you say you were going?" asked Mr. Edwards, quickly.

"Benton."

"Benton, eh? Well, that's funny. I've been there; sold goods in Benton lots of times. You don't happen to know a man by the name of Warren there, do you? He's got three boys about your age, or a little younger – nice man, too."

Harvey gave an exclamation of surprise and delight.

"Know him? I guess I do," he cried. "And the Warren fellows, well rather. Hooray!"

It was Harvey's turn to offer the hand of fellowship this time; and he gave Mr. Edwards a squeeze that made that gentleman wince.

"You've got a pretty good grip," said he, rubbing his right hand with the other. "I guess you can stand some hard work." Then they reverted to the subject of Benton, once more, and it brought them closer together. There was Bob White's father, whom Mr. Edwards knew, and several others; and Jack Harvey knew their sons; and so they might have shaken hands at least a half dozen times more, if Mr. Edwards had been willing to risk the experiment again.

"Now, to get back to the money," said he, finally; "you've got to hide that twenty-five dollars, or you'll lose it. Here, I can help you out."

He drew forth from a pocket a rubber tobacco pouch, and emptied the contents into an envelope in one of his inside coat pockets.

"I don't see how they happened to leave me this," he said, "but they did, and it's lucky, too. It's just what you need. We'll tuck the bills in this, fold it over and over, wrap a handkerchief about it, and you can fasten it inside your shirt with this big safety-pin. Trust a travelling man on the road to have what's needed in the dressing line. It may save you from being robbed. What are you going to do with that other five? Don't you want to save that, too?"

Harvey had taken from a wallet in his pocket twenty dollars in bills, letting one five dollar bill remain.

"I'm going to use that to save the rest with," replied Harvey. "Supposing this brute of a captain asks me if I've got any money, to buy what I'll need aboard here, or suppose I'm robbed; well, perhaps they'll think this is all I've got, and leave me the twenty."

"You're kind of sharp, too," responded Mr. Edwards, smiling. "You'd make a good travelling man. We'll stow this secure, I hope."

He enfolded the bills handed to him by Harvey in the rubber tobacco pouch, wrapped the boy's handkerchief about that, and passed it, with the pin thrust through, to Harvey. Harvey, loosening his clothing, pinned the parcel of bills securely, next to his body.

"That's the thing," said Mr. Edwards, approvingly. "That's better than the captain's strong-box, I reckon. I'm afraid we've struck a pirate. Whew, but I'd give five hundred – oh, hang it! What's the use of wishing? We're in for it. We'll get out, I suppose some way. I'll tackle this captain in the morning. I've sold goods to pretty hard customers before now. If I can't sell him a line of talk that will make him set me ashore, why, then my name isn't Tom Edwards. Guess we may as well turn in, though I reckon I'll not sleep much in that confounded packing-box they call a berth. Good night, Harvey, my boy. Here's good luck for to-morrow."

Mr. Edwards put forth his hand, then drew it back quickly.

“I guess that last hand-shake will do for to-night,” he said. “Pretty good grip you’ve got.”

Harvey watched him, curiously, as he prepared to turn in for the night. Surely, an extraordinary looking figure for the forecastle of a dingy bug-eye was Mr. Tom Edwards. He removed his crumpled collar and his necktie, gazed at them regretfully, and tucked them beneath the edge of the bunk. He removed his black cut-away coat, folded it carefully, and stowed it away in one end of the same. He likewise removed a pair of patent leather shoes.

It was hardly the toggery for a seaman of an oyster-dredger; and Harvey, eying the incongruous picture, would have laughed, in spite of his own feeling of dismay and apprehension, but for the expression of utter anguish and misery on the face of Tom Edwards, as he rolled in on to his bunk.

“Cheer up,” said the latter, with an attempt at assurance, which the tone of his voice did not fully endorse, “I’ll fix that pirate of a captain in the morning, or I’ll never sell another bill of goods as long as I live.”

“I hope so,” replied Harvey.

But he had his doubts.

They had made their preparations not any too soon.

A voice from the deck called out roughly, “Douse that lantern down there! Take this ere boat for an all-night dance-hall?”

Harvey sprang from his bunk and extinguished the feeble flicker that had given them light, then crept back again. He was young; he was weary; he was hopeful. He was soon asleep, rocked by the uneasy swinging and dipping of the vessel. Mr. Thomas Edwards, travelling man and gentleman patron of the best hotels, envied him, as he, himself, lay for hours awake, a prey to many and varied emotions.

But he, too, was not without a straw to cling to. He had his plans for the morrow; and, as tardy slumber at length came to his weary brain, he might have been heard to mutter, “I’ll sell that captain a line – a line – a line of talk; I’ll make him take it, or – or I’ll – ”

His words ceased. Mr. Thomas Edwards had gone upon his travels into dreamland. And, if he could have seen there the face and figure of Captain Hamilton Haley of the bug-eye, *Z. B. Brandt*, and have listened to that gentleman engaged in the pleasing art of conversation, he might not have been so hopeful of selling him a “line of talk.”

CHAPTER V

THE LAW OF THE BAY

The bug-eye, *Z. B. Brandt*, lay more easily at anchor as the night wore away and morning began to come in. The wind that had brought the rain had fallen flat, and, in its stead, there was blowing a gentle breeze straight out the mouth of the river, from the west. The day bade fair to be clear. Still, with the increasing warmth of the air upon the surface of the water, a vapour was arising, which shut out the shore in some degree.

To one looking at it from a little distance, the vessel might have presented a not unpleasing appearance. Its lines were certainly graceful – almost handsome – after the manner of that type of bay craft. The low free-board and sloping masts served to add grace to the outlines. The *Z. B. Brandt* was a large one of its class, something over sixty feet long, capable evidently of carrying a large cargo; and, at the same time, a bay-man would have known at a glance that she was speedy.

Built on no such lines of grace and speed, however, was her skipper, Captain Hamilton Haley, who now emerged from the cabin, on deck, stretched his short, muscular arms, and looked about and across the water, with a glance of approval and satisfaction at the direction of the wind. He was below the medium height, a lack of stature which was made more noticeable by an unusual breadth of chest and burliness of shoulders.

Squat down between his shoulders, with so short and thick a neck that it seemed as though nature had almost overlooked that proportion, was a rounded, massive head, adorned with a crop of reddish hair. A thick, but closely cut beard added to his shaggy appearance. His mouth was small and expressionless; from under heavy eye-brows, small, grayish eyes twinkled keenly and coldly.

Smoke pouring out of a funnel that protruded from the top of the cabin on the starboard side, and a noise of dishes rattling below in the galley, indicated preparation for breakfast. Captain Haley, his inspection of conditions of wind and weather finished, went below.

A half hour later, there appeared from the same companion-way another man, of a strikingly different type. He was tall and well proportioned, powerfully built, alert and active in every movement. His complexion showed him to be of negro blood, though of the lightest type of mulatto. His face, smooth-shaven, betrayed lines that foreboded little good to the crew of any craft that should come under his command. His eyes told of intelligence, however, and it would have required but one glance of a shrewd master of a vessel to pick him out for a smart seaman. Let Hamilton Haley tell it, there wasn't a better mate in all the dredging fleet than Jim Adams. Let certain men that had served aboard the *Brandt* on previous voyages tell it, and there wasn't a worse one. It was a matter of point of view.

Captain Hamilton Haley having also come on deck, and it being now close on to five o'clock of this November morning, it was high time for the *Brandt* to get under way. Captain Haley motioned toward the forecastle.

"Get 'em out," he said curtly.

The mate walked briskly forward, and descended into the forecastle. The two seamen in the upper bunks, sleeping in their clothes, tumbled hastily out, at a word from the mate, and a shake of the shoulder. The men in the two lower bunks did not respond. Angrily raising one foot, shod in a heavy boot, Jim Adams administered several kicks to the slumberers. They stirred and groaned, and half awoke. Surveying them contemptuously for a moment, the mate passed them by.

"I'll 'tend to you gentlemen later on, I reckon," he muttered. Jack Harvey, aroused by the stirring in the forecastle, had scrambled hastily out, and was on his feet when the mate approached. The latter grinned, showing two rows of strong, white teeth.

"Well done, sonny," he said. "Saved you'self gettin' invited, didn't you? Just be lively, now, and scamper out on deck. Your mammy wants ter see you."

“All right,” answered Harvey, and stooped for his shoes. To his surprise, he felt himself seized by the powerful hand of the mate, and jerked upright. The mate was still smiling, but there was a gleam in his eyes that there was no mistaking.

“See here, sonny,” he said, “would you just mind bein’ so kind as to call me ‘mister,’ when you speaks to me? I’m Mister Adams, if you please. Would you just as lieves remember that?”

Jack Harvey was quick to perceive that this sneering politeness was no joke. He answered readily, “Certainly, Mr. Adams; I will, sir.”

The mate grinned, approvingly.

“Get along,” he said.

Pausing for a moment before the bunk in which Mr. Tom Edwards was still sleeping, the mate espied the black tailor-made coat which the owner had carefully folded and stowed in one corner before retiring. From that and the general appearance of the sleeper, it was evident Jim Adams had gathered an impression little favourable to the occupant of the bunk.

“Hmph!” he muttered. “Reckon he won’t last long. Scroop’s rung in a counter-jumper on Haley. Wait till Haley sees him.”

His contempt for the garment, carefully folded, did not however, prevent his making a more critical inspection of it. Drawing it stealthily out of the bunk, the mate quickly ran through the pockets. The search disappointed him. There was a good linen handkerchief, which he appropriated; an empty wallet, which he restored to a pocket; and some papers, equally unprofitable. Tossing the coat back into the bunk, the mate seized the legs of the sleeper and swung them around over the edge of the bunk; which being accomplished, he unceremoniously spilled Mr. Tom Edwards out on the floor.

There was a gleam of triumph in his eyes as he did so; a consciousness that here, in these waters of the Chesapeake, among the dredging fleet, there existed a peculiar reversal of the general supremacy of the white over the black race; a reversal growing out of the brutality of many of the captains, and the method of shipping men and holding them prisoners, to work or perish; in the course of which, captains so disposed had found that there was none so eager to brow-beat and bully a crew of recalcitrant whites as a certain type of coloured mates.

Tom Edwards, awakened thus roughly, opened his eyes wide in astonishment; then his face reddened with indignation as he saw the figure of the mate bending over him.

“Would you just as lieve ‘blige me by gettin’ your coat on an’ stepping out on deck?” asked the mate, with mock politeness.

Tom Edwards arose to his feet, somewhat shaky, and glared at the spokesman.

“I want to see the captain of this vessel,” he said. “You fellows have made a mistake in your man, this time. You’d better be careful.”

“Yes, sir, I’m very, unusual careful, mister,” responded the mate, grinning at the picture presented by the unfortunate Mr. Tom Edwards, unsteady on his legs with the slight rolling of the vessel, but striving to assert his dignity. “Jes’ please to hustle out on deck, now, an’ you’ll see the cap’n all right. He’s waiting for you to eat breakfas’ with him, in the cabin.”

Tom Edwards, burning with wrath, hurriedly adjusted his crumpled collar and tie, put on his shoes and coat, and hastened on deck. Glancing forward, he espied Harvey engaged at work with the crew.

“Here, Harvey,” he cried, “come on. I’ll set you right, and myself, too, at the same time. I’ll see if there’s any law in Maryland that will punish an outrage like this.”

Somewhat doubtfully, Jack Harvey followed him. Jim Adams, leering as though he knew what would be the result, did not stop him. The two seamen, also, paused in their work, and stood watching the unusual event. Captain Hamilton Haley, standing expectantly near the wheel, eyed the approaching Mr. Edwards with cold unconcern. Perhaps he had met similar situations before.

Under certain conditions, and amid the proper surroundings, Mr. Thomas Edwards might readily have made a convincing impression and commanded respect; but the situation was

unfavourable. His very respectable garments, in their tumbled and torn disarrangement, his legs unsteady, from recent experiences and from weakness, his face pale with the evidence of approaching sea-sickness, all conspired to defeat his attempt at dignity. Yet he was determined.

"Captain," he said, stepping close to the stolid figure by the wheel, "you have made a bad mistake in getting me aboard here. I was drugged and shipped without my knowing it. I am a travelling man, and connected with a big business house in Boston. If you don't set me ashore at once, you'll get yourself into more kinds of trouble than you ever dreamed of. I'm a man-of-the-world, and I can let this pass for a good joke among the boys on the road, if it stops right here. But if you carry it any farther, I warn you it will be at your peril. It's a serious thing, this man-stealing."

Captain Hamilton Haley, fortifying himself with a piece of tobacco, eyed Mr. Thomas Edwards sullenly. Then he clenched a huge fist and replied.

"I've seen 'em like you before," he said. "They was all real gentlemen, same as you be, when they come aboard, and most of 'em owned up to bein' pickpockets and tramps when they and I got acquainted. I guess you're no great gentleman. When a man goes and signs a contract with me, I makes him live up to it. You've gone and signed with me, and now you get for'ard and bear a hand at that winch."

"That's an outrageous lie!" cried Tom Edwards, shaking his fist in turn at Captain Haley. "I never signed a paper in my life, to ship with you or anybody else. If they've got my signature, it's forged."

"Look here, you," answered Haley, advancing a step, "don't you go an' tell me as how I lie, young feller. Ain't I seen the contract with my own eyes? Didn't Scroop show it, along with the contract of that other young chap there? Don't you go telling me I ain't doin' things legal like. I'll show you some Chesapeake Bay law."

"Well, Chesapeake Bay law is the same as the law for the rest of Maryland, I reckon," exclaimed Tom Edwards hotly. "You've got no law on your side. I've got the law with me, and I'll proceed against you. You'll find Chesapeake Bay law and State law is much the same when you get into court."

For a moment something like a grin overspread the dull features of Captain Hamilton Haley. Then he raised his arm, advanced another step forward, and shook his fist in the other's face.

"I reckon you ain't had no experience with Chesapeake Bay law," he cried angrily. "But it's easy to larn, and it don't take no books to teach it. Do you see that fist?"

He brandished his huge, red bunch of knuckles in Tom Edwards's face.

"Do you see that fist?" he cried again, his own face growing more fiery. "That's the law of the Bay. That's the law of the dredging fleet. There ain't no other. Any man that goes against that law, gets it laid down to him good and hard. There it is, and you gets your first lesson."

With a single blow of his arm, planting the aforesaid digest and epitome of dredging law full in the face of Tom Edwards, he stretched him sprawling on the deck, dazed and terrified.

Captain Hamilton Haley, having thus successfully demonstrated the might and majesty of dredging-fleet law, according to his own interpretation of its terms, proceeded now to expound it further. His anger had increased with his act of violence, and the veins in his neck and on his forehead stood out, swollen.

"See here you, young fellow," he cried, advancing toward Harvey, threateningly, "don't you go starting out uppish, too. Don't you begin sea-lawyerin' with me. I know the law. There it is, and I hand it out when needed. There ain't no other law among the dredgers that I knows of, from Plum Point down to the Rappahannock. Some of 'em larns it quick, and some of 'em larns it slow; and them as larns it quickest gets it lightest. Now what have you got to say?"

Jack Harvey, thus hopelessly confronted, thought – and thought quickly.

"I signed for a cruise, all right," he replied, returning the infuriated captain's gaze steadily, "and I'm ready to go to work."

“Then you get for’ard, lively now, and grab hold of that winch. You loafers get back and yank that anchor up. This ain’t a town meetin’. Get them men to work again, mate. Take him along, too.”

The captain pointed, in turn, to Harvey, to the sailors who had edged their way aft, to watch proceedings, and to the unfortunate Mr. Edwards, who had arisen from the deck and stood, a sorry, woe-begone object, unable physically to offer further resistance.

“Shake things up now, Jim Adams, shake ’em up,” urged Haley. “Here we are losing good wind over a lot of tramps that costs ten dollars apiece to get here, and little good after we’ve got ’em. How’s a man goin’ to make his livin’ dredging, when he pays high for men an’ gets nothin’ to show for his money? I’d like to get that fellow, Jenkins, out here once, himself. I’d show him this isn’t a business for school-boys and counter-jumpers. I’d get ten dollars’ worth of work out of him, and a good many more ten dollars’ worth that he’s got out of me, or he’d know the reason why.”

Thus relieving his mind of his own troubles, Captain Hamilton Haley, in a state of highly virtuous indignation, watched with approval the actions of the mate. The latter, seizing Tom Edwards, hurried him forward unceremoniously and bade him take hold at the handle of the winch and help raise the anchor. Tom Edwards weakly grasped the handle, as directed, in company with one of the sailors. Jack Harvey and the other seaman worked at the opposite handle.

Two men could have done the job easily, and the four made quick work of it. By the time the anchor chain was hove short, the mate and Haley had got the main-sail up. One of the seamen left the windlass and set one of the jibs; the anchor was brought aboard and stowed. The bug-eye, *Brandt*, began to swing off from its mooring, as the wind caught the jib, which was held up to windward. Easily the craft spun ’round, going before the wind out of the harbour and running across the bay, headed for the Eastern shore.

CHAPTER VI

THE WORKING OF THE LAW

"Shake out the reefs and get the foresail on her," called Haley. "Lively, now, we've lost time."

The mate repeated the order; the two available seamen began untying the reef-points, which had been knotted when sail had been shortened in the breeze of the previous day. It was simple enough work, merely the loosening and untying of a series of square knots. Harvey had done the like a hundred times aboard his own sloop. He hastened to assist, and did his part as quickly as the other two. Jim Adams, somewhat surprised, eyed him curiously.

"You're a right smart youngster, ain't you?" he said, patronizingly. "Reckon you'll be so mightily pleased you'll come again some time."

There was something so insolent in the tone, so sheer and apparent an exulting in his power to compel the youth to do his bidding, that the blood mounted in Harvey's cheeks, and he felt his pulses beat quicker. But he went on soberly with his work, and the mate said no more.

Ignorant of all things aboard a vessel, and too weak to work if he had been skilled at it, Tom Edwards stood helplessly by. The humiliation of his repulse at the hands of the captain, and his dismay at the dismal prospect, overwhelmed him. He gazed at the receding shore, and groaned.

The foresail was run up, and with that and the mainsail winged out on opposite sides, the bug-eye ran before the wind at an easy clip. She responded at once to the increased spread of canvas. Her evident sailing qualities appealed to Harvey, and lifted him for the moment out of his apprehension and distress.

"Now you get your breakfas'," said Jim Adams, and the two sailors shuffled aft, followed by Harvey and Tom Edwards. Harvey was hungry, with the keen appetite of youth and health, and he seated himself with a zest at the table in the cabin. But the place would have blunted the appetite of many a hungry man.

It was a vile, stuffy hole, reeking, like the forecabin, with a stale fishy odour, uncleanly and shabby. A greasy smell of cooking came in from the galley. A tin plate and cup and a rusty knife and fork set for each seemed never to have known the contact of soap and water. Jack Harvey recalled the praise which his absent friend, Mr. Jenkins, had bestowed upon the quarters of the schooner, and that young gentleman's disparagement of the comparative accommodations of a bug-eye; and he endorsed the sentiments fully. Compared with the cabin of the schooner, the cabin of the *Z. B. Brandt* was, indeed, a kennel.

There was little comfort, either, apparently, in the association of the two sailors. The fellow directly opposite Harvey, whom the mate had addressed once that morning as "Jeff," stared sullenly and dully at the youth, with a look that was clearly devoid of interest. He was a heavy set, sluggish man of about thirty-five years, for whom hard work and ill usage had blunted whatever sensibilities he may have once possessed. Evidently he was willing to bear with the treatment, and the poor food aboard the vessel, for the small wages he would receive at the winter's end.

The other man was slightly more prepossessing, but clearly at present not inclined to any sociability. He had a brighter eye and a face of more expression than his companion; though he, too, under the grinding labour aboard the oyster dredger, had come to toil day by day silently, in dumb obedience to the captain and mate. He was one Sam Black, by name, somewhat taller and larger than his comrade.

These two paid little heed to the new arrivals. It is doubtful if they really took notice of their being there, in the sense that they thought anything about it. Life was a drudgery to them, in which it mattered little whether others shared or not. They scarcely spoke to each other during the meal, and not at all to Harvey or Tom Edwards.

Presently there stepped out of the galley an uncouth, slovenly appearing man, who might have passed as a smaller edition of Captain Hamilton Haley, by his features. He was, in fact, of the same name, Haley, and there was some relationship of a remote degree between them, which accounted for his employment aboard the vessel. He was not so stout as his kinsman, however, and more active in his movements.

Whatever may have been the latent abilities of Mr. George Haley in the art of cooking, they were not in evidence, nor required aboard the bug-eye. Jack Harvey and Tom Edwards were now to behold the evidence of that fact.

The cook bore in his hands a greasy wooden box, that had once held smoked fish, and set it down on the table. Just what its contents consisted of was not at first apparent to Harvey. When, however, the two sailors reached over with their forks, speared junks of something from the box and conveyed them to their plates, Harvey followed their example.

He looked at the food for a moment before he made out what it was. It proved to be dough, kneaded and mixed with water, and a mild flavouring of molasses, and fried in lard. Harvey gazed at the mess in dismay. If it should prove to taste as bad as it looked, it must needs be hard fare. But he observed that the sailors made away with it hungrily; so he cut off a piece and tasted it. It was, indeed, wretched stuff, greasy and unpalatable. There was nothing else of food forthcoming, however, and he managed to swallow a few more mouthfuls.

The cook came to his aid in slight measure. He reappeared, bringing a pail of steaming, black liquid, the odour of which bore some slight resemblance to coffee. It was what passed for coffee aboard the bug-eye, a sorry composition of water boiled with several spoonfuls of an essence of coffee – the flavour of which one might further disguise, if he chose, with a spoonful of black molasses from a tin can set out by the cook.

Harvey filled his cup with alacrity, hoping to wash down the mess of fried bread with the hot coffee. He made a wry face after one swallow, and looked with dismay at his companion in misery.

“It’s awful,” he said, “but it’s hot. You better drink some of it. It will warm you up.”

Tom Edwards put out a shaky hand and conveyed a cup of the stuff to his lips. He groaned as he took a swallow, and set the cup down.

“Beastly!” he exclaimed; and added, “I never did like coffee without cream, anyway.”

Harvey laughed, in spite of his own disgust. “The cream hasn’t come aboard yet, I guess,” he said. “But you drink that down quick. You need it.”

Like one obeying an older person, instead of a younger, Tom Edwards did as Harvey urged. He drained the cup at a draught. Then he staggered to his feet again.

“I can’t eat that mess,” he said. “Oh, but I’m feeling sick. I think I’ll go out on deck. It’s cold out there, though. I don’t know what to do.”

He was not long in doubt, however; for, as Harvey emerged on deck, the mate approached.

“You tell that Mister Edwards,” he said, “he can jes’ lie down on one of them parlour sofas in the fo’-castle till we gets across to Hoopers. Then we’ll need him.”

Harvey did the errand, and the unhappy Tom Edwards made his way forward once more, and threw himself down in the hard bunk, pale and ill. Harvey returned on deck. The morning was clear, and not cold for November, but the wind sent a chill through his warm sweater, and he beat himself with his arms, to warm up.

“Didn’t get you’self any slickers, did you, ’fore you came aboard?” inquired the mate.

“No, sir,” replied Harvey, remembering how the man had cautioned him to address him; “I didn’t have a chance. They sailed off with me in the night.”

The mate grinned. “That was sure enough too bad,” he said, mockingly. “Well, you see the old man ’bout that. He sells ’em very cheap, and a sight better than they have ashore in Baltimore. Awful advantage they take of poor sailors there. Mr. Haley, he’ll fit you out, I reckon.”

They stepped aft, and the mate made known their errand.

Haley nodded. "He'll need 'em sooner or later," he assented. "May as well have 'em now, as any time. Take the wheel."

The mate assumed the captain's seat on the wheel box, and Captain Haley nodded to Harvey to follow him below. He fumbled about in a dark locker and finally drew forth two garments – the trousers and jacket of an oil-skin suit. They were black and frayed with previous wear, their original hue of yellow being discoloured by smears and hard usage.

"There," said Haley, holding up the slickers approvingly, "there's a suit as has been worn once or twice, but isn't hurt any. As good as new, and got the stiffness out of it. Cost you seven dollars to get that suit new in Baltimore. You'll get it for five, and lucky you didn't buy any ashore. There's a tarpaulin, too, that you can have for a dollar. I oughtn't to let 'em go so cheap."

Harvey hardly knew whether to be angry or amused. He had not shipped for the money to be earned, to be sure, and the absurd prices for the almost worthless stuff excited his derision. But the gross injustice of the bargain made him indignant, too. He had bought oil-skins for himself, before, and knew that a good suit, new, could be had for about three dollars and a half, and a new tarpaulin for seventy-five cents. But he realized that protest would be of no avail. So he assented.

"There's a new pair of rubber boots, too," continued Haley, producing a pair that were, indeed, much nearer new than the oil-skins. "Those will cost you five dollars. They're extra reinforced; not much like that slop-shop stuff."

The boots thereupon became Harvey's property; likewise a thin and threadbare old bed quilt, for the bunk in the forecastle, at an equally extortionate price. Then a similar equipment was provided for Harvey's friend, Tom Edwards, the captain assuring Harvey that they would surely fit Edwards, and he could take them forward to him.

Suddenly the captain paused and looked at Harvey shrewdly, out of his cold gray eyes.

"Of course I provide all this for a man, in advance of his wages," he said, "when he comes aboard, like the most of 'em, without a cent; but when he has some money, he has to pay. Suppose he gets drowned – it's all dead loss to me. You got any money?"

Harvey thanked his stars for Tom Edwards's precaution.

"I've got some," he said, and began to feel in his pockets, as though he were uncertain just how much he did have. "Here's five dollars – and let's see, oh, yes, I've got some loose change, sixty-three cents." He brought forth the bill and the coins. Haley pounced on the money greedily. He eyed Harvey with some suspicion, however.

"Turn your pockets out," he said. "I can't afford to take chances. Let's see if you've been holding back any."

Harvey did as he was ordered.

"All right," muttered Haley. But he was clearly disappointed.

"Can that fellow, Edwards, pay?" he asked.

"He told me he hadn't a cent," answered Harvey, promptly. "He was robbed after they got him drugged."

Haley's face reddened angrily.

"He wasn't drugged – nor robbed, either," he cried. "Don't you go talking like that, or you'll get into trouble. Leastwise, I don't know nothin' about it. If he was fixed with drugs, it was afore he came into my hands. I won't stand for anything like that. Get out, now, and take that stuff for'ard."

Harvey went forward, carrying his enforced purchases. An unpleasant sight confronted him as he neared the forecastle.

The two men that had been brought aboard the bug-eye, stupefied, had been dragged out on deck, where they lay, blinking and dazed, but evidently coming once more to their senses. The mate gave an order to one of the sailors. The latter caught up a canvas bucket, to which there was attached a rope, threw it over the side and drew it back on deck filled with water.

"Let's have that," said the mate.

He snatched it from the sailor's hand, swung it quickly, and dashed the contents full in the face of one of the prostrate men. The fellow gasped for breath, as the icy water choked and stung him; he half struggled to his feet, opening his eyes wide and gazing about him with amazement. He had hardly come to a vague appreciation of where he was, putting his hands to his eyes and rubbing them, to free them of the salt water, before he received a second bucket-full in the face. He cried out in fright and, spurred on by that and the shock of the cold water, got upon his feet and stood, trembling and shivering. Jim Adams laughed with pleasure at the success of his treatment.

"Awful bad stuff they give 'em in Baltimore, sometimes," he said, chuckling, as though it were a huge joke; "but this fetches 'em out of it just like doctor's medicine. You got 'nuff, I reckon. Now you trot 'long down into the cabin, and get some of that nice coffee, an' you'll feel pretty spry soon."

The fellow shambled away, led by one of the crew.

Jack Harvey, his blood boiling at the inhumanity of it, saw Jim Adams's "treatment" applied with much the same success to the other helpless prisoner; and this man, too, soon went the way of the other, for such comfort and stimulus as the cabin and coffee afforded. Harvey deposited his load of clothing in the forecastle, and returned to the deck.

In the course of some seven miles of sailing, as Harvey reckoned it, they approached a small island which he heard called out as Barren island. Still farther to the eastward of this, there lay a narrow stretch of land, some two or three miles long, lying lengthwise approximately north and south. Off the shore of this, which bore the name of Upper Hooper island, the dredging grounds now sought by the *Brandt* extended southward for some ten miles, abreast of another island, known as Middle Hooper island.

Preparations were at once begun to work the dredges; and Harvey watched with anxious interest. Here was the real labour, that he had by this time come to look forward to with dread. He recalled the utterance of the dismal sailor aboard the schooner, "You breaks yer back at a bloody winder;" and he saw a prospect now of the fulfilment of the man's description of the work.

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