

FICTION

Oliver Optic

Freaks of Fortune

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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FICTION



THE WRECK OF THE CARIBBEE.—PAGE 273.

FREAKS OF FORTUNE;

OR,

HALF ROUND THE WORLD.

BY

OLIVER OPTIC,

AUTHOR OF "YOUNG AMERICA ABROAD," "THE ARMY AND NAVY STORIES,"
"THE WOODVILLE STORIES," "THE BOAT-CLUB STORIES,"
"THE RIVERDALE STORIES," ETC.

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FREAKS OF FORTUNE.

TO

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

THOMAS POWELL, JR.

This Book

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

"FREAKS OF FORTUNE" is the fourth of the serial stories published in "OUR BOYS AND GIRLS." It was written in response to a great number of calls for a sequel to "THE STARRY FLAG." The author was pleased to learn that Levi Fairfield had made so pleasant an impression upon his young friends, and the gratifying reception extended to him in the present story, as it appeared in the Magazine, was quite as flattering to the writer as to Levi himself. When a good boy, like the hero of "The Starry Flag," is regarded with so much kindly interest by our boys and girls, it is convincing evidence that they have the capacity to appreciate noble conduct, daring deeds, and a true life.

The author is not disposed to apologize for the "exciting" element--as some have been pleased to denominate it--of this and others of his stories. If goodness and truth have been cast down, if vice and sin have been raised up, in the story, an explanation would not, and ought not to, atone for the crime. The writer degrades no saints, he canonizes no villains. He believes that his young friends admire and love the youthful heroes of the story because they are good and true, because they are noble and self-sacrificing, and because they are generous and courageous, and not merely because they engage in stirring adventures. Exciting the youthful mind in the right direction is one thing; exciting it in the wrong direction is quite another thing.

Once more it becomes the writer's pleasant duty to acknowledge the kindness of his young friends, as well as of very many parents and guardians, who have so often and so freely expressed their approbation of his efforts to please his readers. He has been continually cheered by their kind letters, and by their constant favor, however manifested; and he cannot help wondering that one who deserves so little should receive so much.

WILLIAM T. ADAMS.

HARRISON SQUARE, MASS.,
July 27, 1868.

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FREAKS OF FORTUNE;
OR,
HALF ROUND THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

THREE YEARS AFTER.

"This is the spot, Bessie," said Levi Fairfield, as he paused on the bank of the brook which flows into the bay near Mike's Point.

"But what was the thing you made?" asked Bessie Watson, as she looked with interest at the place indicated, though she could not see anything very remarkable, or even strange.

"It was a young saw-mill," laughed Levi. "It rested on those flat stones you see there; but the dam is entirely washed away. I made it in Mr. Mogmore's carpenter's shop, near uncle Nathan's house. After a deal of fussing and tinkering, I got it so that it sawed through a board two feet long from one end to the other. It was the proudest day of my life when I showed Mr. Mogmore the two parts, separated by my machine; and he declared I should make a good machinist."

"Where is the saw-mill now?" inquired Bessie, interested in the machine because it had been made by Levi, rather than because she had a taste for mechanics.

"It is up in the attic of uncle Nathan's house; at least it was there three years ago, when I went to live with Mr. Gayles."

"I should really like to see it."

"Should you? Well, you shall, if the thing is still in being. I will go down to uncle Nathan's and get it, and then I will set it up, and you shall see it go," answered Levi, as he led the way towards the house of his uncle.

The water privilege which Levi Fairfield, as a boy of thirteen, had improved, was located on the brook behind the cottage of Mr. Mogmore. Bessie did not care to meet uncle Nathan; so she decided to call upon the carpenter's family; for, having spent three seasons at Rockport, she was well acquainted in several families near her father's new house, which was on the shore, not far from Mike's Point.

Bessie—or, as we ought to call her now, Miss Watson, though it does not sound half so pleasant to the ear, and Levi had been several times reprov'd for addressing her in this formal manner—Miss Watson was "sweet sixteen," or so near it that we give her the full benefit of the majority fraction. If she was pretty at twelve, she was beautiful at sixteen. She was rather tall for her age, but exceedingly well formed. She had spent much of her time in the open air, and on her cheeks glowed the roses of health.

Mrs. McGilvery, a widowed sister of Mr. Watson, who had been the principal of a young ladies' seminary before her marriage, was intrusted with the care of her niece's education. Though Bessie attended school while in the city, yet she was absent four months in the year, during three of which she studied with her governess, on the sea-shore. Fortunately for Bessie, Mrs. McGilvery was an amphibious lady, and was always ready for a trip in The Starry Flag, Levi Fairfield's well-try'd craft. She had a taste for yachts, not only in pleasant weather, and on a smooth sea, but when the wind blew anything short of a gale, and the white caps whipped over the gunwale of the boat. Bessie, therefore, was frequently on the salt water with her *duenna*, and her constitution had been wonderfully strengthened by this healthful exercise.

Levi Fairfield and The Starry Flag were in demand almost every day; and we need not add that the young skipper did not regard himself as a martyr in the cause. Though the excursions to Halibut Point, Straitsmouth, the Selvages, and other places in the vicinity, were frequently repeated, he was never happier than when at the helm with Bessie and Mrs. McGilvery on board; not particularly on account of the latter, though he was quite a favorite with her.

Levi left Miss Watson at the door of Mr. Mogmore's cottage, and walked over to uncle Nathan's house. Three years had not improved the appearance of the miser's house, for he spent no money upon it in paint and repairs. When anything about the building caved in, as it frequently did, he tinkered it himself. If time had not improved uncle Nathan or his house, it had improved Levi. He was nearly eighteen, was "man grown," strong as a lion, and agile as a deer. Within the preceding three years he had made two fishing trips, though most of his time had been spent at the academy.

He entered his uncle's house. Though his visits, like angels', had been few and far between, they were not so because Levi cherished any ill will towards his former guardian, but because he had been made to feel that he was not a

welcome guest. Uncle Nathan never felt right after his removal from the position of guardian of his nephew. The care of the money was taken from him, and he was deprived of the profits he derived from boarding and clothing his ward. He realized that money had been taken out of his pocket by the spirited conduct of Levi; and taking money out of the miser's pocket was the sorest injury that could be inflicted upon him.

But Levi behaved like a Christian. He did not forget that his uncle and aunt lived in that old and dilapidated house, and he did his best to keep the peace with them. In the most literal manner he returned good for evil. It is true he could not respect his uncle, or get up a very warm regard for him,—he was too mean, selfish, and unprincipled to win the respect and regard of any decent person,—but he could treat him with Christian kindness.

Mr. Gayles, since he had been Levi's guardian, had, by the advice of Mr. Watson, given his ward a regular allowance of five dollars a week for pocket money, independent of his actual expenses for clothing himself. This money was spent in books, in improvements on *The Starry Flag*, in charity, and for other proper purposes. Not a cent of it ever went to the keeper of a grog-shop, billiard-saloon, or other place which a young man should avoid; but not a little of it, in one way and another, found its way into the comfortless abode of uncle Nathan.

Though his aunt, by the force of circumstances, had become almost as mean as her husband, she was not a bad woman in other respects, and Levi had considerable regard for her. She had but few joys in this world, and one of them was reading the newspaper, when she was so fortunate as to procure one, which was but seldom. Levi subscribed for the *Boston Journal* for her, which came every day, and for a weekly religious newspaper. The old lady had a splendid time every afternoon reading her paper, and enjoyed a "rich season" every "Sabba' day" over her Sunday paper.

Levi did more than this. He not only carried to the house a great many fish he caught himself, but a leg of veal or lamb, a roasting-piece of beef, a pair of chickens, or a turkey was not unfrequently laid upon the kitchen table by him. Uncle Nathan ate the roast beef, the turkeys, and the chickens, but he hated the giver none the less. It was a shameful waste of money to buy such things; and these delicacies reminded him of the dollars and half dollars that had slipped away from him when he lost Levi, rather than the kindness and Christian charity of the young man in presenting them.

It was not so with Mrs. Fairfield, though the savage flings and unkind allusions of her husband to his nephew were not without their influence upon her. She could not help feeling a great regard for the donor of the newspapers, and the substantial which gave the table such an unwonted attractiveness. As far as her dull nature would permit, she appreciated the kindness and good will of Levi. It is true that on several occasions uncle Nathan had sold the turkeys, chickens, and roasting-pieces his late ward had given him; yet it had never been without a protest on the part of aunt Susan. It was an awful waste for him to eat these luxuries; but selling the gifts of Levi was monstrous to her, and her protest was so energetic that she carried her point, and the miser was compelled to eat food which was so costly that it almost choked him.

Uncle Nathan did not get fat on the bounty of his liberal nephew. He had too many corroding cares, too many financial terrors, too many fears that the banks would break, his creditors fail, his stocks depreciate, to eat and sleep like a Christian. Misers never grow liberal as they grow old, and he was no exception to the rule. A financial panic had just swept over the land, and though he had lost nothing by it, it caused him more anguish than thousands who had lost their all. He was afraid of banks, afraid of men, afraid even of good mortgages on productive real estate. He dreaded some calamity he could not define, which would wrest from him every dollar he had in the world.

To guard against this horrible event, he had actually converted some of the less reliable of his securities into gold, and concealed it in his house, preferring to sacrifice the interest to the safety of the principal, bitter as the necessity seemed to be.

For two months uncle Nathan had kept four thousand dollars in gold in the house, groaning at the loss of sixty-six and two thirds cents a day in interest; but a bank somewhere in the state had failed, and he dared not trust the money out of his own possession. It had been hidden in the cellar, hidden in the parlor, hidden in the kitchen, and hidden in his chamber; but no place seemed to be safe, and the miser trembled when awake, and trembled when asleep, in his dreams, lest the figurative description of riches should be realized, and his gold should take to itself wings and fly away.

Ruin and decay had invaded the sleeping-room of the miser, as it had every other part of his house. There was many a hole in the plastering, and many a hole in the floor; but there was one particular hole in the wall, about a foot above the floor, in a corner behind the bed. This particular hole was selected as the receptacle for the gold. He had cut away the laths, so that he could thrust his arm down into the aperture, and deposit the bag on the sill of the house.

He had begged a piece of board of Mr. Mogmore to cover this hole, and had fastened it over the plastering with four screws. While he was thus engaged, Mat Mogmore, the carpenter's son, had come for the screw-driver uncle Nathan had borrowed at the shop. Mrs. Fairfield, not knowing what her husband was doing, sent him into the chamber for it.

"Stoppin' up the cracks to keep the cold out," whined the miser. "I cal'late I got the rheumatiz out of this hole."

Mat wanted the screw-driver, but he helped fasten up the board before he took it, and wondered what the old man had cut away the laths for. The board was put up, and the money was safe; but the miser hardly dared to go out of sight of the house.

CHAPTER II.

FIRE.

Levi entered the house. Uncle Nathan was not at home, but he was probably somewhere in the vicinity. Aunt Susan was in the kitchen baking her weekly batch of brown bread, the staple article of food in the family, because it was cheaper than white bread.

"Aunt, I want to go up in the garret and get that little saw-mill I made four or five years ago," said Levi.

"Well, I s'pose you can," replied she, filling up the old brick oven with pine wood, which cracked and snapped furiously in the fierce flames.

"It's up there now--isn't it?"

"I s'pose 'tis, if you put it there; I hain't teched it."

"Will you give me a little piece of candle, too, if you please?"

"You can take that piece in the candlestick on the mantel-tree piece, if it's long enough."

"That will do just as well as if it were a foot long," replied Levi, taking the piece of candle, and rolling it up in a bit of newspaper.

He went up into the attic, found the saw-mill just as he had left it, though it was covered with half an inch of dust and cobwebs. When he came down, he heard uncle Nathan's voice in the kitchen. He was growling because his wife used so much wood to heat the oven, and Levi concluded not to see him that day, for he seemed to be in a more than usually unamiable frame of mind. He went out at the front door, and Bessie joined him as he passed Mr. Mogmore's house. The saw-mill was taken to the spot where it had stood before. The dam was reconstructed much more readily than the rebel states.

Taking the candle from his pocket, Levi greased the running parts of the machine, hoisted the gate, and away went the saw as briskly as a bee after its years of rest in the attic, to the intense delight of Bessie, who was quite ready to vote another feather for the cap of the hero. A piece of board was adjusted on the carriage, and the saw began to whisk, whisk, whisk through it, when a series of yells in the direction of the road attracted the attention of the engineer of the structure.

"Why, what's that smoke?" exclaimed Bessie.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!" shouted several persons in the road.

"It's uncle Nathan's house," said Levi; and, without waiting to extend any further courtesies to his fair companion, he bounded through the field, and over the fence, to the imperilled dwelling.

Around the north chimney the smoke was pouring out in a dense volume. Uncle Nathan had raised a ladder to the roof, and was drawing up pails of water to throw on the fire. Aunt Susan and Mat Mogmore were assisting him, and in a few moments several other persons arrived at the house. Levi ran up the ladder, and went to work with a decision and vigor which promised the best results.

"I'm ruined! I'm ruined, as true as you live!" groaned the miser. "The house will burn up!"

"No, it won't, uncle Nathan. We can put the fire out if we stick to it," replied Levi, in encouraging tones, as he dashed a bucket of water on a volume of flame that rushed up at the side of the chimney.

"Tain't no use! It's jest my luck."

"Pass up the buckets, uncle Nathan, and we shall be all right in a few minutes. We are gaining on it."

"O, my money!" groaned the miser, as he dropped the empty bucket he was carrying.

Levi glanced at him. His uncle was as pale as a sheet, and seemed to have wilted as though the flames had blasted him. He sank down upon the roof, and would have rolled off if the strong arm of his nephew had not saved him. His eyes

were closed, his lips were blue and ashy, and his frame was motionless. Levi was alarmed by his appearance. He was either dead or had fainted, and the young man saw that he must be removed. Lying down by the side of the senseless form, he clasped his arms around it, and rose to his feet with the burden on his back. Like all misers, uncle Nathan was nothing but skin and bones, which do not weigh heavily, and Levi walked along the ridge-pole to the other end of the house with the nerveless body on his back.

It was not an easy matter to descend the ladder with such a load, though Levi would have carried his uncle down alone if no help had arrived. Before he reached the ladder, two men had mounted the roof, and while one of them was directed to pour water on the fire, the other assisted in bearing the miser down the ladder. He was carried to Mr. Mogmore's house, and aunt Susan followed, having satisfied herself that her husband was not dead, but had fainted.



A PERILOUS POSITION.—PAGE 24.

Having deposited the form of the miser on the bed, Levi hastened back to assist in saving the house. His post was in the midst of danger, and he went up on the roof. A plentiful supply of water soon drowned out the fire, and before the engine arrived the last spark had been extinguished.

"O, my money!" had been the last words of Mr. Fairfield before he fainted. Levi did not understand the force of this expression, for he was not aware that his uncle had four thousand dollars in gold concealed in the house. The miser had worked with the energy of desperation to put out the fire, until the flames appeared to be gaining upon him, and then he was in despair. At this point the thought of his gold flashed upon him with such stunning force that it had taken away his senses. Doubtless the smoke and the heat, as well as the violence of his exertions, had contributed in some measure to this result.

The house would be burned, and the four thousand dollars would be lost! This was the reflection which overwhelmed the miser. Even death seemed preferable to losing such a vast sum of money. His god appeared to be riven from him, and the revulsion in his mind was terrible. If his hair had not already been gray, the shock was heavy enough to have bleached it out in a single instant.

When the fire had been put out, Levi hastened over to the carpenter's house to ascertain the condition of his uncle. The patient, under the skilful treatment of the old ladies who had ministered to him, was just regaining his consciousness, but had not yet sufficiently recovered to know what had happened to him. The house was not much injured. A hole in the roof, about six feet in diameter, had been burned out, and the water poured upon the fire had found its way into the rooms below.

The neighbors had worked with energy in extinguishing the fire, and some of them had gone into the house, and were removing the bedding and other furniture, so that the water should not drip down upon it from above. When Levi came back, he found Dock Vincent and Mat Mogmore removing the bed from his uncle's chamber. Others were carrying out the bureau and chairs. The work was about finished, and he joined Bessie in the road, where she had been observing the exciting scene.

"How did it take fire, Levi?" she asked.

"I don't know. Aunt had a tremendous fire in the oven."

"There comes your uncle," added Bessie, pointing to the poor old man, as he reeled up the road in his weakness, like a drunken man. "How awful he looks!"

"He feels badly about it, I suppose," replied Levi.

Uncle Nathan's face did indeed present an aspect which was almost hideous. It was still as pale and ghastly as death itself; and upon it there was an expression of the most intense agony. His wife was following him, hardly able to keep pace with the long strides he made.

"It's all right, uncle Nathan; we saved the house, and not much damage has been done to it," said Levi, as the old man passed him.

Uncle Nathan took no notice of him; perhaps he did not even hear him, so deeply was he absorbed in thinking about the gold. Levi and Bessie followed him into the house. The wretched miser rushed into his chamber. Mat Mogmore was there, and seemed to be busy in wiping the water from the floor. Dock Vincent was in the next room, apparently as busy as the carpenter's son.

The miser, with all the powers of his being concentrated in his eyes, gazed tremblingly at the board which covered the hiding-place of his money. That dark hole was the temple of his god, and all his hopes seemed to be shrouded in its gloom. But the board was where he left it, and as he left it, and the miser breathed a little easier.

"It was rather hard on you, Mr. Fairfield; but it's lucky it ain't no worse," said Dock Vincent.

"It's bad enough," groaned the miser.

"That's so; but 'tain't so bad as it might be. I was just coming down from the ledges when I saw the smoke; and I've been to work like a good one ever since," added Dock.

"If I can do anything more for you, I'm willing to help as much as I can," said Mat Mogmore.

"There ain't nothing more to do," replied Mr. Fairfield, who only desired that the neighbors would leave, so that he could assure himself of the safety of his gold.

They did go, without even the thanks of the miser. Levi was in the kitchen with Mrs. Fairfield, trying to make out how the fire had caught.

"Sech a piece of work, massy knows!" exclaimed the old lady, as she looked about her in dismay at the water which was still dripping down from above. "It'll take a whole month to put things to rights agin. I can't tell, for the life of me, how it ketched."

"You had a large fire in the oven, aunt," suggested Levi.

"But the fire in the oven didn't set the ruff afire! Sunthin was the matter with that chimbley, and your uncle fixed it e'enamost a month ago. I don't know nothin' what he did to it. Mebbe there was a hole in that chimbley--For massy sake! What's comin' now!"

This exclamation had been brought from her by a loud, despairing howl from her husband, who at this moment rushed into the kitchen, with such a look of anguish on his face that it frightened Bessie.

"O, my money!" groaned the wretched man.

"For pity's sake, husband, what's the matter?" cried Mrs. Fairfield.

"It's all gone!" gasped uncle Nathan.

"What's all gone?"

"The money!" he replied in a whisper.

His nature could endure no more. He tottered on his legs, and Levi sprang to his assistance just as he dropped senseless on the floor.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOLE IN THE WALL.

As soon as Dock Vincent and Mat Mogmore had left the house, Mr. Fairfield procured a case-knife,--for he was not the owner of so useful an implement as a screw-driver,--and, with trembling anxiety, removed the board that covered the hole in the wall. Thrusting his hand down into the aperture, a cold chill swept through his frame when he failed to touch the bags in which the gold was contained. With convulsive energy, he felt in every part of the cavity; but the money had surely taken to itself wings and flown away.

Had all the human beings upon the earth been suddenly destroyed before his eyes, the effect upon the miser could not have been more deplorable. He loved his money; he did not love his fellow-beings. His heart almost ceased to beat beneath the shock, his lip quivered, and the tears started in his eyes. His brain began to reel before the blow; he uttered a prolonged howl, and rushed out into the kitchen rather from impulse than because he desired or expected human sympathy.

Bessie Watson was terrified by the fearful aspect of Mr. Fairfield when he entered the room, and for weeks the awful expression upon his face haunted her like the vision of a midnight ghost. Levi was startled, and Mrs. Fairfield, accustomed as she was to the ways of her husband, was deeply moved by his singular conduct. When he was ailing, he was subject to fainting fits; but he had never appeared so badly as on the present occasion.

The miser trusted no person, had no confidence in any one, not even in his wife. He had not told her that he had four thousand dollars in gold in the house, for he feared that she might be tempted to rob him of his treasure. Mrs. Fairfield, therefore, did not comprehend his despairing utterances when he announced the loss of his money.

Levi and his aunt conveyed the senseless form to the front room, and after working over him nearly half an hour, he came out of the fit, but only to suffer the most intense agonies at the loss of his money.

"What on airth is the matter with you, Nathan?" asked his wife, when, after another examination of the hole in the wall, he appeared in the kitchen again.

Bessie had gone home; but Levi remained, to render any assistance in his power in putting the house to rights.

"O!" groaned the miser, heavily, as he paced the room with furious strides.

"Can't you tell what ails you?" continued Mrs. Fairfield.

"It's all gone," gasped he, with a prolonged sigh.

"What is it? What's all gone? Why don't you tell a body what has happened?"

"My money is all gone! Somebody has stolen it--robbed me, ruined me!"

"Who on airth stole it?"

"I donno," replied Mr. Fairfield, glancing at Levi.

"How much was stole?"

"Four thousand dollars," sighed the miser.

"For massy sake!" exclaimed Mrs. Fairfield; and it was a question whether she would not faint, for such a sum of money was beyond her comprehension.

"Where was it, uncle Nathan?" asked Levi, who pitied the sufferings of the old man.

The miser looked at his nephew. People always suspect those whom they hate. If any wicked deed is done, they charge it upon those they love the least, regardless of circumstances.

"Levi Fairfield, you stole my money!" continued the old man, fiercely.

"Nonsense, Nathan!" interposed Mrs. Fairfield. "Levi didn't do nothin' of the sort."

"Didn't you tell me he went up in the attic before the fire? Didn't you tell me you gave him a piece of candle?" demanded Mr. Fairfield, earnestly; and doubtless he felt that Levi was guilty, for his impulsive charge was made on the strength of a course of reasoning he had followed out.

"What if I did tell you so? Levi didn't steal no four thousand dollars. There's no sense nor reason in sayin' so," added aunt Susan.

"I say he did steal it. I know he did now," persisted the miser. "He set the house afire, and then took the money. That boy hates me, and he's bad enough to do anything, if he is go'n' to jine the church."

"Levi has money enough," argued Mrs. Fairfield. "Why should he steal your money?"

"Cause he hates me."

"Uncle Nathan, I don't hate you, and I didn't steal your money," said Levi, who had calmly listened to the debate between his uncle and aunt.

"Yes, you did; you set the house afire, so's to git a chance to git the money. It's all plain enough to me," continued the old man, striding up and down the room more rapidly than before.

"I suppose it will be useless for me to say anything," added Levi, more in pity than in anger. "I am willing to do anything I can to help you find the money, if it is lost, or catch the thief, if it was stolen."

"Tain't no use for you to talk no more, Levi Fairfield," said the old man, stopping in front of him. "You know all about it, and you took the money. If you're a mind to give it all back to me, I won't say a word to nobody about it."

"I did not take it, and I know nothing about it. I was not aware that you had so much money in the house," replied Levi.

"What did you want of the candle, then, if you didn't steal the money?"

"I wanted it to grease the saw-mill, and the candle lies on a rock by the brook now."

"Didn't you set the house afire when you went up in the garret?"

"I did not. I had no light, and not even a match in my pocket."

"Who did steal it, then, if you didn't?"

"I don't know. Where did you keep the money?"

The old man led the way to his chamber, and pointed out the hole.

"That's a bad place to keep money," said Levi.

"Tain't no use to keep money in the bank now; they're all failin', and folks is failin'; and a man that's got a little money is wus off than them that hain't got none."

Levi asked a great many questions about the money, and the hole, which uncle Nathan, hoping to find his money, answered. There was no evidence to fasten the crime upon any one. The facts that appeared were, that the money, in four bags, had been deposited in the cavity; that an hour before the fire, the miser had assured himself the gold was safe; that, after the fire, the board had been found in its place as before, but the gold was gone. A dozen of the neighbors, at least, had been into the room, and Dock Vincent and Mat Mogmore had been the last to leave. Mr. Fairfield was sure that neither Dock nor Mat knew he had any money in the house. There was no good reason for supposing they, any more than any other of the neighbors, had taken the gold.

After a long and careful examination of the premises, and a patient inquiry into all the circumstances, nothing could be brought forward to implicate any person in the robbery. Levi was not willing to believe yet that the gold had been stolen. He went down cellar, and surveyed the timbers under the hole, hoping that the bags had dropped through; but he could not find them. He could not determine whether or not there was any connection between the fire and the robbery; but Mr. Fairfield insisted that some one--he did not say Levi now--intended to burn the house, so as to cover up the crime, or at least afford an opportunity to commit the theft.

"How could any one set the fire in the roof?" asked Levi.

"They might have gone up there, as you did," replied the old man, rather malignantly.

"Let us go up and see how the fire took," added Levi. "Aunt Susan had a big fire in the oven."

"It couldn't ketch afire up there if she did," replied uncle Nathan, as he followed his nephew up the ladder.

Some of the boards and shingles had been burned through, but the rafters were only charred. Levi went up to the chimney and examined the woodwork near it. The house was a very old one, and had been built upon until its present proportions had been reached. The chimney, where the fire had taken, was in the most ancient part, and the bricks were laid in clay. Levi found that three or four of them, on one of the inside corners, had dropped out. This was the defect which the owner had repaired.

"There is a great hole in the chimney," said Levi.

"I know there is; but I stopped that up a month ago. I hadn't no mortar nor nothin', and I just nailed a board over the hole."

"That's the way the fire took," added Levi, wondering at the carelessness of his uncle.

"I didn't suppose there was any heat up here, twenty foot from the fire," replied the old man, sheepishly.

"Aunt Susan had a rousing fire in the oven. The wind was pretty fresh, and I suppose the sparks caught on the dry board. It is clear enough to me that no one set the house on fire."

"I suppose they didn't, then; but somebody stole my money. Mebbe you'll prove that nobody didn't steal it."

"I am willing to take your word for that;" and the miser's visible sufferings were all-sufficient to convince any person that the money was gone, whether any one had stolen it or not.

Levi tried in vain to obtain a clew to the lost treasure. He knew of no one that had visited the house during the fire who was bad enough to steal, unless it was Dock Vincent; but it was not right to suspect even him of the crime without some evidence. Neither Levi nor his uncle saw how Dock could have taken off the board, removed the bags, and then restored the covering, while there were so many people in the house.

Dock Vincent, after his discharge from the state prison, had gone to New York, where he had been employed as the mate of a steamer. Six months before the story opens, his brother, residing in Boston, had died, and as the deceased had no family, his property, amounting to twenty-one thousand dollars, had been equally divided among his two brothers and one sister. Dock fully believed that seven thousand dollars on Cape Ann would entirely wipe out the disgrace of having served a term in the state prison, and he returned to Rockport, dressed in a nice suit of black.

Dock was mistaken; seven thousand dollars would not varnish his character so that good men would associate with him. He blustered and swelled, and declared that he had been taken up for nothing; that this was not a free country; and that he was a better man than thousands in town who had never been to the state prison. He never forgave Levi for thwarting his plans, and swore roundly that he would be the ruin of him and of Mr. Watson.

The best friend Dock had was Nathan Fairfield, and the miser was not willing to believe that Dock had robbed him of his gold. After Levi went home that day, his uncle persisted that he had stolen the money.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PLANK OVER THE CHASM.

A week of indescribable misery to Nathan Fairfield passed away; but no trace of the robber or the money had been obtained. The constables and the deputy sheriff had visited the premises, and carefully considered all the facts, without affording the miserable man a particle of consolation. He groaned from morning till night, forlorn and desolate, declaring that he should come to want, and die in the poorhouse.

Probably the money the wretch had lost was not a fifth part of his fortune, and he was in no more danger of coming to want than the sea was of being dried up. But he felt as though he had lost all; and if he had been stripped of everything, he could hardly have suffered more. He felt poor, and wanted to earn money in some way. The dog-fish season had opened favorably, and he was actually preparing to go into the business of catching them. Dock Vincent had promised him the use of a dory,--for he could not afford to buy one,--and he had taken Levi's old lines and repaired them for use.

Mr. Fairfield groaned and sighed all day long while he worked upon his fishing-lines and his trolls. He could not tell who had stolen his money, and in his hatred of his nephew, he still persisted in suspecting him. There was no proof, and he could do nothing but believe that Levi was the thief. It was useless to say anything or do anything, for Levi was so popular that justice could not be had.

The lines, the troll, and the bait were all ready, and the old man carried them down to the landing-place where Dock had left the dory. Along the shore of this part of Cape Ann there is a succession of rocky peninsulas, extending out into the sea. Between these are the beaches, stretching in semicircles from bluff to bluff, as they have been fashioned by the mighty waves which roll in from the open ocean. On these sandy shores the billows chant their solemn melody all day and all night long, and break with sharper pitch and fiercer swell upon the jagged rocks that form the headlands.

On the road, but a few rods from Mr. Fairfield's, and near one of these peninsulas, was the house of Dock Vincent, where his family had always lived, even when he was in New York. The end of the headland curved round so as to leave a portion of the water behind it protected from the force of the sea, thus forming a sheltered landing-place. Off this point lay The Starry Flag, and on the rocks where the boatmen usually embarked were several skiffs, and among them Dock Vincent's dory, which Mr. Fairfield was to use.

Across the end of the headland, a few rods from the extreme point, was a natural chasm in the rocks, through which the water flowed at high tide. It was about ten feet wide, and rather more than this in depth. Across it a plank had been placed for the convenience of fishermen and others.

On the next headland, which terminated in Mike's Point, was the new summer residence of Mr. Watson. He had made a landing-pier, which was available at half tide; but Levi kept his boat at the old moorings, because the place was sheltered from the violence of the north-east winds, and it was less than half a mile across to the house where he usually took in his passengers.

Mr. Fairfield went down to the dory, and put his fishing-gear on board. He did it as a man goes to a funeral. He had been a fisherman in his younger days, but it was a bitter necessity, in his view, which now compelled him to resume it when he was old and stiff. While he was stowing the bait and lines in the skiff, Dock Vincent came down to see him. He had laid aside his suit of black, and now wore a full seaman's rig.

"Well, Squire Fairfield, have you heard anything from your money yet?" demanded Dock, as he seated himself on a rock.

"Not a thing; and 'tain't likely I ever shall, nuther," replied Mr. Fairfield, with a most distressing expression on his face.

"Haven't you any idea what has become of it?"

"Not the leastest grain in the world. It's gone, and that's all I know about it. I did think Levi took it, and I hain't got done thinkin' so yet."

"What made you think he took it?" asked Dock, with no little interest manifested on his ugly face.

"Well, he come to the house when I wan't in, though I was close by and see him go in. He went up garret and got a little

saw-mill he made. I went up to the house, and was just goin' to see where he was; but I stopped a minute in the kitchen to tell my wife she was wastin' the wood, and Levi went out afore I see him. A little while arter, the fire bruk out, and arter that my money was gone. Levi's most eighteen, and it stands to reason he don't want no little saw-mill to play with."

"Of course he don't," added Dock, encouragingly.

"He said arterwards that he wanted to show it to the Watson gal. But what does a city gal like her keer about a saw-mill? and nuther on 'em hain't been near it sence."

"That shows how much they care about it," said Dock, who was evidently prepared to indorse the old man's philosophy.

"I can't help thinkin' Levi set the house afire, and then took the money," continued Mr. Fairfield, ignoring the current explanation of the cause of the fire. "My wife says 'tain't so, because the boy has all the money he wants, and don't have no occasion to steal; but Levi hain't no more idee of the vally of money than he has of flyin', and he throws it away as reckless as a sailor arter he comes home from a Cape Horn v'y'ge."

"I know he does; if he had to earn it, he wouldn't be quite so free with it."

"Levi hates me, 'f I am his uncle, and never did nothing but take good keer of his money for him--he hates me like destruction; and that's what makes me think he done it. He's a bad boy, if he is go'n' to jine the church. Folks will find him out one of these days, and then they'll know I told the truth about him."

"Could anybody else have taken the money? That's the p'int."

"Not's I know on--least ways nobody but you and Mat Mogmore."

"You don't think I took it--do you?"

"I hain't been able to think so," replied the miser, looking up into the face of Dock. "I allers thought you set too much by me to sarve me sech a trick as that. I've lent you a good deal of money one time 'n another."

"But I paid you ten per cent. for it. I didn't take your money, and I know Mat Mogmore didn't. I was with him all the time he was in the house. We worked together."

"It stands to reason, then, that Levi took it; I can't help thinkin' so."

"They say he carries a good many things to your house," suggested Dock.

"Kerries a good many things to my house!" repeated the miser with a sneer. "Mebbe he does. What sort of things does he kerry there? Chickens and turkeys, and surlines and ribs of beef, and sech truck! He knows I don't want sech things, and he does it jest to aggravate me. If he wants to do anything for me, why don't he gim me the money he pays out for 'em? That's what I want to know."

"I don't think you've hit the nail on the head this time, Mr. Fairfield," added Dock, who evidently had a theory of his own to propose. "They say you are worth some thirty or forty thousand dollars, Mr. Fairfield."

"Bless ye! I ain't wuth no sech money. I've got a little or sunthin, but I expect to lose it all."

"Well, call it twenty thousand, then."

"I ain't wuth that," added Mr. Fairfield, testily; for, like all misers, he desired to conceal his possessions, as much to blind the assessors as to avoid the peril of robbery.

"Well, you are worth something."

"A little or sunthin," answered Mr. Fairfield, conceding this for the sake of argument.

"Have you made a will, Squire Fairfield?"

"No, I hain't made no will. I hain't got nothin' to leave wuth makin' a will for."

Dock did not believe this statement, but he took no notice of it.

"You haven't any children, and if you should die, half of your money would go to Levi, and half to your wife. If you should die, Levi would make ten or fifteen thousand dollars by it. Don't you see now what he gives you chickens and turkeys for? He means to keep things smooth till you step out. If you shouldn't come back, when you go out after dog-

fish to-morrow morning, Levi wouldn't feel half so bad about it as I should."

This was a disagreeable topic to the miser, and he cut it short; but the idea that Levi was ready to have him die took fast hold of his shattered mind. Dock Vincent had produced the impression he desired; he had added fresh fuel to the flame of the old man's hatred; and he was content to let the subject drop for the present.

Dock, finding himself a person of no consequence at the Cape, had already announced his intention to emigrate to Australia with his family; and he appeared to be waiting only to wreak his vengeance upon Levi Fairfield, who had defeated his plan to swindle Mr. Watson out of twenty thousand dollars. The young man had exposed and ruined him, in his estimation--not the crime; and he could not leave the country till he had "paid him off," though he was not so particular about his honest debts.

The next morning Dock went down to the landing-place. When he reached the chasm, he saw Levi coming across the beach. His eyes glowed with hatred, as they always did when he looked upon the author of his misfortunes, the one whose testimony had sent him to the state prison. He did not care to meet him, and it was evident that Levi was coming for his boat. Stooping down, he adjusted the plank over the chasm in such a way that his victim would be pitched down upon the sharp rocks beneath, the instant he stepped upon it. The fall would not kill him--it would only bruise and maim him. Levi was beneath the rocky precipice, and could not see him.

There was a smile on the villain's countenance as he retreated to a place of concealment near the spot, to wait for the disaster that should lay his victim upon the bed of pain and suffering.

He waited ten minutes for the crash of the falling plank; but it did not come. Rising from his seat, he moved to a position where, looking through the chasm, he saw The Starry Flag standing over towards Mr. Watson's house. Levi had walked on the shelving rocks, and reached the landing without crossing the bridge. Dock was disappointed, and began to climb the rocks to readjust the plank. As he ascended, he discovered Mr. Fairfield, just stepping on the bridge. He shouted, but it was too late; the end of the plank slipped off, the old man danced upon nothing, and sank in the abyss below.

CHAPTER V.

AN INDUCTIVE ARGUMENT.

Dock Vincent was appalled to find that he had tumbled Mr. Fairfield into the chasm; not that he was disturbed by any compunctions of conscience, but because he wished to keep on the right side of the old man, from prudential motives. He was in doubt whether to exhibit himself to the injured man or not. If he showed himself, he might be suspected of setting the trap into which the miser had fallen.

The old man might be dead, and curiosity, if no stronger motive, induced him to inquire into his condition; but he took the precaution to reach the path by a roundabout way, and approach the chasm as though he had just come from his house. When he reached the abyss, he found Mr. Fairfield had risen, and was trying to climb up the rocks. He was groaning and taking on as though he had been badly hurt.

"What's the matter, Squire Fairfield?" demanded Dock. "What you doing down there?"

"O! O!" groaned the miser.

"Looking for your money in there?"

"O! No! O! I fell in," said the sufferer, in gasps.

"Fell in! Why, how did that happen?" asked Dock, with well-feigned astonishment.

"I donno. O! that plank gin away, O, and let me down."

"Are you hurt?"

"Most killed," replied Mr. Fairfield, holding his breath, and then exploding the words.

Dock walked down the shelving bank above the water, and then entered the chasm.

"Where are you hurt?" he asked.

"My hips is both broke, and I'm jarred e'enamost to pieces."



DOCK VINCENT'S VICTIM.—PAGE 54.

"I guess your hips aren't broke; you couldn't stand up if they were," suggested Dock.

"Sunthin's broke, I know."

"Sit down on this rock, and let me see what is broke."

Mr. Fairfield complied, and Dock, who, as the master of a vessel, had had some experience with sickness and injuries, carefully examined the old man's limbs. He was badly bruised in several places, on the legs and arms, but no bones appeared to be broken, so far as Dock's surgical skill could discern. The jar of the fall had doubtless racked his frame severely; but the miser was still a strong man, physically, and could bear a pretty hard rap.

After resting a while, and rubbing his limbs, the sufferer was able, with the assistance of Dock, to walk home. He went to bed, and his wife bathed his limbs, and dressed the bruises on his legs and arms.

"Shall I go for the doctor, Squire Fairfield?" asked Dock, when he had assisted the patient into his bed.

"The doctor? No; he charges a dollar a visit," replied the old man, fearfully; for the idea of paying a physician's bill filled him with horror. "You say there ain't no bones broke; so I don't need no doctor."

"He don't need no doctor," added Mrs. Fairfield.

"I don't think you do myself. I've had worse cases than this aboard my vessel, and I got along without any doctors. You'll be all right in a week or two, Squire Fairfield."

"It's jest my luck," sighed the miser. "Everything's goin' wrong with me. I shouldn't be a grain surprised if the house burned down over my head afore I got out agin. I shan't ketch no dog-fish to-day, that's sartain. There's ten dollars out o' my pocket, as sure's you live!"

Dock was a rough comforter; but he spoke such words of consolation as the occasion required and his vocabulary contained.

"It's jest my luck," repeated the miser. "Every other man in town might have walked over that plank, and it wouldn't gin away. I walked over that plank last night, and airly this morning. I see, when I stepped on to it, that somebody had been a movin' on it; but I didn't know the 'tother eend was only just ketched on to the rock."

"Who moved it?" asked Dock, rather disturbed by this suggestion of a suspicion.

"I don't know nothin' about it; but somebody's been a movin' on it, or it wouldn't a gin away under me, and let me down."

"But who could have moved the plank?" persisted Dock.

"I donno; the eend I stepped on was kinder hauled up."

"You say the plank was all right in the morning, when you went down?"

"Sartin it was. I went over it, and fixed the dory, ready to go arter dog-fish, arter breakfast."

"Well, the question is, Who has been down to the P'int since you went?"

"I donno; but I believe somebody's tryin' to kill me--that's what I believe."

"O, nonsense! who should want to kill you?"

"I donno," replied Mr. Fairfield, hastily, and in a tone which implied that he knew very well who intended to kill him, but he did not wish to name the person. "If I hadn't been as tough as an old black-fish, it would have killed me, as sure as fate; that's the whole truth on't!"

"But who could have set such a trap?" persisted Dock.

"You didn't--did you?" added the old man, innocently.

"Of course I didn't. You don't think I'd do such a thing as that," said Dock, laughing.

"My wife didn't--did she?"

"Massy sakes! What's got into your head, Nathan?" interposed the old lady. "Goodness knows I didn't do no sech thing."

Mrs. Fairfield was a simple-minded woman, and she did not comprehend that her disabled lord was only reasoning by an interrogatory and inductive method.

"Certainly Mrs. Fairfield didn't meddle with the plank," added Dock.

"Twan't Mr. Watson--was it? nor the Watson gal, nuther?"

"No," answered Dock.

"Who was it, then--don't you see?"

Dock did not choose to see yet, though his mental visuals had perceived from the beginning what the old man was driving at; and he was greatly rejoiced to have the suspicion turned away from himself.

"Who else goes down on to that P'int, almost every day of the week, 'cept Sunday?--and he don't go then 'cause he's go'n' to jine the church," continued the miser, excited by the topic he was discussing.

"You don't mean Levi--do you?" said Dock, opening his eyes as wide as the hawse-holes of a man-of-war.

"I see The Starry Flag a standin' over to Mr. Watson's new house when I was goin' down to the P'int."

"Did you?" asked Dock, when the old man paused to note the effect of the climax of the inductive argument upon the listener.

"I sartainly did. That proves that Levi went down to the P'int afore I did--don't it?"

"Well--yes; he went down there, of course," added Dock, in rather deprecating tones. "He couldn't have got his boat if he hadn't gone down there."

"Then of course Levi done it!" exclaimed the old man. "'Tain't no use o' beating round the bush no more. Levi done it, and he meant to kill me."

"'Tain't so!" protested Mrs. Fairfield, warmly. "There ain't no sense nor reason in sayin' Levi done it. Levi wouldn't do sech a thing."

"He may jine all the churches in town, but I tell you he's a bad boy, and he's go'n' as straight to the gallows as a chicken goes to her dough. Don't you know how he used me? how he fit me, and found fault with his victuals; and then got all the property took away from me, jest because I wouldn't let him spend it all? Don't tell me! I know what Levi Fairfield is

better 'n any other man."

"What on airth should the boy wan't to break your bones for, let alone killin' on you?" demanded Mrs. Fairfield.

"O, well, Susan, you're nothin' but a woman; and we can't expect women folks to see through everything--can we, Dock?"

"Your wife has excellent judgment about things in general, Squire Fairfield," replied Dock, smoothly.

"There now! Tell me I don't know!" retorted the irate helpmate, somewhat appeased by the delicate compliment. "'Tain't in reason that boy meant to do sech a thing."

Mr. Fairfield groaned, and changed his position in the bed. His bones ached, and his bruises smarted; but the task of showing that Levi was wicked enough even to plan a deliberate murder was too pleasing a one to be abandoned, though the twinges of pain that darted through the miser's limbs indicated rest both for body and mind. The sufferer rehearsed all the points bearing against his nephew in the heinous act under consideration, and he succeeded in satisfying himself and his visitor that the young man intended to shorten his uncle's life. Mrs. Fairfield,--grateful for the newspapers, which had given her a new joy in the desolate world, and for the chickens, turkeys, and roasting-pieces, which afforded her an occasional respite from salt fish and fresh fish,--Mrs. Fairfield was obstinate, and refused to believe that Levi--who, by the way, had just added the "Cape Ann Light" to his aunt's sum total of earthly joys--was capable of doing a wicked act.

"Women folks don't see through things," said Mr. Fairfield, disgusted at his wife's want of perception. "I've been thinkin' o' what you said last night," he added, turning to Dock. "I never thought of sech a thing before; but, I vow, it's just as you said."

"Well, Squire Fairfield, I didn't say that to set you against the boy; only to have you keep your eyes open," replied Dock.

"When I fell into that hole, it opened my eyes so wide, I shan't shet 'emagin very soon."

Mrs. Fairfield wanted to know "what on airth all this talk meant;" and the relations of Levi to his uncle's post-mortem estate were explained, so that "women folks" could understand them. She did not believe Levi cared for the property, what there was of it, and she was not yet willing to believe that he set the trap to destroy his uncle.

"I believe it; and what's more, I know it," persisted the miser. "But I'll cheat him out of it; I'll make a will this very day! I'll give what little I have to Susan--I will, by gracious!"

"It's very proper for you to do so," replied Dock, mildly.

"Can't you write a will, Dock?"

"Me! No. I don't know how. You must make it strong, or they'll break it, you know. Better send for Squire Saunders, and have it done right."

"Squire Saunders!" exclaimed the invalid. "What'll he charge?"

"O, five dollars, perhaps."

"Five dollars! What jest for writin' a little or sunthin'?"

"Perhaps he won't charge you more than three."

"I shan't give no three dollars, nuther. I can't afford it. I'm e'enamost stripped of everything now."

The will was not made, and Dock left the house, promising to call again in the afternoon.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STARRY FLAG.

Levi Fairfield, in happy ignorance of the misfortune which had befallen his uncle, headed The Starry Flag towards the mansion of Mr. Watson. This was to be a great day with him, and he was filled with hope and exultation.

The Starry Flag was a capital boat, but Levi had long been beset by an ambition to sail something larger. This desire was about to be realized, for Mr. Watson, always a lover of the sea, had contracted for a yacht of eighty tons, at the establishment of a celebrated builder in the city. She was to be ready by the 1st of June, but she was not completely stored and furnished till the 10th.

Mr. Watson had remained in the city over night, and was to sail in the yacht for his summer home the next morning--on the day that Levi missed falling into the chasm. As the wind was fair, and tolerably fresh, the young skipper thought she would arrive by noon, and he was to take the ladies round as far as Eastern Point, to give her a welcome to the waters of the Cape.

Levi was to be the commander of the yacht, and he was every way qualified for the position. He had studied navigation, could take an observation, and do all the problems required of a thorough sailing master. On the deck of a vessel he was in his element, and there was not a point in navigation or seamanship with which he was not familiar. He could not only hand, reef, and steer, but he could knot and splice, parcel and serve, as neatly and as skilfully as a veteran man-of-war's man. He was interested in such matters, and had spent hours and hours in making short and long splices, eye splices, Turk's heads, and other parts of rigging, until he was an adept in the art.

Bessie had been the prime mover in this enterprise. She insisted upon having a craft in which the whole family could go off for a month, and be almost as comfortable as in their own home. She prevailed in this, as she did in nearly everything which involved only the will of her father to gratify her.

Bessie and Mrs. McGilvery were handed into the boat at the pier behind the house, and The Starry Flag was soon dancing over the long waves that roll into Sandy Bay from the broad ocean. All the party were excited; for to see a splendid, new yacht, in which they hoped to have many good times, was enough to kindle a glowing enthusiasm in such lovers of the art of boating.

"You don't know her name yet--do you, Levi?" said Bessie, in a kind of taunting tone.

"I do not, but I shall soon find out if this breeze holds," replied the skipper, who had been wilfully kept in ignorance on this important matter.

"Wouldn't you like to know?" added Bessie, teasing him.

"Of course I would; but I am willing to wait a few hours longer."

"Why don't you manifest a little impatience about it?" pouted she.

"It wouldn't do any good; besides, I am a Yankee, and I think I can guess what her name is. Indeed, I feel almost sure I know it."

"What do you think it is?"

"That's telling," laughed Levi.

"But won't you tell me?" said Bessie, assuming an imploring look.

"I think I will pay you off by keeping still."

"Do tell me what you think it is. I shall not like it if you don't."

Levi would have dived down among the fishes if such had been her will, and he was compelled to answer--

"Of course there is only one name for her, and your father must have chosen that."

"Perhaps not. But why don't you say what you think the name is?"

"Will you tell me if I guess right?"

"I will if you guess right the first time."

"Very well; here goes, then! Her name is the Bessie Watson, to be sure. There is no other name fit for her."

"No! How absurd you are, Levi Fairfield!" replied Bessie, blushing up to the eyes.

"No? Why, that ought to be her name, if it isn't. It's the Bessie, the Bessie Watson, or something of that kind. I know it is. Of course your father wouldn't think of calling her by any other name."

"It isn't anything of the kind, Levi. I am willing to confess that father wanted to name her after me, but I wouldn't let him. I wanted another name."

"I'm sorry you did, for I wanted that name; and I shall not enjoy her half so much as I should if she had been called after you," replied Levi, not at all in the tones of gallantly, but in those of simple truth and sincerity.

"It is very kind of you to say so, and to think so, Levi; but I believe she has received a better name," added Bessie, not unmoved by the devotion of the gallant skipper.

"There isn't any better name. I'm really disappointed."

"You will not be when you read her name."

"But what is the name?" asked Levi, seriously.

"The--why, I almost told you!" laughed Bessie.

"I hope it is not a hard name, for sailors make such a fuss about jaw-breaking words. An old coaster meant to name his vessel the Amphitrite, but he gave the name of Anthracite to the painter, and it was duly lettered upon the stern. However, it answered just as well, as the craft went into the coal trade."

"It isn't a long name, nor a hard one, and I know it will suit you."

"Well, Bessie, if it suits you, it will suit me," added Levi; "though I did hope she would be called the Bessie."

The Starry Flag sped on her way, and before noon was off Eastern Point. There were several coasters approaching, but Levi could not make out the yacht till he examined every craft with the spy-glass.

"I see her!" exclaimed he, as he headed his boat so as to intercept her.

"Is she handsome?" asked Bessie.

"I can't make her out very well at this distance; but we shall be up with her in half an hour or so."

Bessie looked through the glass, and so did Mrs. McGilvery, but they did not obtain much satisfaction. The yacht was making her ten knots, and in the time Levi had named they were within hailing distance of her.

"She is a beauty, and no mistake!" exclaimed the skipper, warmly. "She is pretty enough to be called the Bessie Watson."

"You mustn't say such things, Levi. They are not pretty," said Bessie, very seriously.

"The yacht is pretty enough, and so is the one she ought to have been named after," persisted the gallant skipper.

"There it is again! You are real naughty, Levi," pouted she; and probably, like all pretty girls, she had a distaste for compliments.

"Yacht ahoy!" shouted Levi.

But Mr. Watson had already recognized The Starry Flag, and the yacht was thrown up into the wind. Levi hauled in his sheet, and sailed in a graceful curve around the stern of the vessel, intent upon reading the secret which had been so persistently kept from him.

"Now you will know!" exclaimed Bessie, gazing anxiously into his face to observe the effect of the discovery upon him.

"Dog-fish and dunderfunk!" ejaculated Levi, as he read the name, "THE STARRY FLAG!"

"There now, Mr. Skipper! Isn't that the name of all names for her?"

"The Starry Flag!" repeated Levi, as he gazed at the golden letters on the stern of the yacht.

"Why don't you say something, you absurd skipper? I'm dying to know what you think of it, and you don't say a word."

"I like it first-rate; but if I had read 'Bessie' there, I should have liked it better, much as I like it now."

"I couldn't have her named after me! How ridiculous! I'm sorry you don't like the name."

"But I do like it, Bessie; though you couldn't expect me to like any other name as well as yours."

"Why, how absurd you are!" replied Bessie, as Levi ran the boat up to the yacht.

The gangway had been rigged so that the passage from one craft to the other was an easy matter, even for ladies. Mr. Watson assisted them on board. One of the hands, who knew the coast, was deputed to take charge of The Starry Flag, and Levi went on board of the beautiful vessel he was to command.

"Well, Levi, what do you think of her?" asked Mr. Watson, after they had walked around the deck, and inspected the cabin and cook-room of the yacht.

"She is magnificent, sir!" replied Levi. "She is, without exception, the finest yacht I ever saw, and I have examined a great many."

"I am glad she suits you. How do you like the name?"

"Very much, sir, though if it had been the Bessie, I should have liked it better."

"I intended to give her that name, but Bessie was contrary, and insisted that she should be called The Starry Flag, in grateful remembrance of her trip from the Penobscot. I really appreciate her motives, and both of us desire to perpetuate the name of your boat by giving it to the finest yacht that could be built."

"Since it pleases both you and her, I ought to be satisfied with it--and I am. We have two Starry Flags now, and we may get them mixed."

"The name of your boat shall henceforth be The Starry Flag, Jr.," laughed Mr. Watson. "When we say The Starry Flag, we mean the yacht, and when we say The Starry Flag, Jr., we mean your boat."

The Starry Flag, then, cut her way through the long billows at a rate which was highly gratifying to the embryo captain, who, prompt to his instincts, had taken the helm, when he had examined her. He declared that she steered splendidly, and he was sure she would prove to be a good sea-boat. In a short time she came to anchor off Mike's Point. The steward had prepared a lunch for the party, and they sat down at the table as soon as the yacht swung round to her cable.

"Now, Levi, you must get a crew for your vessel. These men, with the exception of the cook and steward, will return to Boston this afternoon," said Mr. Watson.

"Are the crew to leave her?"

"I only engaged them to bring her down, for I thought that you would prefer to select your own hands."

"I should," replied Levi, thinking what young men he could procure.

"We shall be ready to start on our cruise to the eastward in three or four days," added Mr. Watson.

"I will be ready, sir."

By the time the lunch was disposed of, The Starry Flag, Jr. had arrived, and Levi landed the party. He was anxious to engage his crew, and he ran the boat over to her moorings. On the rocks he found Dock Vincent, who had been observing the yacht.

CHAPTER VII.

GRAVE CHARGES.

"What vessel's that, Levi?" asked Dock Vincent, as the young skipper landed on the rocks.

"It's The Starry Flag," replied Levi, smiling.

"No, I mean the large yacht, off the Point."

"So do I."

"You don't mean to tell me that vessel's called The Starry Flag!"

"Yes, I do; that's her name. My boat is now called The Starry Flag, Jr.," answered Levi, beginning to move off, for he was not disposed to hold any intercourse with such a person as Dock Vincent.

"Hold on a minute, Levi; tell us about her," said Dock. "What is she for?"

"A yacht; but I am in a hurry now."

"Wait a minute. I have some bad news to tell you."

"Bad news?"

"Your uncle had an ugly fall this morning, just after you went off in the boat," added Dock.

"Where did he fall?" asked the young skipper, interested now, and troubled by the information.

"He fell into the cut, where the plank crosses it," replied Dock, pointing to the place where the accident had occurred.

"Is he much hurt?"

"Yes; I think the old man is putty badly damaged in his timbers. He has taken to his bed, and I shouldn't wonder if he had to stay there a month."

"I am sorry for it," said Levi, with entire sincerity. "How did it happen?"

Dock explained how it happened, taking care to locate himself at a considerable distance from the scene of the catastrophe.

"The old man thinks somebody fixed the plank so as to make him fall," added he, finishing his narrative.

"To make him fall!" exclaimed the attentive listener. "Who does he think did it?"

"Well, Levi, he thinks you did it," answered Dock, softening his tones, so as not to commit himself to this view.

"I!"

"The old man thinks so, but that don't make it so, you know."

"What makes him think I did it?"

"Because you were the last person that went down to the P'int before he did. You were running over to Watson's new house, in the Flag, when the thing happened."

"I haven't been over the plank to-day," said Levi.

"You went to your boat just before the old man come down here; and he don't see who else could have done it."

"I did not cross on the plank; I went along on the rocks, as I always do when I come across the second beach," protested the young skipper.

"Well, I don't know anything about it, you see, Levi," added Dock, in deprecatory tones. "I only tell you what the old man told me. He knows you hate him."

"But I don't hate him."

"Don't you?" asked Dock, with a sceptical grin.

"I'm sure I do not," answered Levi, with emphasis.

"Perhaps you don't; but after all the trouble there's been between you and the old man, it wouldn't be strange if you hated him and he hated you."

Probably Dock was as sincere as Levi; for there was not a Christian idea in his head, or a Christian purpose in his heart. He had no keener perception of the sublime doctrine of forgiving one's enemies, than the beasts of the field or the fowls of the air. In his view it was the most natural thing in the world for the uncle to hate the nephew, and for the nephew to hate the uncle; and he did not believe it possible for either of them to banish the foul impulse from his heart.

"I don't hate my uncle; I would do anything in the world for him," continued Levi, earnestly, but thoughtfully, for he was deeply pained by the suspicions of his uncle.

"I'm going up to see the old man, by and by, and I'll tell him what you say about it," added Dock.

"I have a great deal to do, but I shall go and see him myself," said Levi, as he began to move up the rocks again.

"What's your hurry, Levi? I want to talk with you about that vessel. She is a fine schooner."

"She is all that. I have to find a crew for her, for we are going off on a cruise in three or four days. Do you know of any young fellows who want to make good wages without working very hard?"

"Yes; there's Mat Mogmore," replied Dock, after a little reflection. "He'll make a first-rate hand for you. I rather think he'll go off to Australia with me in the Caribbee."

"In the what?"

"In the Caribbee--that's my vessel. She's a schooner, rather larger than that yacht, and she'll outsail anything of her inches that ever floated. If you want Mat Mogmore, he'll be glad of a lay in that yacht, for I shan't get off for three weeks yet. I'll speak to him about it."

Levi preferred to do his own speaking, not wishing to place himself under any obligation, however slight, to a man of Dock's character and antecedents. He decided to visit his uncle at once, and call at Mr. Mogmore's house on his way home. With some difficulty he escaped from his ancient enemy, and crossing the plank, which had been placed in its original position by Dock after the accident, he walked up the tongue of land, dreading the scene at his uncle's which the information he had received led him to expect.

He found his aunt in the kitchen, and inquired particularly into the condition of uncle Nathan. She thought he was "a leetle more comfortable," and told Levi to go in and see him if he wanted to, for she was confident that the young man could clear himself from the grave charge preferred against him.

"How do you feel, uncle Nathan?" asked Levi, kindly, as he entered the bed-room.

The old man looked at him with a savage stare, but made no reply.

"I am sorry you have had such a fall," continued Levi.

"No, you ain't sorry, nuther! What do you want to say that for, Levi Fairfield? It's all your work, and 'tain't likely you keer how much I suffer," growled the injured man, his words interspersed with many a groan.

"What is my work, uncle?" asked Levi, mildly.

"Didn't you fix that plank over the cut so's to gim me this fall?"

"No, sir, I'm sure I did not," protested Levi.

"Don't tell me!" groaned the old man, suffering as much from passion as from pain.

"I can only say, uncle, that I have not touched the plank; and I did not go near it this morning."

"'Tain't no use; I know you did! You went down to your boat afore I did, for I see you standin' over to Watson's new house jest afore I fell. You want to kill me--that's what you're tryin' to do; and you e'enamost done it this mornin'."

"I'm sorry you have such an opinion of me, uncle," replied Levi, more in sorrow and pity than in anger.

"You've got most of my money afore I'm dead, and you mean to have the rest on't arter I'm gone," continued the old man, in angry, whining tones.

"Do you still think I took the gold, uncle Nathan?"

"Do I think so! I know you did! Nobody else took it, and nobody could done it but you! What have you done with it?"

"I know nothing about it, uncle. I am sorry you think so hard of me. I'm ready and willing to do anything I can for you."

"Then gim me back my money!"

"I haven't it."

"Yes, you have!"

It was useless to talk with the sufferer, and Levi's presence only excited him. After repeating, in the gentlest of tones, his desire to serve him, the young skipper turned to depart.

"You'll be found out, Levi Fairfield, and you'll have to give that money up. 'Tain't no use to try to git red on me, for I'm go'n' to make a will, and leave what little I've got to your aunt," said Mr. Fairfield.

"Uncle Nathan, do you really think I want your money?" asked Levi, beginning to be indignant at the foul suspicious of the old man.

"That's what you want to kill me for," whined the miser.

"I don't want to kill you, or hurt you."

"I'm go'n' to make a will; so 'tain't no use to try to git red of me any more."

Levi pitied the sufferer, as much for his moral as his mental obtuseness, and fearful that his indignation might get the better of his pity, he left the room. His uncle threatened him with all the terrors of the courts and the prisons as he withdrew. In the kitchen he found Dock Vincent, who had come to make his promised afternoon visit. Levi left immediately, and called at the house of the carpenter. Mat Mogmore, after some haggling, consented to become one of the crew of the yacht. He was a young man of eighteen, who had made two or three fishing voyages, and was a smart, active fellow. He had been rather intimate with Dock since the return of the latter; and this was all Levi had against him. Before night, the young captain of The Starry Flag had engaged three other hands. The crew were to go on board the next morning, when Levi intended to start on a trial trip, for the purpose of training his men, and becoming more familiar himself with the working of the yacht.

Dock Vincent entered the chamber of Mr. Fairfield. He found the old man agitated, and almost crying with anger and vexation.

"So Levi's been to see you," said the visitor, seating himself at the bedside.

"Yes, he has! Sunthin must be done, Cap'n Vincent," replied the old man, trying to rise on the bed, but sinking back with a groan.

"Don't try to git up; keep still, Squire Fairfield, and don't hurt yourself," interposed Dock.

"I can't stand this no longer!" howled the miserable man, the tears starting in his eyes. "Sunthin must be done."

"What shall it be, squire?" asked the comforter, coolly.

"I can't stand it no longer, and I won't, nuther," repeated the sufferer. "Somebody's got my money, and I must git it back, or it'll kill me. That boy must be took up, and sarched till the money's found. I know he's got it. Nobody else couldn't have took it. He must have kerried it off in that little saw-mill. That's what he come arter the saw-mill for--to kerry off the money in."

"Do you want to have Levi arrested?" asked Dock, musing.

"Yes; he must be took up. As soon as he sees I'm in airmest, he'll git scared, and give up the money."

"Musn't be too hasty, squire. If you be, it'll damage you."

"No 'twon't; nothin' can damage me now. I'll resk it. Git a constable; but don't git Gayles."

Dock counselled moderation, and thought it would be better to wait till they had more proof, before taking any decisive steps. He finally quieted the old man by promising to "hunt up the evidence," and have Levi arrested as soon as there

was any proof to work with.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONSTABLE COOKE.

Levi went on his experimental trip in *The Starry Flag* the next day. The wind was very fresh, and he had an excellent opportunity to test the weatherly qualities of the yacht, and she proved to be all he had anticipated or desired. She would sail almost into the wind's eye, and went through a chop sea as steadily as a judge through a trial. Captain Fairfield, as all hands on board called him, was proud and happy in his new situation. He was in his element; and it was not likely that the possession of any sum of money could long keep him from the position he was born to fill--the command of a vessel.

The yacht was fitted up below with special reference to the wants of her owner's family and friends. Her trunk extended nearly the whole length of her, affording a high and spacious cabin for a vessel of her size. On each side of the companion-way, leading down from the cockpit, or standing-room, was a small state-room, one of which was appropriated to the use of the captain. It contained a single berth, a writing-desk, a plentiful supply of lockers, drawers, shelves, and brackets for clothing, charts, and nautical instruments. Levi had installed himself in this little apartment, and felt like a lord, as he sat in its cushioned arm-chair at the desk, glancing at his tasty and convenient surroundings.

This state-room, and its fellow on the opposite side of the ladder, opened into the main cabin, which contained four berths, with curtains extending out in front, so as to form an enclosure for each occupant, securing entire privacy. Opening from the forward part of the cabin were two large and airy rooms, each having two berths, for the accommodation of Mr. Watson's family. They contained every convenience belonging to a first-class hotel, with a curious economy of space, which would have excited the admiration of those who have a taste for overcoming impossibilities.

Between these state-rooms was a narrow passageway leading to the fore-castle, which occupied about half the length of the vessel, and contained the pantry, ice-house, cook-room, store-room, and six berths in the forward part for the hands.

The cook and steward were colored men. The former had served for years in a packet ship, and the latter was a steamboat waiter, who never failed to put on a white jacket at meal times. The four hands who had been employed on the Cape were young men, the oldest not over twenty, all of whom had made several fishing voyages, and were hardy, active, and accomplished seamen for a small craft.

On her trial trip Levi took the yacht as far as Boone Island, on the coast of Maine. He dined in state, all alone in the cabin,--he had no passengers on this cruise,--and Augustus, the cabin steward, wore his white jacket, and stood behind his chair. In fact, Levi was Captain Fairfield on this occasion; and he wore his dignity with becoming modesty and grace.

In the evening, after his return, he made a full and enthusiastic report to Mr. Watson and the ladies of the good behavior of the yacht, and declared that he was ready at once to go round the world in her.

"We don't care about going round the world in her, Levi," laughed Mr. Watson; "but on Monday morning we will start for Mount Desert, if you are ready at that time."

"I am ready now, sir."

"I cannot leave before Monday. If we enjoy this trip, we will spend the whole of the month of August on board of *The Starry Flag*. I should like to go as far as the Bermudas, if you think it is safe to take so long a voyage in her."

"Safe!" exclaimed Levi. "You can cross the Atlantic in her as safely as in a steamship. For my part, I should feel safer in her than in any steamer that ever went to sea. She would shake you up more, perhaps, but she will take you through all right if she is well handled."

"No doubt of it. I told the builder to have her as strong as wood and iron could make her. My directions were, first, strength, second, comfort, and third, speed."

"I think he has got the speed in first, for we logged twelve knots to-day, with the wind free in a chopping sea. But she can't be excelled for comfort and safety. I know by the feeling of her in a sea just how she would behave in a gale."

"Have you seen Mr. Gayles since your return, Levi?" asked Mr. Watson, suddenly changing the subject, and wearing a look of anxiety.

"No, sir; he was not at home when I went to supper," replied Levi, satisfied something unpleasant had occurred; and he had not much difficulty in surmising its nature.

"Have you heard anything about a search-warrant?"

"Not a word, sir; but I almost expected something of the kind. My uncle charged me with taking the money he lost; but I did not even know that he had any money in his house," answered Levi, grieved and mortified at the necessity of again defending himself from such an assault.

"Mr. Gayles told me that your room at his house, and indeed all his premises, had been searched by Constable Cooke, in your absence, to-day, for the missing gold."

"Of course they did not find anything," replied Levi, blushing.

"No, they did not; but perhaps they would if your affairs had been managed by a less discreet person than Mr. Gayles. It seems that Dock Vincent went to the house, with the constable, about dinner time. Your uncle appears to have employed Vincent to look up the money for him. Mr. Gayles was willing to admit the officer, but he positively refused to allow Vincent to enter his house. Levi, that villain is the worst enemy a man ever had. You must beware of him; have nothing to do with him, and nothing to say to him."

"I do not, any more than I can help."

"The story now is, that you took your uncle's money, and set a trap to kill or severely injure him at the cut, because you are his legal heir."

"How absurd!" interposed Bessie, indignantly, as she rose from her chair, and seated herself by the side of Levi on the sofa, her mild eyes beaming with unwonted fire.

"Very absurd, my dear; but there are people who are foolish enough to believe such absurd stories even of their own minister. Of course, Levi, there is no real danger, but you may be seriously annoyed."

Levi was smart. He had done great deeds. He was known to be worth thirty-five or forty thousand dollars, in the hands of his guardian; and his intimate relations with the family of Mr. Watson rendered it exceedingly probable that he would eventually roll in wealth, to be counted by hundreds of thousands. Most of the people were generous enough to congratulate the young man, in their hearts, on his brilliant prospects, especially as he did not put on any airs, or cut any of his old friends.

But there were weak and evil-minded men and women who envied his good fortune, and were ready to seize upon any rumor which tended to bring discredit upon him. Among these was Constable Cooke, whom Dock Vincent had employed to search for Mr. Fairfield's money. He could not help thinking that, if he had been intrusted with the warrant for the arrest of Levi, on the charge, three years before, of purloining Ruel Belcher's money, instead of Mr. Gayles, he would have done precisely as that worthy man had, and in the end would have been appointed the young man's guardian, making a few hundred dollars every year in commissions on the care of the property. He could not exactly forgive Mr. Gayles for being so fortunate; nor was he so exclusive as to confine his dislike to the guardian, but extended it to the ward.

Constable Cooke, therefore, was a fit person to do the dirty work of Nathan Fairfield and his coadjutor. He adopted the miser's theory in full, that Levi had set the house on fire with the candle, in order to cover up the loss of the money, which he had conveyed from the house in the little saw-mill. Since the arrival of the yacht, it had even been conjectured that she was the property of Levi, who had paid for her with the ill-gotten gold. This theory, explained and bolstered up with specious argument and sophistical evidence by the constable, rather staggered many people who believed in Levi. If the young man's character had been doubtful, the theory would have been plausible; for, after all, a person's good character is the best testimony in his favor.

Mr. Watson and Levi discussed the situation coolly, though the ladies, with their warmer sympathies, were indignant, and disposed to be violent in their measures. Nothing could be done but to wait the issue of events; and Levi walked as proudly as ever through the streets of the town. The next day he took the ladies out to sail in the yacht; but before he went he called at his uncle's house, carrying a nice tenderloin steak and a jar of jelly for the sufferer, who was improving, in spite of the heat and excitement to which he agitated himself.

"Don't tell him, aunt Susan, that I brought these, things," said Levi. "I pity him, and I don't hate him. I shall try to be a Christian towards him now, whatever he does."

The old lady burst into tears. Such a spirit amazed and overwhelmed her. The reading of her religious paper had prepared her, in some measure, to appreciate such conduct. The next day, which was Sunday, Levi carried some other luxuries for the invalid; but he did not venture to see his uncle after the violent scene which had attended his first visit to the sick room.

On Monday morning Mr. and Mrs. Watson, Mrs. McGilvery, and Bessie were conveyed on board of The Starry Flag. The foresail and the mainsail had been hoisted, and the hands were heaving up the anchor, when a boat from the shore was discovered approaching the yacht.

"Hold on!" shouted Constable Cooke; when the boat came nearer, and was found to contain, besides the officer, Dock Vincent and two other men.

"Belay, all!" said Captain Fairfield; and the operations at the cable were suspended.

"I've come to search this vessel," said Constable Cooke, when he and his party had reached the deck. "I have a warrant."

"I will afford you every facility for the discharge of your duty," replied Levi, as he led the way to the cabin.

"Don't let Vincent go into the cabin," said Mr. Watson, in a whisper.

Levi promptly informed the officer that Captain Vincent must not go below.

"I want him to help me," persisted Constable Cooke.

"Captain Vincent can't go into my cabin. If he attempts to do so, I'll throw him overboard!" added Levi, rolling up his coat sleeves.

"I've a right to call in aid accordin' to law," said the officer, angrily.

"You shall not call him in," protested Levi.

Mr. Watson spoke,—he had money, and the constable was afraid of him,—and the matter was compromised. One of the other men went with the officer, who proceeded directly to Levi's state-room. The desk was opened, the lockers examined, and the drawers searched. In one of the latter, a shot-bag, With ten half eagles in it, was found.

"That's one of the bags!" almost yelled the constable, in the fury of his malignity.

"I never saw it before," said Levi, quietly, "nor the gold it contains."

"I have a warrant for your arrest, Levi Fairfield; and sence you showed fight on deck, I shall put the handcuffs on you."



LEVI IN IRONS.—PAGE 96.

Mr. Watson and the ladies were shocked and alarmed; but not one of them for a moment doubted the innocence of Levi, who suffered himself to be ironed without resistance.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EXAMINATION.

Constable Cooke put the irons on the wrists of Levi Fairfield, not from a sense of duty, but with a keen relish for the act itself. It is but justice to the officer, prejudiced though he was, to say that he was entirely sincere in the belief that his prisoner had stolen the miser's gold. He was needlessly rough and severe in the discharge of his duty, and the irons were a gratuitous indignity. Mr. Watson protested vigorously against the constable's useless display of authority. Bessie was frightened and terribly grieved by the harsh treatment bestowed upon her ideal of a hero.

Levi himself was the only person in the cabin who was calm. His quiet dignity was unruffled by the insults heaped upon him, and he looked proudly conscious of his innocence.

"What does all this mean?" demanded Mr. Watson, when Levi had been effectually ironed, so that he could not tear the constable and his assistant to pieces, as they seemed to fear he would.

"I do not know, sir," replied Levi, shaking his head, with a smile.

"I think it is all clear enough, Mr. Watson," interposed Constable Cooke.

"I don't think it is," replied Mr. Watson, sharply. "You have found a shot-bag with ten five-dollar gold pieces in it. What does that prove?"

"It proves that Levi stole the money just as clear as the sun proves it's day."

"Is it anything surprising that the captain of a yacht has fifty dollars in gold in his state-room?"

"I don't know's 'tis, but it's sunthin surprisin' that he should have one of the bags the old man kept his money in, in his state-room," said the officer, with a sneer.

"How do you know that is one of the bags?"

"How do I know?" repeated the constable, taking the bag from his pocket. "Mr. Fairfield told me he writ his name on all the bags. There it is."

The bag was exhibited, and over the imprint of the manufacturers of the shot it had originally contained was the name, "N. Fairfield," rudely traced in large, awkward characters, in pencil, on the cloth. Levi saw it, and the formation of the two capital letters assured him it had been written by his uncle. The bag was found in one of his drawers; but it was plain that "an enemy had done this."

"If that don't satisfy you, Mr. Watson, I don't know what will. This ain't pleasant business, but I can't help it," added Constable Cooke, who perhaps had begun to think it was imprudent to offend a rich man.

"That doesn't satisfy me," replied the obstinate merchant. "Do you suppose Levi put that bag and the gold into the drawer?"

"I suppose he did, sir. That's his state-room--isn't it?"

"There are half a dozen places there with locks on them. Do you think he would put his money into a drawer without any lock upon it?"

"I don't know anything about that," answered the constable, who could not help seeing that the argument was a good one. "I've got a warrant for his arrest."

"Did you know the money was there before you came on board?" demanded Mr. Watson, warmly.

"I supposed it was there."

"What made you suppose so?"

"I was told it was there."

"Who told you so?"

"I don't know as I'm obliged to tell you who told me," replied the officer.

"I don't know that you are, either; but some of you shall be indicted for conspiracy if you don't answer. You came on board with a warrant in your pocket for the arrest of Captain Fairfield. You expected to find the gold here, you say. Somebody told you it was here, and that somebody knows more about it than the person you have arrested and put in irons," continued the merchant, indignantly.

"You know why I put him in irons. Didn't he threaten to throw one of us overboard?" replied the constable.

"When officers take graduates of the state prison to assist them in the discharge of their duties, they must expect some opposition."

"But Captain Vincent is acting for Mr. Fairfield, who's too sick to do anything himself," pleaded the officer, who could not help seeing that Dock was not a proper person to aid him in the performance of his duty. "I'll take the bracelets off, if you say so."

"I do say so, most emphatically!" added Mr. Watson.

Constable Cooke removed the irons, stepping between Levi and Bessie to do so.

"So long as you and your father do not believe I am guilty of any crime, I don't care for the irons or the prison," said Levi, cheerfully. "I am rather glad of an opportunity to vindicate myself, for I have no doubt there are some people who think I took my uncle's money."

"But it is so terrible to be sent to prison, and to be ironed!" added Bessie, her pretty face full of tender sympathy.

"Not at all. As I view it, the guilt is the only thing that is terrible. This may lead to the discovery of the real thief."

"Levi, have you any idea how that bag came in your state-room?" asked Mr. Watson.

"Not the least, sir. It must have been put there by the thief, or by some one acting for him."

"We shall not make our trip to-day--that is clear enough. Come, Mr. Cooke, we will go on shore, and inquire into this matter at once," continued Mr. Watson. "Levi, you must send all hands to the office of Squire Saunders, for probably we shall want their evidence."

The four young men who constituted the crew of the yacht lived in Rockport, and knew all about the relations of Levi with his uncle. They were directed to go ashore, with the cook and steward, and appear at the office of the trial justice. Levi was taken in charge by Constable Cooke, and went in his boat, with Dock Vincent, much against his will.

"We are likely to have a sharp time on't," said the officer, when they had pushed off from the yacht.

"Why so? What's up now?" demanded Dock.

"Mr. Watson has sent all hands ashore, and I suppose he'll have Squire Cleaves, who's as sharp as a razor new set, and he'll rake us all over the coals."

"What's going to be done, Levi?" asked Dock, turning to the prisoner.

"I have nothing to say about it," replied Levi.

"What did you send all hands on shore for?"

"I shall answer no questions."

"A afraid of committing yourself, I suppose," said Dock, with a sneer, which did not wholly conceal his anxiety.

Levi made no reply. Without being willing, in the absence of some evidence, even to suspect Dock of stealing his uncle's money, he could not help feeling that the antecedents of his old enemy warranted him in thinking that he had something to do with the robbery, or, at least, with fastening the charge upon him, and causing the shot-bag to be placed in his state-room. The party landed, and while Constable Cooke conveyed his prisoner to the office of the justice, Dock called at Mr. Fairfield's to inform him of the arrest.

The old man was somewhat better, and able to sit up in his rocking-chair; but his bones still ached, though he suffered less in body than in mind. Dock called upon him every day, and assured him he would find his gold in time. On the present occasion he had encouraging news, and related the particulars of the events which had occurred on board of the yacht.

"I knowed it!" exclaimed Mr. Fairfield, when he had listened to Dock's story. "I was sartain that boy took the money."

"I suppose it's a clear case enough now," added Dock. "Finding the bag with your name on it settles the matter."

"But did you find all the money, Cap'n Vincent?" asked the old man, nervously.

"No; only about fifty dollars of it."

"Didn't find no more?" added Mr. Fairfield, with a blank stare.

"No, but we shall find the rest of it. Mr. Watson's going to make an awful fuss about it."

"About what?"

"About taking Levi up. I suppose they'll want you to swear to the bag."

"But I can't go out," said the old man with a grunt, when reminded of the pains in his frame.

"Then the squire must come here, as he did when you swore before. I'll go up, and see about it. But, Squire Fairfield, I shan't be able to do much more for you, for I expect my vessel round here soon, and I shall be busy fixing her up for the voyage to Australia."

"I hope I shall find the money afore you go," added the old man, with a gloomy look.

"I hope so too, and I expect you will," replied Dock, as he left the room to attend the examination.

In the mean time Levi had been conveyed to the office of Squire Saunders, who, deeming the evidence of Mr. Fairfield absolutely necessary, had decided to hold his court at the house of the miser; and the old man was soon astonished by the appearance of the whole crowd of officers, counsel, justice, and witnesses in his chamber.

Mr. Fairfield was examined first. He testified, with many a sigh and groan, that he had deposited the four bags, each containing one thousand dollars in gold, in the hole in the wall, which was pointed out to the justice. He had marked his name on each bag, and he identified that produced by Constable Cooke as one of the four. He was asked if the ten half eagles were his property. He was disposed to swear to them also; he had no doubt they were part of the money he had lost; but when asked to state by what marks he recognized them, he was unable to show wherein they differed from other coins of the same value.

The officer then swore that he found the bag in a locker in the state-room, with the money in it. Squire Cleaves, who had already been fully instructed in the case by Mr. Watson, began to put disagreeable questions to him, which appeared to make him nervous.

"You went off to the yacht with a search-warrant--did you, Mr. Cooke?" asked the lawyer.

"I did, sir."

"Did you expect to find the money or the bag on board?"

"I did."

"Had any one told you the bag was there?"

"Well, I can't say any one told me it was there," replied Cooke, with some embarrassment.

"You can't?"

"No, sir; I can't."

"What induced you to look for the money on board of the yacht?"

"I was pretty well satisfied that Levi stole that money, and being he was goin' off on a cruise, I thought likely he would put some on't on board to use. That's what made me expect to find it there," added Constable Cooke, with a more satisfied expression on his face, for the explanation he had given appeared to meet the exigencies of the case.

"Did you reason this out yourself, or did some one suggest the idea to you?"

"Well, some one spoke to me about it, but----"

"Precisely so! Who spoke to you about it?"

"No one said much to me, and I----"

"But who said anything?" interposed the squire.

"Well, Captain Vincent said I might find the bag--he didn't say I *should* find it."

CHAPTER X.

MR. C. AUGUSTUS EBENIER.

Squire Cleaves had brought out from the unwilling witness the fact that he wanted, and Dock Vincent was put upon the stand. The learned counsel adroitly conveyed the information that the witness had been convicted of crime, and had served a term in the state prison--which, though it did not exclude him from giving evidence, might affect his credibility. This statement roused the ire of Dock, and he was cross and sullen, which is a very bad state of mind to be in when subjected to the torture of a skilful lawyer.

Dock described the manner in which he had assisted Mr. Fairfield in finding his money. He had done all that an honest man and a good neighbor should do to help a feeble old man; and it wasn't right for "one-horse lawyers" to insult him.

"Do you consider yourself insulted, Captain Vincent?" asked the squire.

"Yes, sir; I do!"

"Have you been convicted of a crime?"

"What if I have? There was no justice in it," growled Dock.

"Have you served a term in the state prison?"

"If I have, it wasn't a fair thing; and a good many better men than you or me have spent years in prison."

"Undoubtedly, but our best men don't usually graduate at the state prison. You admit the facts as I stated them. Now, Captain Vincent, you were employed by Mr. Fairfield in finding the money he lost."

"I said so; I was."

"Did you tell the constable he would find the bag on board of the yacht?"

"No, sir; I did not."

"What did you tell him?"

"In my opinion, Levi stole that money. I didn't think so at first, but his uncle convinced me he must have done it. I told the constable to look for the money and the bags on board that vessel."

"Didn't you tell him he would find this bag in Levi's state-room?"

"No, sir; I did not."

"Didn't you tell him he might expect to find it there?"

"Perhaps I did; whether I did or not, I expected he would find it there," answered Dock, casting a malicious glance at Levi.

"Why did you expect he would find it there?"

"Because I was satisfied Levi stole the money, and would use some of it while he was gone on the cruise."

"Was that the only reason?"

"It was."

"Captain Vincent, do you know how that bag came in Levi's state-room?" asked the lawyer, looking upon the floor, as though he considered the question of little consequence.

"Yes, sir; I do."

"Please to state how it came there."

"Levi put it there."

"You are willing to swear that Levi put it there--are you?"

"Yes, sir; I am," replied Dock, promptly.

"Did you see him put it there?"

"Of course I didn't. I never was aboard of that yacht till this morning."

"How can you swear that he put it there, then?"

"Because Constable Cooke found it there."

"Is that the only ground on which you swear Levi put it there himself?"

"That's ground enough."

"Answer my question, if you please."

"Yes, it is; and my belief that Levi robbed his uncle of his money."

"That will do; we shall give you the little end of the horn to crawl out of before we get through," added Squire Cleaves.

Dock, sour and crabbed, sat down near the rocking-chair of Mr. Fairfield; and Mr. Caesar Augustus Ebenier, cabin steward of The Starry Flag, Sr., was politely invited to take the stand. He appeared in his best clothes, and his name, quality, and position on board of the yacht were duly elicited by the magistrate.

"What do you know about the money or the bag?" asked Squire Saunders.

"I know all about it, your honor," replied the witness, with a radiant smile.

"Who put them in the locker, where they were found?"

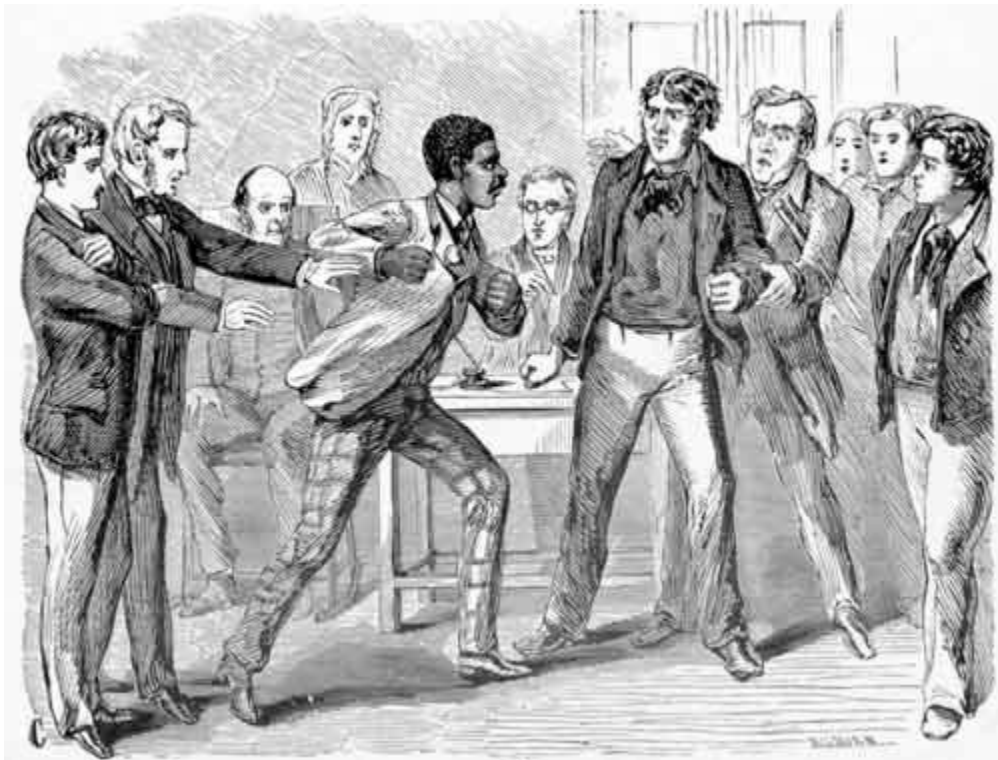
"I did, your honor."

"That nigger's been bribed to say that," interposed Dock, savagely.

"Who do you call a nigger?" demanded Mr. Caesar Augustus Ebenier, stepping briskly up to Dock, with his fists doubled up for use. "I never was convicted of crime and sent to the state prison."

"Order!" called the justice.

Dock was the more disturbed of the two; but the constable quieted him, while Mr. Watson patched up the wounded dignity of the cabin steward, who was doubtless a much better man than Dock. He had formerly been the body servant of a French gentleman in Louisiana, and he could read and write, and spoke French fluently. He wrote his name "C. Augustus Ebenier," and he insisted that his surname should be pronounced A-ba-ne-a. He was a person of no little importance in his own estimation, and had a southern negro's contempt for mean whites, of whom Dock Vincent seemed to be the meanest specimen he had yet seen.



MR. C. AUGUSTUS EBENIER IS WRATHY.—PAGE 112.

"Now, Mr. Ebony, we will proceed with this examination."

"A-ba-ne-a, if you please, your honor," suggested the witness, with the politest of bows.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Ebenier," said the justice, with a smile. "You placed the bag and the money in the locker--did you?"

"I did, your honor; in the captain's locker: but I didn't comprehend what was in the bag at the particular moment when it was in my possession."

"Exactly so."

"I was not precisely informed in regard to the nature of the contents of the bag, which was agglomerated in a mass, and exceedingly heavy for the bulk of the parcel, appearing to consist only of a portion of tow cloth."

"Just so, Mr. Ebenier; we are fortunate in being able to understand you."

"I beg your honor's pardon, but the initial E in my surname should be pronounced like long a."

"Excuse me, monsieur," laughed the justice; "but my French is rather rusty. Will you do me the favor to indicate in what manner the bag and its contents came into your possession."

"With pleasure, your honor. Yesterday afternoon, just previous to Captain Fairfield's going on shore----"

"Who?" asked Squire Saunders, who was not familiar with Levi's new title.

"Captain Fairfield, your honor."

"You mean Levi?"

"No, your honor; far be it from me to commit the gross disrespect of calling the captain of the yacht in which I sail by his Christian name. Captain Levi Fairfield, your honor."

"Go on, then. I know whom you mean."

"Yesterday afternoon, just as Captain Fairfield was going on shore--I disremember the precise time, but it was about five o'clock, post meridian."

"That is sufficiently accurate, Mr. Ebenier. Do me the favor to proceed."

"I beg your honor's pardon, but these interruptions have a tendency to prevent me from following accurately and succinctly the thread of my narrative."

The magistrate bowed, and laughed, as all in the room were doing except Dock and Mr. Fairfield. The witness commenced his story again, repeating everything he had said before; and the squire did not deem it prudent to interrupt him again.

"I was located in a standing position near the entrance to the main cabin; and your honor is aware that, in first-class yachts, the descent commences in the standing-room, which in New York yachts is more frequently called the cockpit. At a distance of not more than a quarter of a marine league from our yacht lay a fishing schooner, which I was informed by those who probably possessed an accurate knowledge of the intended movements of the schooner, though I really could not now state to your honor the names of the parties from whom I received this intimation----"

"Not material," interposed the squire.

"The information I received may prove to be material, your honor. I was credibly informed that the vessel intended to sail for the Grand Banks or the coast of Labrador, I cannot now swear which, or, indeed, if it was either of these localities. Possibly it was either, possibly it was neither, or possibly it was both. I wish it particularly understood that, under the solemnity of an oath, I do not state positively where the vessel was going. Suffice it to say that she was going on a fishing voyage; but whether for cod, haddock, mackerel, or halibut, or either, or all, or a portion of these piscatorial inhabitants of the mighty deep, I am entirely unable to say."

The court, counsel, and witnesses, with the exceptions before noted, roared with laughter; and the cabin steward smiled complacently, as though he was conscious of having made a point.

"I can only observe, under oath, that I was informed that the vessel intended to depart in search of some of the numerous ichthyological specimens that roam in finny herds through the boundless depths of the sea--as soon as the tide turned."

"Excuse me, Mr. Ebenier, but what has all this to do with the money and the bag?" asked the justice, choking down his laughter.

"I trust I shall be able to demonstrate, to the entire satisfaction of your honor, that there is an intimate connection between these circumstances and the suspicious articles discovered in the state-room of Captain Fairfield."

"Go on, then. It is almost dinner time."

"A dory--an exceedingly anomalous craft to a resident of New York, where I have had the honor to reside for several seasons--a dory----"

"You mean a dory--don't you?"

"I am really unable to pronounce the word according to any authorized orthography, as it was never my good fortune to see the word in print. I am not informed whether or not the acute accent is placed over the final e."

"There is no e in the word. D-o-r-y."

"Ah, excuse me! It is not a French word, then, and it is quite proper to call it a dory."

"Precisely so; and now, having settled this important point, that it is a dory, and not a dory, will you inform the court where you got the bag and the money?" said Squire Saunders, beginning to be a little impatient.

But he might as well have attempted to make water run up hill as to induce Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier to relate his story in any other than his own way.

"A dory from the fishing vessel, about to depart on her voyage, paid a visit of courtesy to the Starry Flag. The party which came in the dory consisted of three persons, all of them fishermen, and all of them young men. All, or a portion of them, were evidently personal friends of the four worthy young men who collectively constitute the crew of the yacht, of which I have the honor to be cabin steward. The persons who came on board were not cabin visitors; I am not even aware that they paid their respects to our excellent captain; but I feel compelled to add that, while on board, they behaved with the utmost propriety. I was located----"

"Avast there!" exclaimed the justice. "The court is adjourned till after dinner. I hope the distinguished gentleman will be able to spin out his yarn before bed time."

CHAPTER XI.

THE RESULT OF THE EXAMINATION.

The dignity of the court had been effectually swamped by the grandiloquence of Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier, though it was evident that he was a very important witness. Of course no one was invited to dine at the miser's, and the court and witnesses went home to dinner. As a compromise, Constable Cooke was asked to dine with his prisoner at Mr. Watson's. At the appointed hour in the afternoon the court again assembled in the house of the miser.

"Mr. Ebenier," said Squire Saunders, "you had proceeded in your narrative, when the court adjourned, to the point where four of the crew of the fishing vessel, about to depart in search of ichthyological specimens, came on board of the yacht, which has the honor to have your valuable services as steward."

"I beg your honor's pardon; I had the honor, not the yacht," interposed Mr. Ebenier, bowing.

"Well, I should say that the honors were divided," replied the justice; and his remark was regarded as a judicial joke. "If you could commence where you left off; and go on, I should be under very great obligations to you."

"I will make a persistent effort to do so, your honor," added the obliging Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier. "As I had the honor to hear your honor remark, the three young men from the fishing vessel, about to depart, as aforesaid, were on board of our yacht, as aforesaid, and as I was standing near the cabin door, as aforesaid,--now my narrative progresses, your honor,--one of the young men from the fishing schooner aforesaid, as Captain Fairfield was about to go over the side into his boat, rushed up to me with the bag in his hand."

"You mean the shot-bag containing the gold--do you?" asked the squire, now deeply interested in the substance of the story.

"I do, your honor; perhaps I should have said the bag aforesaid, which I thought I had described with sufficient minuteness. The bag had originally contained shot, if the words printed on it can be relied upon----"

"In the name of the Constitution of the United States, don't repeat the description of the bag!" protested the squire. "One of the young men rushed up to you with the bag in his hand."

"The bag aforesaid, then, your honor. I affirm that he *rushed* up to me, meaning that he walked briskly and rapidly towards me. He placed the bag--the bag aforesaid, your honor--in my hand, extended for the purpose of receiving it when I understood that he wished to commit it to my keeping."

"Precisely so; what did he say?"

"He observed that the captain desired me to place the parcel--by which I mean the bag aforesaid, with its contents, not then known to me--in one of the lockers in his state-room. As nearly as I can remember, though I should not be willing to swear to the precise phraseology of the language he used, his words were, 'The captain wants you to put this into the locker in his state-room.'"

"Didn't you ask him what it was?"

"No, your honor; I never ask any questions when the captain's orders come to me. It is my duty to obey, without knowing the reasons for the action I am directed to take. I went immediately to the captain's state-room, and deposited the parcel--the bag aforesaid--in one of the empty lockers. I supposed from its weight that it contained nails, hinges, screws, or some other species of hardware."

"Did you see the captain hand it to the person who gave it to you?"

"No, your honor, I did not. Under the painfully disagreeable circumstances which have followed the *denouement* of the depositing of the bag aforesaid in the locker, I wish to add, if my humble opinion is of any value to this honorable court, that I do not believe the captain gave the bag aforesaid to the person of whom I received it."

"Do you know the name of the man who gave it to you?" asked Squire Cleaves.

"I can only reply that I heard him called Ben,--which I presume is an abbreviation of Benjamin,--when addressed by his companions."

"It was Ben Seaver," said Levi. "He was on board at the time mentioned."

"I have no knowledge whatever in regard to his patronymic," added the cabin steward.

"Why do you say you don't believe the captain handed it to Ben?" continued the justice.

"Because, your honor, the circumstances do not justify such a conclusion on my part. It is not reasonable to suppose--"

"Confine yourself to the facts, Mr. Ebenier. We do not care to listen to an argument," interposed the justice.

"I beg your honor's pardon; to facts, then, will I confine myself. The captain went directly from the cabin to his boat, and the person whom his companions called Ben came to me directly from the fore-castle. I did not see him hold any communication with the captain, though he paused for a moment at the gangway, and looked over the rail into the boat."

"Might not the captain have handed him the package then?"

"I don't think it was possible, your honor."

"What were the men on the fore-castle doing?"

"They were coiling away a spare cable--all but Bob Thomas, who was to pull the captain ashore; and the visitors were assisting them."

"That will do, Mr. Ebenier; we are much obliged to you for the lucid manner in which you have given your testimony, which is very important," said Squire Saunders.

Bob Thomas, who had pulled the captain ashore, and who had been in the boat with him at the time when he was alleged to have sent the bag to the steward, was next questioned. He had neither seen the bag, nor seen Levi speak to Ben Seaver. The rest of the crew were examined, but nothing was elicited from them. Each of them was asked what had passed between Ben and himself, but the conversation related entirely to fish and fishing. Mat Mogmore seemed to be slightly confused, which was attributed to bashfulness, for his statements were as square as those of his shipmates.

Ben Seaver, who appeared to be the only person that could solve the mystery, had gone on a fishing voyage, and might not return for two months or more. No one had seen him at the fire, when the money was stolen; and it was not probable that he was the original thief, whatever part he might have been employed to perform by the guilty party.

Levi himself was then examined at great length. His statements, covering the time from the fire down to the present moment, were clear and positive. He knew nothing about the money; he had not given the bag to Ben Seaver; had not spoken to him, except to pass the time of day with him as an old acquaintance. When Dock and Mr. Fairfield declared that Levi hated his uncle, Mrs. Fairfield disproved the statement by adducing all the kind acts he had performed.

Squire Cleaves, for the defendant, then reviewed the testimony for and against his client.

"It certainly has not been shown that Levi stole this money," said he. "Nor has sufficient evidence been brought against him to render it probable that he is guilty; not enough to justify your honor in committing him for trial. This investigation has led us to follow the bag from the captain's state-room to the hands of Ben Seaver. There we are blocked, and can go no farther till this person's return from his voyage. Mr. Watson proposes to charter a steamer, send her after the fishing vessel, and bring back Ben Seaver. Then we can follow the bag until it leads us to the feet of a conspiracy against my client."

"It is not necessary to send any steamer after the witness," said the justice. "The only evidence, in this long examination, which has been brought against the prisoner, is, that the bag was found in his state-room. It has been shown, conclusively, that he did not place it there, and probably did not cause it to be placed there. The defendant is discharged." And Squire Saunders rose from his seat at the table.

The decision, though it had not been unexpected, caused a decided sensation in the little audience assembled in the miser's chamber. Dock Vincent was mad, Mr. Fairfield was in despair, and the constable was disappointed. The victim had escaped, and the miser had obtained no clew to the lost treasure. The justice took possession of the bag and its contents, to be used when Ben Seaver returned. The audience dispersed to talk over the event among themselves.

Levi's friends, including Mr. Gayles, who had listened with the deepest interest to the proceedings, were satisfied that the whole affair was a conspiracy. Mr. Watson's theory was, that Dock Vincent had robbed the miser himself, and had employed the absentee to place the bag in Levi's room, intending himself to be on the way to Australia before Seaver returned. As the matter stood, nothing could be proved. But Mr. Gayles declared that he should watch Dock Vincent

and a "certain other person," whose name he declined to mention, by night and by day, until some evidence was obtained. It was not enough to vindicate the innocent; the guilty must be exposed and punished.

"Then Levi didn't steal my money, arter all," said Mr. Fairfield to Dock Vincent, after the other people had gone.

"Yes, he did. Levi's smart, and knows how to cover up his work."

"We don't know no more'n nothin' in the world what's come on't," sighed Mr. Fairfield.

"Levi's got it; and it will come to light yet," repeated Dock.

"I donno whether he has or not."

"That nigger lied all the way through. Folks that tell the truth don't spin no sich yarns as he did. If I catch that nigger in the right place, I'll pound him till he tells the truth, for Levi certainly bribed him to tell that story. He didn't say a word about Ben Seaver on board the vessel. He only did it to get his master out of a scrape--that's all, you may depend upon it."

"All I want's my money, and I don't keer much whether Levi took it or not, if I only git it," groaned Mr. Fairfield.

"Don't be alarmed, Squire Fairfield. You'll get your money one of these days--every dollar of it, for Levi's got money enough to make up for what he spends. I've got some one in a situation to keep watch of him, and something'll leak out before long. You keep a stiff upper lip, Squire Fairfield, and it'll all come out right in the end," added Dock, as he turned to leave.

"I don't feel quite so sartain as I did that Levi done it," replied Mr. Fairfield.

"Yes, he did, and that nigger got him out of the scrape. Levi's smart, and so's the nigger. Wasn't it cunning for him to say the bag was given him by a man who has gone off on a fishing voyage? I can see through that trick with my eyes shut. I shall keep an eye on Levi, and on that nigger too," said the comforter, as he left the room.

Dock was sorely vexed at the result of the examination. He had been confident that his victim would be committed for trial, but the steward's testimony had saved him. He walked down towards his own house; but he had not gone far before he discovered Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier, going in the direction of the Point. With a little contrivance on Dock's part, they came together out of sight and hearing of everybody.

CHAPTER XII.

HOTEL DE POISSON.

If Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier had been a prudent colored man, he would have avoided the meeting which Captain Dock Vincent contrived to bring about, by dodging around the rocks, and again appearing in the principal path. But he was not a prudent colored man; and when he saw the dangerous individual before him, though he might easily have turned aside so as to avoid him, he did not do so.

The steward was a very peaceable and well-disposed person on board the yacht, and elsewhere, but under certain circumstances he was a belligerent colored man. He had a very reasonable and decided objection to being called a "nigger." He claimed that he was a gentleman, and while he behaved like a gentleman, he declined to be insulted with impunity. Mr. Ebenier saw the person who had applied this obnoxious epithet to him during the examination. It is possible that his heart beat a little quicker when he discovered the blackguard, as he regarded him; but it is certain that he did not turn to the right or the left, but proceeded on his way as though Dock had been a pygmy, instead of the heavy, stout man he was.

"See here, you nigger," Dock began, when the steward was within hailing distance.

"What do you want of me, you state-prison bird?" replied the colored man.

"What's that you say?" demanded Dock, angrily.

"I asked you what you wanted of me, you state-prison bird," repeated the steward.

"We'll settle that here," said Dock, rolling up his sleeves. "I don't allow any man, white or black, to insult me."

"That's just my position exactly," added Mr. Ebenier, throwing off his coat. "I don't allow any man, big or little, black or white, to insult me."

The unexpected readiness of the steward to settle the question on the spot rather startled and perplexed Dock, and he did not appear to be quite so ready to "pitch in" as he supposed he was. It is sometimes true of individuals, as it is of nations, that a readiness to fight is the surest guarantee of peace.

"What do you mean by calling me a state-prison bird?" demanded Dock, in less confident tones.

"What do you mean by calling me a nigger?" retorted the steward.

"Well, you are one--aren't you?"

"Well, you are a state-prison bird--aren't you?"

"Don't say that again!" said Dock, shaking his head.

"I'll say it twenty-five times more, if you call me a nigger as many times as that."

"Aren't you a black man?"

"I am; but my heart isn't half so black as yours. I'm not a nigger," protested the colored man, stoutly; and it was evident in this instance that the negro would fight, which was just the thing Dock didn't wish him to do.

"Whatever you are, I won't dirty my hands licking a nigger," added the bully.

"But I'll dirty mine by licking a state-prison bird, and you shall have the satisfaction of being licked by a black man," said the steward, stepping up towards his burly antagonist.

"Cool off, cuffee; I was only joking with you," continued Dock, with a mighty effort to laugh.

"Don't call me cuffee. My name is C. Augustus Ebenier, and I am ready to teach you good manners, without fee or reward."

"Never mind, Mr. What's-your-name."

"If you wish to apologize, do so, or I'll soil my boot by kicking you."

"Apologize to a nigger!" exclaimed Dock.

The steward kicked him. This was more than Dock could stand, and he levelled a blow at the spunky assailant, which was parried. Dock was heavy, but he was clumsy, and before he could repeat the stroke, the hard fist of the colored man had settled under one of his eyes, leaving its mark there--a black eye. The bully retreated under the stunning force of the blow, and picked up a stone, which he hurled at his opponent, but fortunately without hitting him. Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier appeared to be satisfied with what he had done, and he did not follow up his advantage, but picked up a stone, to intimate that two could play at that game as well as one.

"We'll settle this another time," said Dock, wiping his black eye.

"You wanted to settle it now, and you have," replied the steward. "If I can do anything more for you, all you have to do is to call me a nigger, and I'll put your other eye into mourning."

"I'll see you again," said Dock, in threatening tones, as he turned and walked away towards his house.

The steward put on his coat, and moved towards the landing-place, beyond the chasm. Since the examination, he had been promenading the town to see the place, or, what is quite as likely, to permit the inhabitants to see him; for Mr. Ebenier was human, and his weak point was a large estimate of his own consequence. He was on his way to the Point to hail the yacht for a boat.

He followed the path better satisfied with himself than we are with him, for it is not the part of a gentleman to fight unless attacked, or to return epithet for epithet. But he had hardly taken half a dozen steps, before a stone, as big as a man's fist, struck him on the back of the head, and he dropped senseless upon the rocks, not killed, or even badly hurt, but effectually stunned. This was Dock Vincent's mode of warfare--to hit a man behind his back.

"Now you'll keep a civil tongue in your head for a while," said the ruffian to himself, as he hastened towards his house.

The steward lay still upon his bed of rocks. The sun had gone down, and the darkness gathered over him; but no one appeared to render him any assistance. The blow had been a heavy one, and the blood ran down the back of his head from the flesh wound it had produced.

When it was quite dark, Augustus, as he was called on board the yacht, began to move and exhibit some signs of life; but a few minutes elapsed before he had sufficiently recovered to rise. He got up, rubbed his head, looked around him, and collected his ideas enough to know where he was. He felt the blood on his head, but he was a strong-minded man, and did not believe he was killed. He walked down to the landing-place, and hailed the yacht without obtaining any response. He repeated the call a dozen times with no better success. Either the crew were not on board, or they had turned in for the night.

Augustus was a man of the world, and his philosophy was equal to almost any occasion. He could not get on board, and therefore he decided to remain on shore, which exhibited a nicety of judgment worthy of commendation and imitation. Removing his collar, he bathed his head and neck in cold salt water, and was satisfied that his wound was not a dangerous one. He congratulated himself that the stone had not hit him in the face, and thus marred his personal beauty; for, being an exquisite in his own way, this would have been the most fearful calamity that could possibly have happened to him.

After making himself presentable, so far as he could in the darkness, and in the absence of a mirror, his first impulse was to find his treacherous enemy, and punish him for his dastardly attack; for Mr. Ebenier did not purpose to trouble Squire Saunders or the courts with his affair. But he did not know where to find Dock, and was not aware that he lived in the house nearest to the landing-place. He did not exactly like the idea of passing the night in the open air, and it would not be etiquette for him to apply to Mr. Watson or the captain for a lodging.

The steward was not only a philosopher, but a man of expedients. On his way up to the town in the morning he had noticed a dilapidated fish-house, at the head of a little inlet. This building would afford him a shelter, if nothing more, for the night, and he repaired to its friendly but inhospitable roof. Entering the fish-house, he groped about for a suitable place to lie down, and blundered against a rickety flight of stairs in one corner. Hoping to find better sleeping accommodation in the loft than on the ground floor,--as literally it was, being composed of earth and rocks,--he ascended the steps. The stairs creaked and groaned, and it required some nerve to go up in the dark; but the steward's courage was equal to the emergency.

He found that it was not safe to walk about on the floor of the loft in the dark, for the timbers groaned under his weight, and the boards were full of holes and traps; but near the head of the stairs was an old sail, which seemed to have been

placed there for his especial accommodation. Lying down on this, he wooed the slumber which his head, still dizzy from the effects of the blow, required.

"I'm all right now," said he to himself. "It smells fishy; I will call it Hotel de Poisson, and go to sleep."

While the steward was seeking a resting-place for his weary head, Dock Vincent walked down to the Point to ascertain whether or not he had killed his victim. He was gone, and the ruffian went home again.

Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier could not go to sleep in his hotel as readily as he desired; but, just as he was dropping off, he was startled by the sound of voices, in low, suppressed tones, hardly above a whisper. He heard footsteps, and then the dim light of a lantern shed its rays up through the holes and cracks in the floor. In vain he tried to identify the voices; the whispers did not enable him to do so. He dared not move lest the creaking of the timbers should alarm the nocturnal visitors.

He was satisfied that the persons below were engaged in some kind of mischief, and it was his business to know what it was, and who the men were. Near the centre of the loft there was a large hole in the floor, and he commenced working himself by hundredth parts of an inch towards it; but every time he moved, however slightly, the creaking joist threatened to betray his presence, and he decided to satisfy himself at once. One glance might inform him who the men were, and perhaps the mystery of the stolen gold would be solved.

The steward made a spring towards the aperture, throwing himself forward upon his hands, so as to look down through the hole. He had forgotten the ruinous condition of the Hotel de Poisson. His weight and the force of his movement were too much for the strength of the rotten wood; a timber gave way, and Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier was precipitated, head first, through the hole he had made, and struck between the two men, who sat each on a rock facing the other, with the light on the ground between them. The lantern was smashed, and the two men uttered a howl of terror.

If the steward's head had struck one of the rocks it must have split it open--the head, not the rock! He hit the ground, and, as it was, he was again stunned, the men making a hasty escape without recognition.

CHAPTER XIII.

"OFT FROM APPARENT ILLS."

Doubtless a person with Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier's pretensions to gentility should have sent down his card to the individuals engaged in conference below before he went down himself; but the circumstances did not permit the exercise of this degree of courtesy. In fact the steward had no intention forcibly to intrude himself upon the persons below; only to obtain a glance at them. He was a man of intelligence, and the arrest of his captain, in whose character he had a becoming interest, was enough to assure him that something was wrong. He had listened patiently to the details of the examination, and while he was willing to admit that the old man had been robbed of his gold, it never entered his head that Levi was guilty of the crime.

The muffled speech of the two men in the Hotel de Poisson, and the unseemly hour they had chosen for their conference, suggested to the steward that they had something to do with this robbery. He had vainly endeavored to identify their voices, and as a last resort, failing to obtain any information by other means, he decided to obtain one glance at them at all hazards. Perhaps it was well for him that the timbers broke beneath his weight, for the men, not relishing the intrusion, might have subjected him to much bodily harm.

As it was, they bolted as though an evil spirit had suddenly dropped down between them from the upper regions. They were terribly frightened, as indicated by their rapid flight. The steward had not even obtained his coveted view of their faces and forms, and was no wiser in the end than he was in the beginning. The treacherous timbers had defeated his purpose, while, perhaps, they had saved him from a greater calamity than his fall.

For the second time that day, the steward lay senseless on the ground. Though Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier was not wanting in intelligence, his skull seemed to have a capability for enduring hard knocks which was really surprising. Doubtless his head was his strong place; if it had not been, his brains must have been dashed out. According to the tradition, it was safer for him to strike on his head than on his shins. Certainly he was not badly injured, and if reduced to extremity he might have let out his head for use as a blacksmith's anvil.

Before the two men who had been conferring together in the Hotel de Poisson could muster courage to return, the steward had in a great measure recovered from the effects of the fall. Perhaps the superabundance of stars which dawned upon his vision had not all ceased to shine; and perhaps his ideas, which had all been thrown into a confused mass, were not altogether detached and restored to their original channels; but Augustus was practically himself again. His first thought was one of regret that he had failed to obtain a sight of the two men; that he had not even learned whether they were black or white, old or young, seamen or landmen.

He rubbed his head to relieve the pressure on his brain, and to vivify his ideas. The incident which had occurred seemed to render the Hotel de Poisson an unfit place for him to remain during the balance of the night; but he was not willing to leave till he had examined the locality, and obtained whatever evidence it might afford him in regard to the mysterious couple who had met there. Kicking about the ground, he disturbed the fractured glass of the lantern. The globe had been broken, but the lamp was still whole.

Though Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier had a great many bright parts, he was inclined to be a "swell." He smoked a pipe on the fore-castle of the yacht, but when he walked through the principal streets of Rockport, in his plaid pants and bobtail sack, he smoked an Havana cigar, with a meerschaum mouthpiece, in deference to his huge mustache--it was more genteel to smoke a cigar than a pipe. The steward carried a cigar case, which always contained two or three of the choicest brand, and he claimed to have brought them from Havana himself. In this case he also carried matches, which now promised to serve him a better turn than for the lighting of his cigar.

In a moment he had the lamp from the lantern burning, and was looking curiously and eagerly about the premises. The steward had an idea; perhaps not a very brilliant one, but as brilliant as could be expected of a man whose intellect had been so rudely jarred twice within a brief period. The conduct of the two transient guests at the Hotel de Poisson had been suspicious, to say the least. That afternoon the robbery had been fully discussed, and he was confident that the visitors were in some manner connected with that affair. His idea was, that the fish-house had been used as a place of concealment for the plunder. He made a hasty examination of the ground and the rocks which formed the first floor of the Hotel de Poisson, but discovered nothing to confirm his impression.

The steward crossed the place to examine under the rickety stairs. On his way he hit his head against a splintered

board, which was hanging from the floor above, partly detached by his movement through the structure. It scratched the top of his head, already tender from rough usage, and thereby vexed and angered him, as slight accidents often ruffle even great minds. With a gesture of impatience, and a petulant word not in good taste for a drawing-room, he seized the projecting board, and gave it a savage wrench.

Mr. Ebenier was not a poet himself, but he was fond of the poets, and had perused Milton, Shakspeare, Beattie, Cowper, and Keats with real pleasure, to say nothing of having read Corneille and Racine in the original. The steward, therefore, was prepared to appreciate the poet's sentiment, "Oft from apparent ills our blessings rise." His impatient gesture and his petulant exclamation when the board scratched his head, indicated that he regarded the accident as "an apparent ill;" but, as he wrenched the board, a shot-bag, plethoric with gold coin, tumbled, with a clinking clang, upon the ground at his feet, narrowly avoiding his head, and thus saying him from being knocked senseless a third time.

The steward opened his eyes, and regarded the bag as the blessing. He shook the board again, and another bag came this time. Then he pulled it away, and the sail which had formed his bed in the loft rolled down. Overhauling this, he found a third bag; and this was the last he could find. Picking up the lamp till it blazed like a torch, he renewed the search; but no more of these heavy blessings were available.

Mr. Ebenier was satisfied, and he set his lamp down on the ground, intending to open one of the bags, and ascertain the nature of its contents. Under ordinary circumstances the steward would have been too careful to set his lamp down so near a pile of dry seaweed as he did on the present occasion. But his mind was, probably, so confused by the hard knocks his head had received, and by the excitement of finding the gold, that he took little note of his surroundings. His thought was concentrated upon the bags of gold. He did not even think of the two men whose conference he had disturbed, and did not seem to fear that they would return and deprive him of his booty.

He was about to untie the string of one of the heavy bags, when a bright glare overspread the space before him. The pile of dry seaweed, which had been used to cover a sail-boat in the winter, was all in a light blaze. The steward tried to quench the flames with his feet, but his efforts were unavailing. The dry stuff burned like shavings, and the more he kicked, the more the fire leaped up and spit at him. He fought the flames as long as his courage held out, and then he "allowed" that the Hotel de Poisson was a doomed structure.

Taking the money-bags, he retreated down the peninsula towards the landing-place at the Point, lighted on his way by the burning building. Crossing the plank, he reached the shore. There was a dory there, and putting the three bags into it, the steward launched it, and pulled off to the yacht. The treasure was conveyed to the cabin, and deposited temporarily in a locker under a berth. The dory was towed back to the shore, and placed where the steward had found it, that no early fisherman might be deprived of his morning trip. Augustus was in a flurry of excitement all this time, and had not even considered what he should do with the bags. His present object was to secure the plunder so that it could not be recovered by the robbers; and, having done this, he was entirely satisfied with himself, and everybody else, except Dock Vincent, to whom he owed a balance on account, for that night's business.

There was an alarm of fire on shore. The bright glare of the flames from the Hotel de Poisson penetrated the windows of a house near Dock Vincent's, and lighted up the bed-chamber of a sleeping stone-cutter. He gave the alarm; the bells rang, the engines rattled, and the whole town was aroused from its peaceful slumbers. Hundreds of men, who had worked hard all day, lost two hours of sleep for an old shanty which was not worth five dollars.

The Hotel de Poisson was burned to the ground before many people had gathered. Some good men thanked God that it had not been a poor man's house; young men enjoyed the excitement of "running with the machine," and those with an eye for the picturesque were thankful that the unsightly shanty had been removed from a place where it disfigured the landscape. No one appeared to be sorry; but every one wondered how the fire had caught. Various conjectures were suggested; but, after all, no one knew anything about it. Some thought a straggler had used it as a lodging, and set it on fire in lighting his pipe. Others thought some bad boys had set the fire for fun.

If the two men who had met there to confer about their ill-gotten gold were in the crowd, doubtless they were sadder and wiser men. Probably they thought that the breaking of the lantern had communicated the flame to the shanty. The people present knew nothing of the event in the Hotel de Poisson wherein Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier had been the principal actor. The finding of the half-melted remains of a lantern had no significance or suggestiveness to them. The building burned up clean, and there was nothing left of it but a few smoking timbers, and a thin sprinkling of ashes on the ground and the rocks.

If the robbers, whoever they were, went to the fire, it is more than likely that they searched eagerly among the ruins for the gold. If they did, they saw nothing which looked like the fused coins of the treasure. The old sail, in which the gold appeared to have been concealed, or which had been thrown over its place of concealment, was burned to tinder, and there was not a vestige of the bags or the money.

CHAPTER XIV.

"LOSE HIS OWN SOUL!"

The steward of The Starry Flag, after he had returned the dory to the rocks, and secured the jolly-boat of the yacht, had an opportunity to rest his fevered, mixed-up brain, and to consider his next step. The four seamen of the schooner slept on shore, at their own homes, and there was no one on board but the cook, who slumbered heavily in the fore-castle, and did not hear Augustus when he conveyed the bags to the cabin.

Mr. Ebenier lighted a lamp, closed the cabin doors, and drew the silken curtains over the ports in the upper part of the trunk, so that no one could see what he was doing. Though it was not lawful for the steward to use the wash-bowl in Mr. Watson's stateroom, he considered that the present emergency would justify him in doing so. He performed his ablutions with the utmost care, paying particular attention to his wounded head. He then changed his clothing throughout, and devoted half an hour to cleansing his plaid pants, which had been somewhat soiled by contact with the burning seaweed. He even polished his boots before he put them away.

So far as cleanliness was concerned, the steward was a gentleman, which no unclean person can be. Having completed his toilet, and removed all signs of the operation from the state-room, he sat down on a locker in the cabin. He was thinking of the extraordinary incidents of the night. He was fully satisfied that he had found Mr. Fairfield's treasure, and that the opportunity entirely to free his young captain from suspicion was within his grasp. It was a pleasant thought; but, after all, who was Captain Fairfield? Only a young fellow behind whose chair at dinner he was privileged to stand. He had seen him for the first time but a few days before, and he did not feel under any peculiar obligations to him.

Mr. Ebenier took the three bags of gold from the locker, and laid them on the cabin table. It was midnight by the clock which hung in the cabin--the dead hour of night, when all were sleeping. The fire on shore had burned out, and all was still save the rolling sea. The steward went to the door, opened it, passed up to the deck; there was no one in sight, and hardly a light to be seen on the land. Returning to the cabin, he poured out the contents of one of the bags on the table, and proceeded to count the gold. It was a long job, and there was more money than the steward had ever before seen together. On a piece of paper he noted each hundred dollars with a tally-mark. His last pile contained but fifty dollars. Counting up his marks, he made thirty-eight of them; and the whole sum, according to his reckoning, was thirty-eight hundred and fifty dollars.

The old man had lost four thousand dollars, and the steward, concluding he had made a mistake, performed the agreeable task of counting the gold a second time, but with the same result as before. After making the allowance for the fifty dollars found in the captain's state-room, the amount was one hundred dollars short. Mr. Ebenier had the impudence to ask himself if this could be the miser's money, since it did not hold out in the sum he had lost. But the bags were plainly marked, as the fourth had been, "N. Fairfield," in the cramped handwriting of the miser. Of course there could be no doubt in regard to the ownership of the treasure, and Mr. Ebenier could not but wonder at the stupidity of the thieves in hiding it in or under the old sail in the Hotel de Poisson. But he did them the justice to conclude that it had only been placed there for a short time, perhaps for but a few hours; at any rate, their presence in the shanty indicated that it was to have been removed during the night.

It had been removed during the night! The steward chuckled when he thought of it, but his capacious intellect was agitated by a great moral question. Thirty-eight hundred and fifty dollars was an immense sum to a person in his station, who had never had even a hundred dollars in his possession at one time. Honesty was a precious jewel, but it was not possible for him to make thirty-eight hundred and fifty dollars, at one stupendous haul, by being honest. He did not steal the money. He did not rob the old man. If the steward had not suffered the perils and discomforts of two broken heads, or rather one head broken twice, the robbers, whoever they were, would doubtless have divided the money between them, and the old man would never know what had become of his cherished gold.

Mr. Ebenier asked himself if this was not a freak of fortune in his favor; if the money was not a providential compensation for his twice-broken head. Thirty-eight hundred and fifty dollars would be a very handsome atonement for two such raps as he had received, and he was Mammon-worshipper enough to feel willing that his head should be pounded to a jelly at this rate, so long as the germ of his mighty intellect was not extinguished.

The steward was a man of exquisite tastes, and was ambitious for social recognition and distinction. In Paris a colored man was just as good as, if not a little better than, a white man. His former master, in Louisiana, had believed in Paris,

and seeing with his eyes, he had been fully converted to his master's faith. Mr. Ebenier wanted to go to Paris, wanted to live there, even as a waiter in a *café*, if no better situation presented itself. With the money before him, he could realize his dream of luxury and splendor. He could convert these half eagles into napoleons, and revel like a prince in the gay metropolis of France. He would wear the finest of broadcloth, eat the most sumptuous of dinners, and saunter up and down the Champs Elysees like a gentleman. In short, thirty-eight hundred and fifty dollars, or nearly twenty thousand francs in the currency of France, would make a gentleman of him.

Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier was sorely tempted. It might be only once in his lifetime that such a chance to be a gentleman would be presented to him. He could put the gold into his carpet-bag, walk over to Gloucester, and take the first train for Boston. No one would know what had become of him; or, if they did, he would not be suspected of having the gold. But he would be missed, and his absence might cause a commotion. It would be better not to leave at present. The money could be concealed on board of the yacht, and when he was disposed to abandon the vessel it would be within his reach.

After more reflection on this important matter, the steward became convinced that it would be safer and better to hide the gold on board. At the stern of the vessel, under the standing-room, there was a space not available for cabin use, which formed a kind of store-room for extra supplies. It was reached by removing the cabin steps. The tempted man entered this contracted and low apartment with the lamp in his hand. He found a narrow aperture, which led to the space under the cabin floor, where the ballast was deposited, and over which a board had been nailed to prevent the odor of bilge water from penetrating the apartment of the passengers. He removed this board, and reaching down into the hold, placed the bags in a position where they were not likely to be discovered, even by a person searching for them. Nailing on the board again, he covered it with various articles, and returned to the cabin.

On the table lay a Bible, which the steward occasionally read. Though it was now two o'clock in the morning, he was not sleepy; he was too much excited to think of slumber. He opened the good book mechanically, turned its leaves, and read a verse here and there; but he was thinking all the time of the luxurious gayety of the French capital, and the pleasures which thirty-eight hundred and fifty dollars would purchase.

"For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

This was the last verse he read, and he closed the book, as though this appeal of Holy Writ grated harshly on his feelings.

"Lose his own soul," repeated he, almost in spite of himself.

He tried to think of the Boulevards and the gardens of the Tuileries again; but "lose his own soul" came up to his lips still, as though some invisible power compelled him to whisper the impressive sentence. He attempted to whistle, and then to sing an air; but "lose his own soul" came up to his lips, and he could not help whispering the sentence again.

"This money don't belong to me," said he, in audible words. "I am not the happy owner of this princely sum. Unto but few is it appointed to be both rich and good-looking, and I am not of the number. I must be contented with my good looks."

It was no use to say it; he did not mean it, and the idea of Paris and its luxuries still haunted his imagination. He turned in, but it was only to think what thirty-eight hundred and fifty dollars would purchase; and "lose his own soul" not only came to his lips, but the solemn sentence seemed to be printed, in sombre-hued capitals, all over the cabin. He went to sleep at last; but "lose his own soul" followed him into his dreams, yelled in the distance and muttered in his ears by grinning demons, such as those with which his fancy peopled the realms of the lost. But he slumbered uneasily till the sun was far up on his day-journey. When he went on deck, he saw The Starry Flag, Jr. almost alongside. Captain Fairfield and the four seamen came on board.

The young skipper announced that the trip to the eastward, which had been postponed from the day before, would be commenced at once, and the party would be on board at eight o'clock. The steward had enough to do to keep his hands, if not his mind, engaged in making preparations for the occupants of the cabin. At the time appointed the party came on board, and the yacht sailed on her cruise.

Our story need not follow them during the ten days to which the trip was prolonged. It is enough to say that the party enjoyed every moment of the time. Even Mrs. Watson, who had no taste for the sea, was delighted; for Levi, at her request, was careful to bring the yacht to anchor in smooth water every night, and to stay in port when the sea was very rough.

During those ten days Mr. Ebenier considered and reconsidered, and then considered again, what he should do with the money that had so strangely come into his possession. He was disposed to use it; but the gospel sentence

thundered in his ears, and trembled upon his lips, and rolled like the chariot of an avenger through his mind. Once or twice he was on the point of telling the captain all about the gold, but the vision of Parisian luxury checked him.

When the yacht entered Sandy Bay, the Caribbee lay anchored off the Point, and The Starry Flag moored a couple of cables' length from her.

CHAPTER XV.

ANOTHER LITTLE PLAN.

When The Starry Flag returned from her pleasant excursion to the eastward, Mr. Fairfield had so far recovered from the effects of his fall as to be out, and to be making his preparations again to catch dog-fish. It seemed to him to be absolutely necessary that he should make some more money. He felt like a poor man, and his stocks and bonds, notes and mortgages, afforded him but little comfort. His heart seemed to have been lost with the four thousand in gold.

When the yacht made her moorings, the old man was at the landing-place, getting ready to go dog-fishing the next day. His bones still ached, and nothing but bitter necessity could have induced one so feeble as he was to think of going off in a dory, miles from the shore, braving the perils of ocean and storm. He believed that poverty and want stared him in the face, and that he must go to the poorhouse if he did not make an effort to retrieve his great misfortune.

Dock Vincent was never far off when a vessel came into port; and, though he was very busy in making the preparations for his departure, he hastened down to the Point when The Starry Flag hove in sight.

"That's Levi's vessel, Squire Fairfield," said he.

"I s'pose 'tis," replied the old man, casting an indifferent glance to seaward.

"I sold my house to-day, Squire Fairfield," continued Dock, seating himself by the shore.

"Did ye? What d'ye git for 't?"

"Fifteen hundred dollars. It was worth two thousand; but, as I'm going to Australia right off, I couldn't afford to hold it for a better price."

"You'll have a good deal of money to kerry off with you."

"Not much. I paid six thousand for that vessel, and she's dog-cheap at that; but I shall make my fortune in her, carrying passengers."

"I hope you will, for you've done well by me, though you didn't find my money;" and the old man sighed heavily. "I reckon I shall never see nothin' more on't."

"I'm afraid you never will, Squire Fairfield. That nigger lied so like all possessed that Levi got clear, and then we couldn't do anything. I'm afraid it's too late to do anything more. I calculate that nigger and Levi understand one another pretty well. They fixed things between them, and I'm just as sure as I can be that your money went off in that vessel."

"In the yack?"

"Yes, in the yacht," replied Dock, warmly. "It was stowed away somewhere in her; but I suppose they have got rid of it by this time."

"You think I shan't never see it again," groaned the old man, with a piteous expression on his thin face.

"I'm sorry to say I don't think you ever will, Squire Fairfield."

"Then I'm a ruined man! I can't afford to lose four thousand dollars. It was e'namost all I had, and I don't see but I must go to the poorhouse."

Dock Vincent took off his hat, rubbed his head, gazed upon the ground, and seemed to be in deep thought for several minutes. So was the miser in deep thought--brooding over his lost treasure.

"Squire Fairfield, when I begin to do a thing I always do it, sooner or later," said Dock, glancing doubtfully at the old man.

"You didn't find my money," added Mr. Fairfield.

"No; but I'm going to find it, or some more just like it. Squire Fairfield, I can put you in the way of making twenty

thousand dollars just as easy as you lost that four thousand."

"You don't say!" exclaimed the old man, his sunken eyes glowing at the suggestion.

"I can; there isn't any doubt about it."

"You don't mean to steal it--do you?"

"Steal it! You don't think I'd steal--do you? If you do, I won't say anything more about my little plan."

Another little plan!

"Well, no; I never knowed you to steal nothin'."

"Twenty thousand dollars is a good deal of money, Squire Fairfield."

"So 'tis--more 'n I ever expect to see."

"But you shall see it, and have it, if you will take hold of my little plan."

"What is't?" asked the old man, curiously and eagerly.

"It's something we must keep still about. I'm going to make my fortune out of it, and yours too."

"What do you want to keep still for, ef you ain't go'n' to steal it?"

"I see it's no use to talk with you," said Dock, petulantly. "If you think I'd steal, I can't depend upon you, or you upon me. So there's an end of it."

Dock rose from his seat, looked at The Starry Flag, which was just coming to anchor, and then began to walk up the Point; but he expected to be called back, and he was not disappointed.

"Why don't you tell me on't, so I can know what you're go'n' to do?" demanded the miser.

"I shall not say anything to you. I don't think I can trust you. The business isn't all regular; but it isn't stealing," protested Dock.

"You can trust me, Cap'n Vincent, jest as long as you can trust anybody. You know I never says nothin' to nobody about business. I allers keeps things to myself," whined Mr. Fairfield.

"Will you keep this to yourself?"

"Sartin, I will."

"Pon honor?" added Dock, earnestly.

"Yes; 'pon honor. Nobody ever knowed me to say nothin' about business. I never trust nobody, not even my wife, with business matters."

"Sit down, squire, and we'll talk it over between us," replied Dock, apparently satisfied with the old man's promise.

Mr. Fairfield, with some difficulty, seated himself on the rock, and with glaring eyes--so interested was he in a project which was to put twenty thousand dollars in his pocket--he listened to the rather prolix explanations of his companion. For twenty thousand dollars he would have sold his soul; but he was timid.

"I never fail in doing a thing without wanting to try it over again," Dock began. "I always put things through when I begin upon them."

The old man was not quite sure of this, but he did not interrupt the speaker.

"Three years ago twenty thousand dollars slipped through my fingers just as easy as though the money had been greased," continued Dock.

"I didn't know on't."

"Yes, you did. Watson had his money all ready to pay over to me when I had the girl before, and if Levi Fairfield hadn't come between me and him, I should have had the money. Now, Squire Fairfield, I'm going to try that over again; and I'm not going to fail this time. I've got things fixed so that I can't fail."

"I donno about that," said the old man.

"I know, and I'm just as certain about it as though the thing was done already. But I'm not going to tell you anything more about it than I'm obliged to, and then you won't know anything about it, and can't be held responsible for it."

"I don't see how I'm go'n' to make any money by it," interposed the miser, who was more interested in this part of the plan than any other.

"Don't you, squire? How much money do you suppose Watson's worth?"

"I donno."

"More than a million! I know that to be a fact; and I shouldn't wonder if he was worth two millions: folks in Boston think he is."

"He's spendin' on't all on yacks and sech things."

"What that yacht cost to him is no more than a copper to you and me. He don't mind a hundred thousand dollars any more than you would half a cent."

"Not so much!"

"But he don't believe in throwin' on't away."

"I'm going to bleed him just seventy thousand dollars--fifty thousand for myself, and twenty thousand for you."

"I don't see how it's go'n' to be done."

"He shall pay the money over to you; that's what I want you for."

"Then they'll ketch me, and put me in jail," suggested the old man, timorously.

"Nonsense! They won't do it. The whole matter will be between you and Watson. You won't know anything about the business--not a thing. All you've got to do is to take the money and keep it till I call for it. After the girl has been gone a month or two, he will be glad to give you twice as much as I ask. I shall get her aboard the Caribbee."

"How you go'n' to do it? She won't go with you, any more'n she'll go with the evil sperit."

"I'll take care of that. You are to know nothing about it. I shall leave things so that Mr. Watson will go to you, and offer to pay the money without your saying a word about it beforehand. All you have to do is to keep what he gives you till I call for it."

"I donno about it."

"It's all right. We shan't hurt the girl. She shall have a good state-room, and my wife will be on board to see to her. I tell you I'm going to have this thing done over again."

"Where's Levi go'n' to be all this time? He sticks to the gal all the time, and if you git her off, he'll follow you way round the world."

"He won't know anything about it; besides, I calculate he'll be in jail for stealing your money before that time."

"You don't think so!"

"Yes, I do; I'm going to fix that nigger, and I'll bet Levi won't have his wool to hold on to much longer."

"But I don't understand nothin' about this business, Cap'n Vincent," said the old man, doubtfully.

"I don't want you to understand anything about it. It's all right as it is. When the money comes, you hold on to it."

"Ain't you go'n' off to Australia?"

"Of course I am."

"Then how you go'n' to git the money?"

"Leave all that to me," replied Dock, impatiently. "If you don't know anything, you'll keep out of trouble. You will make your twenty thousand dollars out of it, and that ought to satisfy you. Now, Squire Fairfield, there's only just one thing more to be done."

"What's that?"

"I'll give you a chance to make another ten thousand, if you like."

The old man's eyes brightened again, as he asked how it was to be done.

"I find I'm going to be a little short fitting out. I'm going to take out some notions to sell that will pay me five dollars for one; but I haven't got the money to do it," continued Dock.

The old man's chin dropped, and he looked sad and sorrowful.

"I want ten thousand dollars more than I've got. I shall make forty thousand out of the venture, and I can afford to pay a heavy interest. I will give you ten thousand for the use of ten thousand."

"I hain't got no sech money," protested the miser.

"But you can raise it."

"I ain't sure of ever gittin' on't back."

"Yes, you are. You will lend me ten thousand dollars, and then take twenty thousand out of my fifty when Watson pays it over to you."

"Perhaps he never'll pay it over to me."

"You may be sure he will. If he don't, he never will see his daughter again. He will be glad of the chance to pay it. But if he don't, you know, you shall have my note, and I will pay it as soon as I've turned my notions."

Mr. Fairfield, eager as he was to make the ten thousand dollars, had no more idea then of letting the sum asked for pass out of his hands than he had of giving away that amount. It was not his style to let money go from him without the best of security. The approach of a boat interrupted Dock's argument, and the old man promised to think of the proposition.

"I shall not want that dory any more, and I'll give it to you, Squire Fairfield," said Dock, hoping his munificence would touch the money-lender's heart, as he walked away.

"I'm much obleeged to you; it will sarve me a good turn," replied Mr. Fairfield.

"Think over my offer, and I'll see you again soon," added Dock, as he passed out of hearing.

CHAPTER XVI.

PISTOLS FOR TWO.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when The Starry Flag arrived from her cruise. Her passengers were immediately landed; and, after the vessel had been put in order, the four young men who lived in Rockport were permitted to go on shore; and the cook went with them, intending to return in the evening with the boat. The steward did not wish to visit the town, and remained on board as ship-keeper.

Mr. Ebenier was so polite and attentive to the wants of the passengers, and, above all, used such choice language, that he had become quite a favorite. Bessie, who had made considerable progress in her French, was delighted with him, as well because he was an original character, as because he anticipated all her wants. She talked French with him; indeed, all except Levi used the "polite language" at the table to a great extent. The steward was treated with a great deal of consideration by all the occupants of the cabin. This was what he most desired, and after the party had been on board two or three days, he ceased to think of leaving the yacht before the close of the season. Such a friend as Mr. Watson was worth more than the contents of the three bags concealed in the vessel's run.

But ever since he had placed the treasure in its hiding-place, the gospel malediction, "lose his own soul," had been thundering in his ears. The temptation was a strong one; but the steward had thus far been an honest man, and the present seemed to be the crisis of his lifetime. The kindness and consideration of the captain and his passengers won his heart, and he had determined that Levi, in the words with which he clothed the idea, should be triumphantly vindicated.

Mr. Ebenier reasoned that his captain could not be vindicated by simply returning the gold to the old man, his uncle. The two men whom he had failed to identify in the Hotel de Poisson must be discovered; and he determined to find them, if it were possible. On this subject he had some views of his own, and he concluded to let the gold remain where it was until he could institute an investigation: we use the gentleman's own words, subsequently uttered.

The steward dared not leave the yacht when the others went on shore. If he had not recognized the two men, they had probably recognized him. They must suppose he had taken possession of the money, and they would expect to find it if an opportunity to search the yacht was afforded to them. Mr. Ebenier did not intend to give them any such opportunity; therefore he remained on board. He went farther than this. The robbers might come on board while he was there alone, overpower him, and thus regain their plunder. The steward kept a revolver in his carpet-bag; for, being a man of varying fortunes, he was liable at any time to be in a situation to need such a weapon. He took the pistol from the bag, loaded it, and put it into his pocket. It was his duty, as ship-keeper, to defend the vessel in the absence of the captain; and the weapon gave him a strong assurance of safety.

From his house Dock Vincent watched the movements of the crew of the yacht. Levi and five men had landed; consequently the steward must be on board alone. But he had decided to pay him a visit, whether alone or not. In Dock's classic speech, he was "going to fix that nigger," and he was watching for the opportunity to do the "fixing." One of the Caribbee's boats was at the landing, and as soon as the crew of the yacht had landed, he pulled off to her. His coming was not unexpected, and Mr. Ebenier, in spite of the injuries he had received at the hands of the visitor, was as smooth and polite as though his temper had never been ruffled.

"Steward, I want to talk with you a little while," said Dock, as, without an invitation, he stepped upon the deck of the yacht.

"Though I have no particular inducements to condescension, so far as you are concerned, I am willing, in this instance, to gratify you," replied Mr. Ebenier, graciously.

"If you don't object, we will go down into the cabin, where we shall not be interrupted," added Dock.

"Though it is not customary to admit any but gentlemen into the cabin, I shall be happy to waive the rule in this instance, as all our people are on shore," answered Mr. Ebenier, as he led the way to the cabin.

Dock Vincent paid no attention to the polished insults of the steward, but seated himself on a stool, at the side of the table. Mr. Ebenier took his place opposite the guest.

"Now, Captain Dock Vincent, I am entirely at your service," said the steward.

"It won't take a great while to get off what I want to say," Dock began, putting a very uncompromising look upon his ugly face. "I suppose you know the old man that lost the money."

"I have not the honor to be personally acquainted with him, but I am informed that he is the paternal uncle of Captain Levi Fairfield."

"That's so; and Levi has treated him in the most shabby manner."

"Permit me to interrupt you, Captain Vincent," interposed the steward. "It would not be possible for Captain Fairfield to treat any person in a shabby manner, certainly not his own uncle."

"On that point we differ, steward; but let me say what I was going to say."

"Proceed, Captain Vincent. I simply refuse to indorse your statement, and I protest against it."

"All this is neither here nor there. To come right down to the p'int, the old man lost four thousand dollars in gold. I'm trying to help him find it. I know just as well as I know anything, that Levi stole that money. All the circumstances go to show that he did, letting alone the fact that one of the bags was found in his state-room."

"Not without an earnest protest can I permit my worthy captain to be maligned in this unjustifiable manner. On my own responsibility I declare that your statement is utterly false."

"I am satisfied it's just as I say," persisted Dock. "Now, we'll go a p'int closer to the wind. I'm almost certain that the gold Levi stole is hid aboard this vessel."

"And you wish to search the yacht for it?" added the steward.

"That's just my idea," replied Dock, promptly.

"Permitting such a search would be an acknowledgment, on my part, of the possibility of my worthy captain's guilt; therefore I cannot suffer such an investigation to be instituted."

"Well, steward, whether you are going to suffer it or not, it's going to be done," said Dock, savagely. "I didn't come off here, this time, to be fooled with. I know the gold's on board, and I'm going to have it."

"You know it," repeated the steward, calmly.

"Yes, I know it."

"So do I," added Augustus, quietly.

"You do!" exclaimed Dock. "I knew you did! I've been satisfied all along that you knew all about it, and that you was helping Levi cover up his guilt. I suppose he was going to give you something for it."

"One of your statements, namely, that the money is on board of this yacht, is assuredly correct; but your theory, your logic, your premises, and your conclusions are undoubtedly false and absurd," said the steward, a cheerful smile playing beneath his huge mustache.

"Isn't the gold here?" demanded Dock, impatiently.

"It is."

"Then quit your flabbergast, and talk in plain English. Of course Levi stole it."

"Not he!"

"Who did, then?"

"You and another person. Excuse me, Captain Vincent, if my remarks seem too personal; but I have a theory of my own, which, with your permission, I will unfold to you. Have a glass of cold water, sir?"

The steward filled a tumbler from the ice pitcher, and politely tendered it to the guest.

"No; I don't want any; go on with your yarn," growled Dock, sourly, for he desired to ascertain what the steward knew.

"We need use no undue haste in our deliberations," replied Augustus, as he drank the glass of water.

"Go on, and don't talk any flabbergast."

"The money was stolen by you and another person."

"Humph! What other person?"

"To be entirely candid with you, I do not yet know who the other person is; but a certain contingent event will expose him." He referred to the return of the fishing vessel, with Ben Seaver, who had handed him the bag. "You and the other person--to me at present unknown--stole the money, and concealed it in the Hotel de Poisson."

"In the what?"

"I refer to the fish-house, which was consumed in the conflagration of ten days ago. After you had knocked me down by hurling a stone at me in the basest and most unchivalrous manner, on my recovery from the effects of the blow, I went to the fish-house to sleep, being too late to return on board. I was in the loft when you and the other person were below. The floor broke, and I had the misfortune to be precipitated upon you and your companion in infamy. You ran away; but I found the gold, and brought it on board. This is my theory, Captain Dock Vincent."

"This is all a lie!" gasped Dock, putting his hand into his side pocket.

"On the contrary, it is all the sacred truth."

"See here, steward; you can't fool me. I want that money."

"Allow me to inform you that you cannot have it. In due time it shall be restored to the rightful owner."

"I can and will have it," said Dock, fiercely, as he took a revolver from his pocket, and pointed it at the head of the steward.

"I think not," replied Mr. Ebenier, producing his revolver; and, straightening out his legs under the table, he threw himself into an attitude as impudent as the human form could assume, while upon his face played an expression of smiling assurance, which took the ruffian all aback.

Dock's hand trembled, and the pistol vibrated in his grasp, as he looked in dismay at the steward's weapon, all capped and cocked, as his own was not--a circumstance which probably helped Mr. Ebenier in keeping so cool and self-possessed.

"Why don't you fire, Captain Dock Vincent?" taunted the steward. "If you move you are a dead man!"



IN THE CABIN OF THE YACHT.--PAGE 182.

At this moment a boat touched the side of the vessel; and while the two men were confronting each other as described, Levi entered the cabin. He was startled by the array of deadly weapons presented to him as he descended the steps; but neither Dock nor the steward appeared to notice him, for each was afraid the other would fire if his attention was for an instant diverted.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GOLD RESTORED.

Levi could see no good reason why Dock Vincent and the steward of the yacht should be such deadly enemies as to draw pistols on each other. He had come on board for a travelling bag, which Bessie had left in her state-room, and he was not prepared for the scene that met his view in the cabin.

"What are you about, Augustus?" demanded he.

But the steward was obliged to attend to the ugly customer opposite him at the table, and he made no reply—a piece of rudeness, however, which he regretted as an absolute necessity.

"Captain Dock Vincent, I will trouble you to lay your weapon on the table," said the steward. "If you don't do it, I will fire."

Dock did it.

"Pardon me, Captain Fairfield, for my rudeness in not replying to your question," continued Augustus.

"I asked you what you were about," repeated Levi.

"I was about to shoot this ruffian, and I should have done so if I had not happened to observe, in good time, that his weapon was not in condition to go off."

Dock Vincent rose from his seat, leaving his revolver on the table. Probably he had not expected to use it, believing the sight of it would be sufficient to intimidate the steward, and induce him to give up the three bags of gold. He looked at the colored man, then at Levi. The former had dropped his revolver, seeing which the ruffian walked towards the cabin door. As the movement was not opposed, he ran up the steps, jumped into his boat, and pulled for the Caribbee.

Levi again impatiently demanded an explanation of the scene he had witnessed. The steward, commencing back at the day of the examination, related, in his prolix and grandiloquent speech, all the events in which he had been the chief actor, up to the current incident of the day. He did not confess that he had been tempted to steal the money, for he regarded the overcoming of the temptation as a sufficient virtue, without the humiliation of exposing his own weakness.

"Then the gold is on board now!" exclaimed the astonished Levi.

"Yes, sir; it is concealed in the run," replied Augustus.

"Why didn't you tell me of all this before?"

"Because I wished to find the men that stole the money. I thought I could do it better alone than I could with the constables, or anybody else," answered Augustus; but he hung his head as he thought of the dishonest purpose he had cherished.

He had resisted the temptation, but his conscience was sensitive enough to make him regret that he had even been tempted to steal.

Levi was thoughtful and troubled. The triumphant vindication of his captain which the steward had promised himself to bring about was not likely to be realized. The gold was on board of the yacht, and could be restored to Mr. Fairfield; but the vessel had been searched for it, and restoring it looked more like confirming the vile charge against him than like disproving it. Perhaps it would be better for his reputation to keep the money until the return of Ben Seaver; but Levi could not believe it was right to retain the gold even a single day. He was honest and true, and he determined to do his duty before God and man, letting his reputation take care of itself.

He directed the steward to bring out the bags from their hiding-place. The name on the tow-cloth, in his uncle's cramped writing, assured him there could be no mistake in regard to the ownership. The steward told him there was thirty-eight hundred and fifty dollars in the bags—one hundred and fifty dollars less than the sum lost. The robbers had probably taken out one hundred dollars for present use, and fifty for the snare which was to intrap the captain of the yacht. One of the bags had been emptied, and its contents distributed among the other three.

The gold was transferred to the boat, the cabin doors and forward scuttles were locked, and Levi, accompanied by the steward, pulled ashore, and landed at Mr. Watson's house.

The exciting story of the recovery of the money was repeated, and the young skipper declared his intention to restore the bags to Mr. Fairfield. Mr. Watson volunteered to go with him on this interesting errand. With the bags in his hands, Levi entered the kitchen, where his uncle was seated, followed by his constant friend.

"There is your money, uncle Nathan," said he, as he placed the bags on the table.

"What! the gold?" demanded the miser, with breathless eagerness.

"Yes, sir, the gold," replied Levi.

"All of it?" gasped the old man, rising from his chair, while his frame trembled under the excitement of the moment.

"All but one hundred and fifty dollars."

"I think you ought to give me back the whole on't, Levi."

"Fifty dollars more of it is in the hands of Squire Saunders."

"But then there's a hund'ed gone," added the old man, as he clutched the bags, and raised them to test their weight.

"I suppose the thieves took a hundred dollars of the money," said Levi.

"Who's the thieves?"

"I don't know who they are; but I think they will be discovered in due time. The steward of the yacht found these bags in the old fish-house that was burned."

Mr. Watson and Levi had agreed that the ends of justice would best be answered by saying no more than this at present. Both of them were satisfied that Dock Vincent was one of the robbers, but unfortunately there was no evidence that connected him with the crime. Though he had gone on board the yacht, and demanded the gold of the steward, he had done so in the name of the owner; and the act was consistent with his position as the agent of Mr. Fairfield.

The old man asked a great many questions, but he obtained only the facts; all theories and suspicions were suppressed. Mr. Watson had sent the steward for Mr. Gayles, and before they left the miser's house he arrived; and the party proposed to visit the fish-house, and examine the premises, in search of any evidence that might be obtained.

Though Mr. Fairfield was overjoyed to find his gold, his satisfaction did not prevent him from growling sorely at the loss of the hundred dollars. He insisted that Levi ought to make it up to him. He followed the party out of the house, and would have gone to the ruins of the Hotel de Poisson with them, if Dock Vincent, who had just landed, had not joined him.

The steward told his story over again; and the metallic parts of the lantern, which still remained there, were a partial confirmation of the truth of it. Mr. Gayles took possession of these pieces, hoping to be able to prove something by them. While they were still discussing the matter, Dock Vincent and Mr. Fairfield joined them.

"If you make up that hund'ed dollars, Levi, I won't say nothin' more about it," whined the old man.

"I shall not do so, uncle Nathan," replied Levi.

"Certainly not," added Mr. Watson.

"He ought to do it," interposed Dock. "He stole the money, and the least he can do is to give it all back."

"I do not wish to hold any conversation with you on the subject," answered the merchant, coldly.

"I suppose you don't," sneered Dock. "It has all turned out just as I said it would. Levi stole the money, and got that black steward to help him when he was like to be found out. I knew, all the time, that money was on board the yacht; and Squire Fairfield may thank me for getting it for him. I made the steward own up that the gold was on board; and after that Levi didn't dare to keep it any longer. I suppose you don't want to say anything more about it after that."

"Not to you," added Mr. Watson, as he walked away, followed by his companions.

"There, Squire Fairfield, you can see them sneaking off like sheep-stealers," said Dock. "It's just as I tell you, you may depend upon it; and if Levi don't make up that hundred, I should put him through a course of sprouts."

"He ought to gim me the whole of the money," replied Mr. Fairfield, who accepted Dock's explanation in regard to the recovery of the gold.

"I reckon you'll get it yet. But, Squire Fairfield, I expect I shall get off in two or three days now, and I want that money I spoke to you about," added Dock, as they walked towards the road. "I am going to sail for New York first, buy the goods there, and then go to Australia. You are going to make thirty thousand dollars out of me, and you can afford to accommodate me a little. I expect you will get the whole thirty thousand before I sail from New York; I know you will."

Dock talked half of that night to the old man, and finally persuaded him to raise the sum he required. The gold which had been restored to him made up a large portion of it, and the next day he obtained the rest. The emigrant had sold his house, and disposed of his furniture to the buyer, who was to have possession as soon as Dock sailed.

While Mr. Fairfield and his villanous companion were discussing the loan, Mr. Gayles called at Dock's house, after dark, to borrow a lantern, having ascertained that he had recently purchased one at a store in town.

"We haven't any lantern now," replied Mrs. Vincent.

"I thought you had one. Captain Vincent bought one not long ago," added the constable.

"Well, he hasn't any now. I'm sure I don't know what's become of it. It may be he left it on board of the vessel. He never said what had become of it."

Without having proved the fact, Mr. Gayles was satisfied that Dock's lantern was the one broken by the steward when he fell from the loft of the fish-house. The parts he had taken from the ruins corresponded, in size and form, with one which the shopkeeper declared was like that he had sold Dock. The constable worked hard to obtain evidence enough to warrant the arrest of Dock before he sailed for Australia; but Squire Cleaves declared that the lantern was not sufficient.

On the day after Dock obtained the money from Mr. Fairfield, he moved his family on board of the Caribbee, which had already cleared at the custom-house. Mr. Gayles was alarmed lest he should escape, and hastened to Squire Cleaves for advice.

"We must not let him go," said the lawyer. "Where is that colored man, Mr. Ebenier?"

"I saw him at Mr. Watson's house ten minutes ago."

"Bring him to me."

The steward was brought to him, and he was induced to make a charge against Dock of assault and battery. A warrant was obtained, and Mr. Gayles, with a sufficient posse, went to the Caribbee to arrest him. His wife, and a man whose name was not known, but who was said to be a passenger in the schooner, declared that he had gone to New York on business, and the vessel would not sail till his return. Certainly Dock was not on board, and it was ascertained at the depot that he had taken the train for Boston.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MAT MOGMORE.

Mr. Gayles watched the *Caribbee* night and day; but he saw nothing of Dock Vincent. Mr. Fairfield said his neighbor and friend had informed him, several days before, of his intention to go to New York. The constable was forced to believe that the people on board his vessel had told the truth, and he could only wait for his return. Of course the *Caribbee* would not sail on her long voyage without him, and there seemed to be but little danger of losing his man.

The only strange circumstance was, that Dock had sent his family on board of the vessel; but he had not much consideration for his wife and children, and would not scruple to add a week of confinement to the three or four months' duration of the proposed voyage. The man on board, who was said to be a passenger, and was a stranger in Rockport, appeared to take a lively interest in the affairs of the vessel and her owner. It was surmised that, as Dock was not a skilful navigator, he had been employed to furnish the science for the vessel. Neither he nor any one on board professed to know when Dock would return, or when the *Caribbee* would sail.

On Monday evening, when Dock had been gone three days, Levi had taken tea at Mr. Watson's, and was reading the daily paper, which the merchant had brought from Boston.

"That's too bad!" suddenly exclaimed the young skipper, dropping the paper, and looking at Bessie.

"What's too bad, Levi?" she asked.

"There's to be a yacht race in Portland harbor to-morrow, at eleven o'clock, to sail for a silver pitcher."

"I do not see anything wicked in that," laughed Bessie.

"Nor I; but it is wicked that I did not know of it before. I am sure *The Starry Flag* will beat anything of her size this side of New York; and I am provoked to think I did not know of this race sooner, for a silver pitcher would be a very handsome ornament for our cabin."

"Is it too late now?" asked Mr. Watson.

"The race comes off at eleven, to-morrow forenoon, and five yachts have already entered," answered Levi, glancing at the paper again.

"Well, haven't you time to sail down there before the race?"

"If we sail to-night we have time enough. We can get there in ten hours with a good breeze; with a stiff one, in six," replied Levi, beginning to be excited.

"How is the wind now?"

"About west--a six-knot breeze."

"Let us start at once, then. I had as lief sleep on board the yacht as on shore," said Mr. Watson.

"O, do go!" exclaimed Bessie.

"Do go!" repeated Mr. Watson, laughing. "Do you expect to sail in a regatta, Bessie?"

"To be sure I do! I must go, father! I have been longing, ever since we had the yacht, to sail in a real live race."

"But, Bessie, we must make a night run to Portland."

"So much the better! I shall enjoy it above all things. My state-room on board is just as good as my chamber up stairs, and I like it better."

"Your aunt Mary is sick, and cannot go with you," suggested her father, alluding to Mrs. McGilvery.

"But you are going, father," persisted Bessie.

"True, I am; but----"

"Do let me go, father."

"I suppose you must go if you insist upon it."

"I do insist with all my might!" exclaimed Bessie, delighted with the prospect.

"It will take us a couple of hours to get ready," said Levi, as he looked at his watch; "but we can get off by ten o'clock. The only difficulty I can see is, that yachts must be entered on the day before the race;" and he picked up the newspaper again.

"We must get over that somehow," replied Mr. Watson, who seemed to be quite as much interested as Levi and his daughter.

"How? With the best breeze we can expect, we can hardly reach Portland before six in the morning."

"While you are getting the yacht ready, I will ride over to Gloucester, and telegraph to a friend of mine in Portland, who will have The Starry Flag entered to-night."

"That will do it splendidly!" exclaimed Bessie, delighted to have the obstacle removed.

"The cook and steward are on board, but the hands are all at home," said Levi. "I will go and find them."

Mr. Watson rang the bell, and ordered the horse and buggy. Bessie went to her room to prepare for the cruise, and Levi hastened over to Mr. Mogmore's house, where he found Mat, whom he sent to look up the other three hands. The young skipper pulled off to the yacht. The water tanks were examined, and found to contain a week's supply at least. The steward was sent on shore, with directions to bring off the men, and a stock of ice and fresh provisions, after he had put the two state-rooms in order.

By the time Augustus had procured his steak, chops, butter, milk, and ice, the four hands had assembled at the landing-place, in readiness to go on board.

"Hurry up, now!" said the steward. "Captain Fairfield is waiting for us."

"There!" exclaimed Mat Mogmore, "I have forgotten one thing. The captain told me to see Mr. Gayles, and tell him the yacht was going to Portland; and I did not think of it till this minute."

"We can't wait for you," replied the steward, impatiently.

"You needn't wait. I will get some one to put me on board. Go ahead!" And Mat ran up the rocks, and hastened towards Mr. Gayles's house.

But he hurried only a moment, till the darkness concealed his form from his shipmates. Instead of going up to the town, he returned to the landing-place as soon as the boat had left. While he stood on the rocks, the clock struck nine. A few moments later, a boat, containing one man, pulled up to the Point.

"Is it all right?" asked the person in the boat.

"All right," answered Mat Mogmore, as he stepped into the boat. "We have no time to lose; Mr. Watson will return soon."

Mat took one of the oars, and they rowed over to the landing-place, in the rear of Mr. Watson's house. Mat went up to the side door and rang the bell. He was admitted to the entry, and told the servant he wished to see Miss Watson. Bessie, who was now all ready, came down stairs with her travelling bag in her hand.

"Captain Fairfield sent me on shore for you," said Mat.

"Where is my father?" asked Bessie.

"He is on board. He was in a hurry to see the captain, and went on board with the steward. The yacht is all ready to sail now, as soon as you go on board."

It was not exactly like Levi to send one of his hands after her; but the yacht was going off in a hurry, and he must be very busy. It was strange that her father did not come home before he went on board; but perhaps he had learned something more about the race, and was in haste to inform Levi of it. She was only afraid that the trip would be abandoned. Her mother came to the entry, told her to "wrap up warm," be careful not to take cold, and then kissed her with an affectionate adieu. Mat Mogmore led the way down to the boat, and assisted her to a seat in the stern-sheets.

The night was clear; but it was quite dark, and the darkness on the water is deeper, and more dense, to a person

unaccustomed to the sea, than on the land. Bessie was not afraid; but after the boat had gone a few rods from the shore, she had no idea where she was, for the gloom of night breeds confusion in the mind on the sea.

Bessie did not recognize Mat's companion in the boat; but she supposed he was one of the crew of the yacht. He did not speak, and she had no reason to suspect that anything was wrong. Mat Mogmore was well known to her, and had been long before the yacht was built. He was one of Levi's hands, and his presence, if she had had any suspicions, would have been enough to satisfy her.

"How dark it is!" said Bessie to Mat, who pulled the after oar.

"Not very dark, miss," replied Mat. "The stars are out, and we don't call it very dark when we can see them."

"But I cannot see anything, or tell where I am. I can see the lights in the town, but I can't make out anything else."

"Because you are not used to it. Can't you see the yacht right ahead of us?"

"I can see the outline of a vessel, but I couldn't tell whether it was The Starry Flag or a fishing vessel."

"It's the yacht."

Bessie looked around her, and tried to distinguish the headlands, which looked like masses of darkness resting beneath the star-lit sky.

"Now you can see the yacht," said Mat, as the boat approached a vessel which was not unlike the yacht.

"Yes, I see her plain enough now," answered Bessie, taking it for granted.

"It's a very pleasant night to sail," added Mat, as the boat ran up alongside the vessel.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Bessie, as she looked up to the stars.

The boat was brought up to the gangway; the man at the bow oar stepped out and assisted her on board. Mat Mogmore did not follow her, but pushed off the boat, and pulled away into the darkness. It still wanted more than half an hour of the time appointed for the sailing of the yacht. Mat pulled a short distance from the vessel, and then lay upon his oars. He waited there fifteen minutes, either to kill the time or to arrange his plans, and then ran up alongside the yacht.

He had put Bessie on board of the Caribbee!

He was actually in the employ of Dock Vincent.

Mat stepped on the deck of The Starry Flag, whose foresail and mainsail had been hoisted, and her anchor hove short. The lamps in the cabin and state-rooms were lighted, and the steward was as busy as a bee, and delighted at the thought of once more having the beautiful young lady on board; for it was a joy to serve her, her smile was so sweet, her voice so pleasant, and her heart so full of kindness.

"Where are you, Mat?" demanded Levi, as the treacherous seaman came on board.

"My mother has just had a fit, and they say she will not live till morning," replied Mat, in the most disconsolate of tones. "I shouldn't have come on board at all if Mr. Watson hadn't sent me with a message to you."

"What was the message?" asked Levi, tenderly, for he was full of pity for Mat.

"He told me to tell you that he and Miss Bessie would meet you in Portland on your arrival. Her mother made such a fuss about her going off in the night without her aunt, that her father decided to take the cars, for he heard in Gloucester that an excursion train would come along about twelve o'clock."

"Very well," said Levi. "I will go on shore with you and see about it. I hope your mother will get better."

"I hope so. Mr. Watson started right off in the buggy with Bessie."

"Has he gone?"

"Yes, he went right off. He was in a hurry, for he has to drive to Beverly to catch the train. You won't see him if you go on shore."

"Then I think I will not go; but I will not keep you a moment," added Levi.

"If you want another hand in my place, I can get Tom Sampson."

"We can get along very well without any more help," replied Levi, as Mat pushed off.

Levi was vexed that Mrs. Watson's timidity had deprived him of Bessie's company; but it was like her, and on their trip to the eastward, he had been obliged to be in port every night to please her. However, he would receive his passengers on board at Portland the next morning; and, in a few minutes more, the yacht tripped her anchor, and sailed out of the bay.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CARIBBEE.

Bessie Watson stood upon the deck of the Caribbee, and in the darkness of the night she did not at first discover that the vessel was not The Starry Flag. She wondered that Levi, with his accustomed devotion, did not spring to receive her when she came on board; that the steward did not present his smiling face; and that her ever-anxious father failed to assure himself that she did not fall overboard in passing from the boat to the vessel. She was an only daughter, and when she appeared it was customary to "turn out the guard" and pay all the honors.

To say that Bessie Watson was a pretty girl, is saying very little. She was a good girl--and this is saying something more, and something better. Nothing but a true heart and excellent common sense saved her from being spoiled by the indulgence of her father and mother. Another devotee was added to those who adored her; but she refused to be spoiled even by Levi's flattery, if such it could be called; for the young skipper was as sincere in his admiration of her as of the yacht he commanded. Bessie did not pout or flout when neither Levi nor her father appeared to receive her.

The man who had been in the boat with Mat Mogmore was Captain Gauley, the stranger. After handing Bessie on board, he led the way, in silence, towards the cabin. There were no lights on deck, and she could see no difference between the two vessels, even when she had descended the steps into the cabin; for no light appeared there. The darkness had been chosen to help the illusion, and Bessie had to feel her way. She came to the table in the middle of the cabin, and knowing that there were lockers forming seats below the berths, she groped her way to the side of the apartment, and seated herself.

"All hands are busy forward in getting under way," said her conductor, from the steps.

"Where is the steward?" asked Bessie.

"He has been so hurried putting away his stores that he has not been in the cabin."

"Are you a new hand?" asked Bessie, who did not recognize the voice of the man.

"I am; I am only going this trip."

"Send the steward, if you please, to light the lamps," added Bessie, who was reasonable enough to understand that the yacht was going to sea on short notice, and she did not demand any unnecessary attention under the circumstances.

"I will send him right down if I can find him."

Captain Gauley went on deck; and Bessie heard a great rattling of ropes, a swaying of booms, and hasty footsteps above her. She could not see a thing; but she waited in the gloom for the steward to come and light the lamps. The noise on deck indicated that all hands were busy, as the man had said; and even yet she suspected nothing.

Mat Mogmore did not go on shore to see his sick mother. He heard the order of Captain Fairfield to man the windlass and stand by the head sails; then he pulled for the Caribbee, to which his boat belonged. Everything had worked to his entire satisfaction. Levi had been as credulous as he desired him to be, and The Starry Flag was standing out of the bay on her way to Portland.

"How is it?" asked Captain Gauley, in a low tone, as Mat came on deck.

"All right; the yacht is under way," replied Mat.

"We must get off at once, then."

"Don't be in a hurry; wait till the Flag has made a couple of miles, so that Levi won't notice the movements of this vessel. Where is the girl?"

"In the cabin. It is pitch dark there, and she has not found out where she is yet," answered Gauley, with a suppressed chuckle, as though the plan was not only a success, but a capital joke.

The foresail and the mainsail of the Caribbee were hoisted, and her crew were busy in getting up the anchor. By the time the preparations were completed, the yacht had disappeared in the darkness and the distance. The jib was hoisted,

and the vessel stood out of the bay in a direction nearly opposite to that taken by the yacht.

Bessie began to be impatient. The yacht was under way, and still the steward did not come; still her father, who had nothing to do with working the vessel, did not make his appearance. Had they forgotten that she was on board? If they had, it would be the most remarkable thing that ever occurred. She could not understand it. She knew, as the vessel was now sailing, that Levi must be at the helm, just at the head of the stairs, and she decided to go up and speak to him. She could see the stars through the opening of the companion-way, and she had no difficulty in finding her way out of the cabin.

"Levi?" said she, as she stepped upon deck.

"He is not here," replied Captain Gauley, who was at the helm.

"Where is he?" asked Bessie; and, without knowing that anything was wrong, things began to look a little strange to her, or rather to feel so, for she could not see anything.

"I really don't know where he is, just now," replied the helmsman. "But he cannot be far off."

"The steward has not lighted the cabin yet," added she.

"The captain told the steward not to do so."

"Did he--why?"

"I think you cannot be accustomed to sailing near the land at night," added Captain Gauley.

"I really am not."

"The light would blind the helmsman's eyes so that he could not see the shore. As soon as we are clear of the Selvages we shall light up."

Bessie was satisfied with this explanation. On board of a Sound steamer she had observed that the windows in the forward part of the saloon were covered with thick canvas at night, so that the glare of the light near the boat should not deepen the gloom beyond it, and thus prevent the pilot from seeing the land, or other vessels in the distance. But she was not satisfied with her situation otherwise. The vessel did not *feel* like the yacht, and Levi and her father did not appear.

While she stood watching the helmsman, and trying to comprehend the inexplicable position of affairs, she saw a light in the cabin. She looked down, and perceived a woman in the act of lighting a lamp.

"Don't light that lamp!" shouted the man at the helm. "It blinds my eyes so that I can't see to steer."

The woman extinguished the match she was applying to the lamp, and darkness reigned in the cabin again. Who was the woman? She asked the helmsman.

"Your father thought you ought to have a female waiter, and he has obtained one," replied Captain Gauley; but she did not notice the chuckle with which he spoke.

Bessie knew that her father would not have provided a woman without consulting her, and she determined to inquire into the situation. She went down the cabin steps again, guided by faith, rather than sight, and felt her way to the locker where she had before been seated.

"Who is it?" asked the woman, from her place at the forward part of the cabin.

"It is I," replied Bessie. "Did my father employ you as stewardess of the yacht?"

"I guess not," replied the woman. "I'm not anybody's stewardess, I can tell you!"

"Who are you then?" asked Bessie, now really alarmed.

"Well, I'm Mrs. Vincent, of course. This is my husband's vessel, and I never expect to be a servant to anybody," answered the woman, rather indignant at being thought a stewardess, even in the dark. "Now, who are you?"

"I am Miss Watson," replied Bessie, her heart sinking within her, so that she could hardly utter the words.

"Miss Watson! Bless me! What, Mr. Watson's daughter?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is strange, sure enough!"

"Is Captain Dock Vincent your husband?" asked Bessie, almost choked with terror.

"Certainly he is."

"And this vessel is not The Starry Flag?"

"Why, no; it's the Caribbee. How on earth came you here?"

"I supposed it was the yacht--my father's yacht," gasped the poor girl, overwhelmed when she realized that she had fallen into a snare set by her former enemy.

"That's too bad; but I didn't know nothing at all about it. Waldock"--she called her husband by his full given name--
"Waldock is up to some awful trick."

It was a consolation to know that the woman was not a party to her husband's wicked scheme. Bessie explained how she had been entrapped; but Mrs. Vincent declared that she did not even know the vessel was to sail that night. She had retired with her two children at nine o'clock, and got up when she felt the motion of the vessel under way.

"Where is she going?" asked Bessie, wiping away the tears that dimmed her eyes.

"We are all going to Australia."

"Where is your husband?" demanded Bessie, with a shudder.

"I'm sure I don't know. He went off to New York; but of course we are not going to Australia without him."

While they were talking, Mat Mogmore came into the cabin, and lighted a lamp.

"Mat, what does all this mean?" said Mrs. Vincent, sharply.

"We have carried the thing out just as Captain Vincent told us to do," replied Mat.

"What did he tell you to do?"

"He left us to get Miss Watson on board. We haven't had a chance to do so before, though we have been watching three or four days for one."

"Why did you wish to get me on board?" inquired Bessie, trembling in every fibre of her frame.

"O, you needn't be frightened, Miss Watson. You are not to be hurt, and you are to be treated as well as if you were on board of the yacht. Three years ago your father and Levi sent Captain Vincent to the state prison. He didn't forget it, and he is going to carry out the plan he began upon then."

"Am I to be carried to Australia?" asked Bessie.

"That depends on your father. If he pays the money Captain Vincent asks, we shall send you back. Your father and Levi served the captain a mean trick, and he always said he would get even with them; and I think he will now."

"But how came you in this vessel, Mat?" asked Bessie.

"I went into the yacht for the sole purpose of doing the little job I finished up to-night," answered Mat, with a sneaking smile.

"O, what a wretch!" exclaimed Bessie.

"A wretch? Well, perhaps I am; but it pays better than going before the mast in the yacht. Captain Vincent has your father this time where he can hold him," added Mat. "Levi has gone off to Portland to sail in the race, and he can't do anything for you this time. If you have a mind to write to your father, and tell him to come down with the rocks, I will see that he gets the letter within a week or so. He must put down about a hundred thousand dollars this time."

"Poor girl!" ejaculated Mrs. Vincent. "I pity you; but my husband is an awful man, and I can't do anything about it."

"We haven't anything against her," said Mat. "She is to have a state-room by herself, and live like a lady. That's the captain's orders. The matter rests there, and it isn't any use to say anything more about it."

Mat went on deck, leaving Bessie to weep over her unhappy fate, with no one but Mrs. Vincent to comfort her.

CHAPTER XX.

DOCK VINCENT'S LETTER.

Mr. Watson drove to Gloucester; but at this hour in the evening he had some difficulty in finding the telegraphic operator, and it was fully ten o'clock before he returned to his house in Rockport, ready to go on board of the yacht.

"Why, I thought you had gone!" exclaimed Mrs. Watson, when her husband presented himself.

"No; I was detained in Gloucester. Where is Bessie."

"Bessie has gone on board of the yacht. Mat Mogmore came for her, and said you had gone off in the steward's boat."

"There is some mistake about it," replied Mr. Watson; but he had no idea of the stupendous mistake which had been made.

He went out to the pier; but, having no boat, he hastened over to the Point to obtain a skiff, though he could not see why a boat from The Starry Flag was not waiting for him. All was still on the Point; but he found a dory, in which he pulled off to the place where the yacht usually lay when in port. He could not find her. It was evident that she had sailed; and it was more certain than before that a great mistake had been made. He returned to the Point. Mr. Gayles was there. He had come down to assure himself that the Caribbee had not stolen a march upon him. He could not see her in the gloom of the night. He recognized Mr. Watson, as he landed from the dory.

"Did you see the Caribbee?" asked the constable.

"No; did you see the yacht?" demanded the anxious father.

"I did not."

Mr. Watson stated the circumstances; but the officer could neither assist nor enlighten him.

The Starry Flag was miles away to the north-north-east, and the Caribbee was miles away to the south-south-east.

Levi had gone, Bessie had gone, the Caribbee had gone. Mr. Watson wanted to know why Levi had gone without him; but there was no one to tell him. He did not suspect that Bessie had not gone with him. Mr. Gayles wanted to know why the Caribbee had sailed without Dock Vincent; but there was no one to tell him. Standing on the Point, both were vexed and perplexed; but neither could help himself, and neither could solve the mystery. Both went home.

Mrs. Watson was alarmed when her husband told her that the yacht had gone without him. It was a fact--as Mat Mogmore had stated--that an excursion train left Boston at eleven o'clock for Portland. Many of the people of Rockport had gone to the city to hear a great singer, and were to return in this train. Levi knew of it, or he might have doubted Mat's story. Mr. Watson was a man of action. He ordered his fastest horse to be brought to the door; and he drove, at a furious pace, to Ipswich, which was a little nearer than Beverly, and the train would arrive there half an hour later. At five o'clock in the morning he was in Portland. He chartered a large sail-boat, and stood down the harbor. At seven o'clock he discovered The Starry Flag, off Cape Elizabeth.

Mr. Watson was angry because Levi had left him behind; angry because Levi had taken Bessie and not taken him. Though an unpleasant word had never before passed between them, the father--whose ideas of propriety were very clearly defined--determined that some emphatic words should be used on the present occasion. He paid his boatman, when the yacht had been hailed, and in due time was transferred to her.

"Where is Bessie?" asked Levi, before her father had time to utter a single sharp word.

The emphatic words were never spoken.

"Where *is* she?" repeated Mr. Watson. "Isn't she on board of the yacht?"

"No, sir," replied Levi, now alarmed, as her father was.

"Not here?"

"Certainly not. Didn't she come by railroad with you?"

"No; I haven't seen her since I started for Gloucester last night."

Levi almost sank upon the deck, and Mr. Watson's strength was all taken from him by the discovery that some mishap had befallen his daughter. Levi explained when he had breath enough to do so. Mr. Watson also explained, and each was in possession of all the information the other had; but their wisdom was foolishness, since it fell far short of the requirements of the moment.

"The Caribbee sailed last night, Levi," said Mr. Watson, who, however, did not regard the fact as of much importance, or as having any especial connection with the absence of Bessie.

"Sailed!" exclaimed Levi. "Then Bessie has sailed in her."

"I can hardly believe it," added Mr. Watson.

"It is another plan to extort money from you."

Levi persisted in his belief. Putting this and that together, he could almost demonstrate that Mat Mogmore was in the employ of Dock Vincent; indeed, Dock had told him that Mat intended to sail for Australia with him. Mr. Watson decided to return immediately to Rockport, and the yacht lay to off the railroad wharf long enough to land him. He took the morning train for Boston, and reached home at two o'clock.

The Starry Flag did not sail in the race that day. As soon as her owner had been landed, she was headed for Cape Ann again, and arrived before night. Levi was bewildered and confounded by the shock of the blow which had fallen upon him and the Watson family. He could do nothing, and in his inactivity he chafed like a caged lion. Mr. Watson had gone to Boston soon after his arrival, taking Mr. Gayles with him. He did not return till the next day. He had chartered a swift steamer, and the constable, with other officers, had gone in pursuit of the Caribbee.

In the morning mail, on the second day after the disappearance of Bessie, came a letter to her father. Levi was present when it was opened, and it contained a full confirmation of his theory that Bessie had been carried off in the Caribbee, and was now going half round the world to Australia. The letter was written by Dock Vincent, and dated ten days before its receipt. The villain assured the distracted parents that Bessie should be kindly cared for by Mrs. Vincent, and should be restored to her friends as soon as possible after her father had paid over to Mr. Fairfield the sum of seventy thousand dollars.

Mr. Watson dropped the letter on the floor, and breathed a deep sigh. He would have given double the sum for the return of Bessie; but his conscience would not permit him to reward villainy like that of Dock Vincent.

"Levi, your uncle is concerned in this affair," said Mr. Watson, turning to the young skipper with a sad look.

"I suppose he is. I will go and see him at once."

"I will go with you."

They went.

"Mr. Fairfield, where is Dock Vincent?" asked the suffering father, when he and Levi had been admitted to the kitchen.

"I don't know no more'n nothin' in the world," whined the miser. "I hain't seen nothin' on him."

"You don't know!" repeated Mr. Watson, sternly.

"No more'n nothin' in the world," answered the old man, who realized that the first instalment of trouble on account of Dock's little plan was about to come upon him.

"Yes, you do know where he is. Read that letter;" and the merchant handed him the epistle he had received from Dock.

Mr. Fairfield took the letter, put on his glasses, and studied out its contents.

"I don't know nothin' about it," pleaded the old man, as he looked over his spectacles at the stern parent.

"Don't tell me that! I'm not to be trifled with. I want my daughter, and you are a party to this conspiracy. If you don't speak I'll wring an answer out of you by force," said Mr. Watson, his patience exhausted, and his indignation so aroused that he could not control it.



MR. WATSON IS EXCITED.—PAGE 227.

"I tell you I don't know nothin' at all about it. I hain't seen your darter, nor Cap'n Vincent nuther," whimpered the miser.

"No evasion! Answer me at once," thundered the enraged merchant, goaded to desperation by the anguish his injury called forth. "Your name is mentioned in this letter. You are to receive the money, and share it with the scoundrel who intends to filch it from me. Vincent did not go in the vessel. Where is he?"

"I don't know nothin' at all about it," answered Mr. Fairfield, wriggling like a worm in his chair.

"Yes, you do. You are to send the money to him. Where is he?" demanded Mr. Watson, as he seized the old man by the throat, and dragged him out of his chair.

"Lem me be!" sputtered the miser, trying to free himself from the grasp of the wrathful father.

"Speak, old man! Where is he? Speak, or I will tear the answer from you."

"Be calm, Mr. Watson," interposed Levi, gently.

"For massy's sake! You don't mean to kill him—do you?" exclaimed Mrs. Fairfield, alarmed for the safety of her husband. "Don't hurt him! He's a poor old man, and don't know no better."

Mr. Watson, conscious that he had gone too far in his violent indignation, released his grasp upon the miser, and he sank back into his chair more frightened than hurt.

"If I knew anything consamin' this business, I'd tell you all about it," added the old man, when he had regained his breath.

"Uncle Nathan, this money is to be paid over to you, and you must know something about it," said Levi, decidedly.

"O, yes; you hate me, and you want to persecute me," replied the old man, bitterly, as he glanced spitefully at his nephew. "There, now, you broke my glasses," continued the miser, as he picked them up from the hearth, on which they had fallen. "I gin a dollar for them glasses; I'm a poor man, and 'tain't right I should lose 'em."

"Will you tell me where Vincent is, or shall I send a constable to arrest you for conspiracy?" demanded Mr. Watson.

"I don't know nothin' at all where he is," replied the miser, alarmed by this threat.

"You were to receive this money."

"That may be. Cap'n Vincent did tell me if you paid any money to me for him to keep it till he come for't. He didn't tell me nothin' at all he was go'n' to do, nor where he was goin' to. I hain't no idee in the world where he is."

This was all that either Mr. Watson or Levi could get out of the old man. It was really all he knew; and the visitors, disappointed and disheartened, retired from the miser's presence, though not till the merchant had declared that he did not intend to pay one penny to Dock to restore his daughter. The old man groaned when they had gone; but it was because he was to lose his reward, and probably the money he had loaned. It was a bitter hour to him.

Mr. Watson and Levi conferred together as they walked home. From that time no one passed in or out of the miser's house without being observed. Levi watched that day; but at nine o'clock in the evening, Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier took his place, to serve for the night.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CARIBBEE SAILS FOR AUSTRALIA.

If Mrs. Dock Vincent had not been a person of higher moral purposes than her husband, sad indeed would have been the lot of the two children that slept in the captain's state-room on board of the *Caribbee*. As is often the case, she knew less of her husband's moral obliquity than the world at large, though even she knew enough to believe that he was not what he should be. People did not tell her of Dock's wicked deeds, and he complained bitterly to her of the hard treatment which the world bestowed upon him. That good men frowned at him and spurned him he unjustly attributed to their hypocrisy and self-esteem, rather than to his own evil deeds and evil intentions.

Dock had spent a term in the state prison, and his character was damaged, if not ruined. Men would not trust him, and the reprobate chafed under the public censure. To his wife and his friends he made himself appear like a deeply injured person, like a martyr--in what good cause he could not say. He was going to Australia to begin life anew, to carve out his fortune in a strange land, where he was not known. Mrs. Vincent was willing to leave her native land, and make a new home in a distant country for this purpose, for the motive seemed to be a laudable one.

She had no knowledge, guilty or innocent, of the abduction of Bessie, until after the *Caribbee* had sailed; but she felt herself powerless to undo the mischief. If her husband had been on board, she would not have dared to oppose him, he was so violent and savage when she interfered with his plans. She could at least protect the poor girl from insult and injury, and she determined to do this at all hazards. It was evident to her that the *Caribbee* would not proceed immediately to her destination without her owner and captain. It was probably the intention of Captain Gauley to put into some port before she started on her long voyage, when Dock would join her.

Mrs. Vincent pitied Bessie Watson, and almost hated her husband when she realized of what infamy he was capable. She comforted the poor girl as well as she was able, and promised to be her friend under all circumstances. She conducted her to an unoccupied state-room, which had doubtless been reserved for her use, and spent half the night with her; for Bessie trembled at the thought of being alone on board of the vessel of her great enemy.

Bessie was truly grateful to Mrs. Vincent, who, though rough and rude in her manners, was kind at heart; and her presence was a great comfort. The poor girl, torn thus suddenly from her friends, wept long and bitterly at her sad fate; but at last she fell asleep, committing herself to the care of the heavenly Father, and relying upon him for the succor which he alone could give. No one disturbed her; and Mrs. Vincent watched over her, as a child, till she was fast asleep.

When she awoke, late in the morning, she heard the voices of children in the cabin, and it was hard to realize that she was the victim of Dock Vincent's villany. She was kindly greeted by Mrs. Vincent, and the children stared at her as though she had come up from the depths of the ocean. She soon made friends with the boy of eight and the girl of ten, who were included in the family of her persecutor. After breakfast she went on deck with them, and learned that the vessel was off Cape Cod. Captain Gauley was very civil to her; but she did not allude to the events of the previous evening. He was a bad man, and she could hardly help shuddering in his presence.

All day long she played with the children, and short as she made the hours to them, they were very long to her. She was so gentle, and kind, and unselfish, even in her woe, that the little ones loved her, and would hardly leave her for a moment. She was certainly comforted by their presence, and her endeavors to assure them lightened the moments of the long day. The kindness of Mrs. Vincent did much to assure her; she was satisfied that nothing worse than a long separation from her parents was likely to happen to her. Feeling that it was useless to repine at her condition, or to weep over what she could not avoid, she resolved to make the best of it. There was no real hardship in her situation, and the circumstances were certainly more agreeable than when she had before been an involuntary passenger in Dock's vessel. The absence of the villain himself was perhaps her greatest consolation; but the presence of Mrs. Vincent and the children was a real comfort.

In the evening Bessie and Dock's wife talked the matter over again in her state-room. Mrs. Vincent roundly and unequivocally condemned the conduct of her husband. She had discovered that the *Caribbee* was now headed to the west, and it was plain to her that she was not yet on her way to Australia. Dock had told her he was going to New York, and it was possible that he intended to join them there. She told Bessie that she might be able to leave the vessel when she reached her destined port. The poor girl became more reconciled to her situation only because it was no worse, rather than because it was not bad enough. She slept well that night.

The next day she played with the children, read to them, and dressed the girl's doll in the latest fashion. In the evening, after Bessie had retired, the *Caribbee* ran by Sandy Hook, and made a harbor near Amboy, where she came to anchor. She was moored a mile from the shore, and no other vessel was near her. Captain Gauley had carried out the plans of Dock to the letter. He had been a steamboat pilot in these waters, and was quite familiar with the navigation. Dock had made his acquaintance while he was acting as mate of a boat, and the mate and the pilot were congenial spirits.

When Bessie went on deck with the children in the morning, Captain Gauley told her, if she wished to write to her father, her letter should be forwarded, as he was going on shore during the forenoon. She was glad to assure her parents of her safety, and she wrote a long letter, describing her capture and her situation on board of the *Caribbee*. She stated the facts as they were. Dock's agent was writing at the same time in the cabin; and when she was about to fold her sheet, he wished to see it. He read it through, tore off the heading, "Near New York," and the date, and then suggested that she had better ask her father to pay the money required for her release.

"My father must do as he thinks best about that," replied Bessie, decidedly.

"You don't understand your situation, I see," added the captain. "It is impossible for you to escape from the vessel, and if your father does not pay the money, you will go to Australia with us."

"My father will do what is best," repeated Bessie.

"Very well," added Captain Gauley, sourly. "If your father is not wiser than you are, you may spend the rest of your days in Australia."

Bessie made no reply, but folded and directed her letter. It was plain now that Dock was to levy his contribution on Mr. Watson before he came on board. This out-of-the-way place had been selected, where no one would be likely to hear of her, for the vessel to remain until Dock could obtain his money. Captain Gauley went off in a boat, with one man, leaving the schooner in charge of Mat Mogmore. He did not return till night; but Bessie, though she considered various plans to escape from the vessel, was satisfied that nothing could be done, for Mat watched her all the time. Her only hope was, that she might induce one of the sailors to assist her by promising him a large sum of money; but her vigilant guardian would not permit her to speak to any man on board. If one of the seamen came aft, he was ordered forward; and Bessie's hope faded away.

The *Caribbee* remained for ten days in the vicinity of Sandy Hook, changing her anchorage several times. Every day, either Mat Mogmore or Captain Gauley went on shore, evidently expecting to see Dock, or to hear from him. Bessie watched in vain for an opportunity to make a friend of one of the sailors, or to hail a passing boat; but so carefully was she guarded, that all hope in this direction was cut off. She began to wish that her father would pay the money, for this seemed to be her only chance of escape. Dock's non-appearance indicated that his little plan was not working as well as he had expected, and Mrs. Vincent and Bessie saw that Captain Gauley and Mat were becoming very anxious.

On the tenth day after the arrival of the *Caribbee*, Mat Mogmore, who had been on shore, returned with a letter, directed, in a strange hand, to Captain Gauley. He opened it in the cabin. It contained but a few lines, which he read and then hastened upon deck, leaving the letter on the table. The rattling of ropes and the flapping of sails were immediately heard; and it was plain to Bessie that the vessel was getting under way.

"I wonder what is to be done now," said Mrs. Vincent, coming out of her state-room.

"I don't know. Captain Gauley read the letter which lies on the table, and then hurried on deck," replied Bessie.

"A letter!" exclaimed Mrs. Vincent, who was continually on the lookout for news; for she was hardly less a prisoner than Bessie.

She took it from the table, and without hesitation opened it.

"It is from my husband," said she, glancing at the signature. "Things are going wrong with me, and you will sail for Australia without me," she read, "the moment you get this letter. Keep things as before, and *do not let any one leave the vessel*. If you don't do this, my only chance is lost. Be careful, for they are after you. I shall get the money, and go to Australia by steamer from England, and shall probably be there before you."

"Then we are actually starting for Australia!" exclaimed Bessie, with a deep sigh.

"I suppose so."

Bessie went into her state-room and wept bitterly, as all hope deserted her. She cried, and she prayed, and then endeavored to reconcile herself anew to her situation. The sails were hoisted, and the *Caribbee* was standing out to sea.

Captain Gauley was at the helm, and Mat Mogmore was at his side, talking with him about the prospect.

"If he wrote a letter at all, he ought to have told us all about it," said Mat, disappointed at the meagreness of the news from Dock.

"He says things are going against him."

"And he says they are after us; but he don't say who, nor what," added Mat. "I would like to know what has gone wrong, and who is after us."

"Do you see that schooner on the weather bow?" said Captain Gauley, pointing to a trim-looking craft. "She has an eye on us, and we must give her a wide berth. She came about just now, and is running across our fore-foot."

"That's the yacht, as true as I live!" exclaimed Mat, when he discovered her.

"What yacht?"

"The Starry Flag!"

She had been standing off and on between Sandy Hook and Coney Island for twenty-four hours, on the lookout for the Caribbee.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TRAVELLER WHO LOST HIS WAY.

The steward of the yacht watched the house of Mr. Fairfield all night; but no one entered or left it. Levi took his turn the next day again; and, when he proposed to employ a fresh hand for the second night, Augustus insisted upon serving, himself. He had slept enough during the day, and he wanted the satisfaction of capturing Dock, if he presented himself.

This time he was in luck, as he declared, for about one o'clock at night, when the town was as still as though it contained not a single living inhabitant, the villain came to obtain his money, probably not doubting that by this time it had been paid to his agent.

The steward had stationed himself in such a position that no one could approach the house unseen by him. Just after the clock on one of the churches had struck one, he heard footsteps on the road, and presently a man stopped in front of the miser's house. Contrary to the usual custom of rogues and villains, he went up to the front door, and knocked vigorously. The heart of the watcher leaped with expectation, and he crept like a cat on the grass till he had obtained a position behind a lilac bush, near the front door. The first summons of the unseasonable visitor did not procure a response from within, and the man knocked again.

Though the vigilant sentinel did not recognize his cowardly enemy, he had no doubt it was he. The form was about the height of Dock, but appeared to be better dressed than when he had seen the ruffian. Who else should go to the house of the miser at that unseemly hour?

"Who's there?" called Mr. Fairfield, with his impatient whine, as he threw open one of the windows of his chamber.

"I've got lost, and I want some one to show me the way to Gloucester," replied the visitor, in a tone so different from the voice of Dock that Augustus did not recognize it, and began to fear that the villain was not within his reach, as he had confidently believed.

"Got lost--have you? Well, take the right hand road out by the school-us," added the miser, not so sourly as most people would have spoken when roused from their sleep to direct a night traveller.

"There are two or three roads there, and I can't afford to go much out of my way. Come out and show me, and I'll pay you for your trouble."

This was quite enough for the miser, and he promised to come. The caller stepped out into the road, and Augustus crouched down under the lilac bushes to escape observation. In a few moments Mr. Fairfield appeared, muffled up in a ragged overcoat.

"Well, Squire Fairfield, what's the news?" demanded the visitor, when the old man joined him.

If the steward had any doubts before, he had none now. It was Dock Vincent beyond a peradventure, and his voice sounded as natural as on former occasions. It was plain that the bewildered traveller was a myth for the benefit of Mrs. Fairfield, who, being "women folks," and not understanding business, was not permitted to share the heavy secrets of her husband, especially on the present momentous occasion.

"There ain't nothin' at all for news," replied the old man, as he glanced at the house, as if to assure himself that his wife was not watching him.

"No news?" exclaimed Dock. "Hasn't Watson come done with the money yet?"

"No; nor that ain't the wust on't, nuther. I don't believe he will."

"O, yes, he will!" replied Dock, confidently. "I've got things fixed this time so that he can't help planking down the money. He'll be glad to pay it, I can tell you."

"What have you done with the gal, cap'n?"

"We've got her; and Watson never'll see her again unless he pays the money--that's so."

"But he won't pay it; and I ain't go'n' to git my share on't at all," whined the miser.

"Yes, you will; don't be alarmed, Squire Fairfield."

"They've sent a steamer off arter the vessel."

"Have they, though?"

"Yes, they have; and Gayles has gone in her."

"All right; the steamer'll cost some money, and won't do any good. She'll come back without the girl. My vessel isn't a great ways from New York, and when I say the word she'll start, whether I go in her or not. I tell you, Mr. Watson will be glad to pay the money before many days. He don't understand the matter yet. I'll come again in two or three days; and I reckon you'll have the money next time I come."

"Where are you stoppin' now?" asked Mr. Fairfield.

"Nowhere in these parts; but I'll be here in two or three days."

"But Watson won't pay that money, no more'n nothin' in the world."

"Yes, he will. He can't help doing it, if he wants his daughter again. Where's Levi now?"

"He's round here; but what am I go'n' to do for what you owe me, if Watson don't pay the money?" asked the old man, anxiously.

"I'll pay it all just as I agreed to do. Now go to bed again, Squire Fairfield, or your wife will be out looking for you."

"But I want to know sunthin more about this business."

"You mustn't know any more than you do. I didn't mean you should know anything about it. I never told you anything. When you get the money, you hold on to it till I come. I don't know as it's quite safe for me to come here again, even in the night. I guess we'll fix it some other way."

Dock did "fix it some other way"--it is of no consequence how.

"After I get this money, and get all ready to start, I'm going to settle up matters with Levi and that nigger before I go. I expect I shall kill that nigger if I ever see him again."

"Shall you? Then now's your time!" yelled Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier, as he sprang from his covert, and rushed upon his enemy.

Dock Vincent was startled, as a braver man than he might have been under such circumstances; but the steward did not permit him to recover his self-possession. With an oak stick he carried in his hand, he dealt a heavy blow upon the head of the villain. But his cranium seemed to be made of more solid material than his African assailant's, for he attempted to rise, when the steward repeated the stroke so effectually that he lay still on the ground.

"Don't! Don't!" pleaded Mr. Fairfield, terrified by the tragic event. "Don't tech him agin. Let him be."

But Dock was not deprived of his consciousness even by the severe blows he had received, and again he attempted to rise.

"Lay still! If you don't there'll be a dead man not far from here," said the steward, as he took his revolver from his pocket.

Dock saw it, and dared not move.

"Don't tech him no more. Let him go now."

"Not if I know it! Allow me to insinuate, in the most direct manner possible, that this man is my prisoner; and if he don't spend the rest of his days in the state prison, it will be an outrage upon humanity," added the steward.

"Don't tech him no more. Let him go. I'll give you twenty-five cents if you will," whined the miser, who had to open his heart very wide to make this liberal offer.

"He is going to jail, if there is such an institution in these parts," replied Augustus.

"I'll give you fifty cents if you'll let him go," pleaded Mr. Fairfield.

"If you would give me fifty thousand dollars, I wouldn't let him go," replied the steward. "Do you think I would sell my own soul for money?"

Augustus, with the revolver in his right hand, felt in all the pockets of his prostrate enemy for dangerous weapons, but he found none.

"Now get up," said he.

Dock obeyed, in momentary fear that one of the pistol balls would be spinning through his head.

"Do you know where Mr. Watson's house is?" continued he.

"I do," replied Dock.

"Then march; and if you turn to the right or the left, or attempt any irregular proceeding, I promise you, on the honor of Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier, that I will give you the benefit of every bullet this pistol contains, six in number, by actual count. Forward!"

Dock marched in the direction indicated; he could not help doing so, bitter as the necessity was. Mr. Fairfield followed, begging and pleading with all his eloquence, and even offering as high as a dollar for the release of his friend.

"Old man, return to your humble abode, and give up your weary frame to the arms of Morpheus," said Augustus, when his patience was exhausted. "In other words, venerable sir, go home, and go to bed."

The miser was terribly stricken by the sudden misfortune of Dock; not from sympathy, but because it foreboded the loss of the money the prisoner owed him. It is possible that he had some fear of being compromised before the courts. If he had, it was overborne by the greater dread of losing his money. He could not willingly return; and it was only when the steward threatened him with the terrible pistol that he did so.

Augustus walked about six feet behind his victim till he came to Mr. Watson's house, and then directed him to go up to the side door.

"Ring the bell!" said the steward, in the stern tones of command.

"See here, steward, can't we arrange this thing," replied Dock, turning to his remorseless captor.

"Ring the bell! We'll arrange it in the court."

Dock rang the bell. Little did the father and mother of Bessie sleep while she was away from them, and they heard the bell the first time it was rung.

"Who's there?" called Mr. Watson from a second-story window.

"Augustus, sir," replied the steward, in the mildest of tones. "There's a gentleman here to see you, sir."

"I will be down in a moment;" and presently a light appeared in the dining-room.

"Walk in," said Mr. Watson, opening the door.

"Walk in!" repeated Augustus, in stern tones.

Dock followed the merchant into the dining-room, closely attended by his guard.

"Vincent!" exclaimed Mr. Watson, when he turned to see who his midnight visitor was.

"Yes, sir," replied the steward. "You will pardon me for bringing him here, sir; but I did not know what else to do with him."

"Vincent, where is my daughter?" demanded the merchant, earnestly.

"She is on her way to Australia," replied Dock, who was now beginning to recover his self-possession, and to measure the consequences of his misfortune.

"I beg to suggest, Mr. Watson, that his reply is a wretched falsehood," interposed the steward. "I heard him tell Mr. Fairfield that his vessel wasn't a great ways from New York."

"In the latitude of New York, I meant merely. Mr. Watson, this man is making a mess of it for you. I made my demand of you by letter. Give me the money, and your daughter shall be restored. If you don't, you will never see her again, whatever may happen to me," said Dock.

"Not a dollar! Not a penny!" replied Mr. Watson, with emphasis.

"Very well, Mr. Watson. You will discover your mistake soon enough," added Dock.

"We want an officer and a pair of handcuffs," said Mr. Watson. "Can you keep him while I procure assistance?"

"I can," answered Augustus, confidently, as he displayed his pistol.

Mr. Watson called his two men, and sent one of them for Constable Cooke, who was the only officer available at that hour of the night. He came, and the villain was ired. The constable and the steward kept guard over him till morning.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OFF SANDYHOOK.

Levi did not learn that the great enemy had been captured till he went up in the morning to relieve the steward; but the news was spreading rapidly, and it came to his ear before he reached his station. He hastened to the house of Mr. Watson, where Constable Cooke and the steward still kept vigil over the fallen foe. The officer evidently did not relish his employment; but Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier had proved that he was a first-class tiger, as well as an exquisite of the first water.

Mr. Watson had another interview with the wretch as soon as Levi arrived; but Dock Vincent was as obstinate as a mule. He took no pains to conceal the fact that he enjoyed the distress of the suffering father and the intense anxiety of Levi. The prisoner was to be examined before Squire Saunders during the forenoon, and it was hoped that some development of the plan of the conspirator would be obtained.

By the morning train came Mr. Gayles. The steamer sent in pursuit of the *Caribbee* had returned to Boston in the night. Of course she had not seen or heard of the vessel, which had gone through Vineyard Sound, while the steamer followed the track of ships bound round the Cape of Good Hope.

"Has he been searched?" asked Mr. Gayles, when he had reported the result of his mission to his employer.

"No; I proposed it to Mr. Cooke, but he declined to do it until a warrant had been obtained," replied Mr. Watson.

"It should be done at once;" and Mr. Gayles hastened to attend to this important duty.

Dock blustered, and attempted to resist the indignity, as he termed it; but the constable was determined, and heeded not the prisoner's protest or his struggles. On his person was found a variety of papers, and among them the letter which Captain Gauley had written in the cabin of the *Caribbee*. But this document had no signature, and was hardly more satisfactory than the letter which Mr. Watson had received from Bessie; at least it contained no accurate information. One sentence, however, was sufficiently definite to make a beginning upon. "We are somewhere inside of Sandy Hook, ready to go to sea at a moment's notice," Captain Gauley wrote. "You know where to leave a letter in New York, when you are ready to go on board; and one of us goes up to the city every day now."

"It's no use," said Dock, maliciously. "You can't find the *Caribbee*. Mr. Watson, I may rot in jail; but you will never see your daughter again if you go on with this matter. If you want to get her back, pay me the money I ask, let me go, and you shall have her in a week."

"I will not pay you a dollar," replied Mr. Watson, firmly.

"All right," added Dock, with a sneer. "You will wish you had in the course of a year or two. I know what I'm about this time."

Mr. Watson, Mr. Gayles, and Levi went to another room to consider the situation, leaving Constable Cooke in charge of the prisoner.

"Cooke, do you want to make a hundred dollars easy?" said Dock, in a whisper.

"I don't know," replied the officer. "I can't compromise myself."

"You run no risk," added Dock, as he wrote with a pencil, on half a sheet of note paper, the letter which Captain Gauley received just before the *Caribbee* sailed. "Put this in an envelope, direct it to Captain John Gauley, care of E. G. Baines & Co., No. --- Maiden Lane, New York, and put it into the post office. That's all; and here is a hundred dollars."

Constable Cooke took the note and the money. Dock wrote the direction for the letter on a piece of paper. He thrust the whole into his pocket. He had his doubts, as well he might, about the propriety of mailing the letter.

Levi, from the information obtained, was satisfied that the *Caribbee* was at anchor in one of the secluded inlets below New York, waiting for Dock to join her. It was not likely that she would go to sea without her owner, whose family were on board of her.

"Dock says she will go to Australia, whether he joins her or not," said Mr. Gayles.

"She will not sail till those on board have heard from Dock. We must take care that he does not send any letter or message," added Levi.

"Perhaps it would be better to let him do so, if we could only stop the letter at the post office."

"But we don't know who has charge of the vessel. It is plain that he has a captain on board of her; but he does not sign his name to the letter we found upon Dock," interposed Mr. Watson.

"Don't let him send any letters," persisted Levi. "Then the Caribbee will stay where she is till we find her."

"That is the better way," replied Mr. Watson.

"Perhaps it is," said Mr. Gayles. "But it would do no harm to ask the postmaster to stop any letter to Mat Mogmore, for instance."

"Mat Mogmore did not take that vessel round to New York," added Levi. "There is a bigger man than he on board of her, and we don't know his name. We can't do anything in this way, unless we stop all the letters directed to the vicinity of New York."

"Doesn't this man's name appear in any of Dock's papers?"

"No; I have looked in vain for it."

"Mr. Watson," said Levi, suddenly springing to his feet, "I am sure I can find Bessie."

Both Mr. Watson and Mr. Gayles looked at him with interest. He had done a similar work once before, and his confident expression was entitled to respect.

"I am as sure as I want to be that the Caribbee is anchored somewhere in New York Bay. Dock's letter says so. He sent her there, intending to join her as soon as he had collected his black mail. The facts and the theory agree with each other."

"Admit what you say," added Mr. Watson, "and there is no doubt of it. What shall we do?"

"I will go to New York in The Starry Flag. I can tell the Caribbee as far as I can see her, by night or by day. I will stand off and on by Sandy Hook, so that she cannot pass me. You and Mr. Gayles shall go to New York to-night, charter a small steamer, and explore all the inlets and bays below the city till you find her."

"She may escape before you get there," suggested Mr. Gayles.

"No; she will wait till she hears from Dock."

"It may get into the newspapers."

"We will see that it does not."

Various objections to Levi's plan were considered; but it was adopted without material alteration. Mr. Watson thought it would be better to charter a steamer in New York for Levi's use; but he preferred the yacht. She would be under his control, and at the critical moment would not be out of coal, or her machinery out of order.

Levi determined to sail as soon as the examination of Dock Vincent was finished. He engaged three extra hands, and put provisions and water enough on board to meet any emergency, in case the cruise should be unexpectedly prolonged. He was confident that his plan could not fail; and if Constable Cooke had not been unfit for a place of trust, probably it would not have failed, either in whole or in part.

Mr. Fairfield was arrested, and at ten o'clock both he and Dock were arraigned for examination. The old man was dreadfully alarmed. With the arrest of Dock his fondest hopes had gone out in darkness. Not only was the rich reward he had been promised forever lost, but his neighbor's note for ten thousand dollars was not worth the paper on which it was written. Though the conspirator did not yet believe that his plan had failed, the old man did.

Dock was held on a complaint of kidnapping Bessie Watson, and an attempt to extort money from her father. The evidence, including Dock's letter and the absence of Bessie, was more than enough to hold him, and he was committed for trial. The testimony was strong enough to hold Mr. Fairfield, and he also was committed; but Mr. Watson, out of consideration for the poor old man, procured bail for him. It was in vain he protested that he had nothing to do with the affair, and knew nothing about it. His midnight meeting with Dock Vincent condemned him.

The deputy sheriff bore Dock to the jail; for Mr. Gayles suggested that Constable Cooke's fingers were slippery, though

he did not know that they had already been soiled by a bribe. Levi hastened on board of the yacht as soon as the case had been disposed of, where his crew had made every preparation for the intended cruise--how long it was to be they knew not then. The wind was blowing a smashing breeze when she sailed, and in forty hours she was off Sandy Hook. Mr. Watson and Mr. Gayles arrived a day earlier, but did not deem it prudent to commence the search till the next day, fearful that the Caribbee might slip away before the yacht arrived; but they were not idle. They visited all the small ports in the vicinity; but Captain Gauley kept the vessel away from any harbor.

Constable Cooke could not settle his mind in regard to the letter in his pocket, and he kept it there till the day after the examination. Mr. Watson and Mr. Gayles had both neglected, and even snubbed him. They did not ask his advice; they did not employ him to assist in the search. They had gone off without him, and he saw no chance to make any money with the information in his possession. If Mr. Watson wanted Mr. Gayles to do his business for him, he might employ him. Mr. Cooke enclosed the pencilled note, directed it, and then mailed it in Gloucester.

Mr. Watson commenced his search in the steamer he had engaged for the purpose. He went a dozen miles up North River, examining every vessel in the stream, passed down the bay, through The Kills, up Newark Bay, through Staten Island Sound to Amboy, scoured Raritan Bay and River, without success, and thus used up the first day of the search. The next day--that on which Mat Mogmore went to the city and brought off the letter--she followed East River to Throg's Point; ran into Harlem River, Flushing Bay, and all the inlets, examining the Long Island shore as far as Rockaway, but with no better results than on the preceding day. Off Coney Island she spoke The Starry Flag. The captain of the steamer was confident that the Caribbee was not in the vicinity; it was more probable that she had come through the Sound, and put into Cow Bay, or some other waters beyond Throg's Point; and the steamer returned to the city, to renew the search on the third day.

Captain Gauley changed his anchorage every day or two. On the first day he had been behind Coney Island, but had moved over to a point south of Staten Island that evening, and thus, by accident, escaped discovery.

Mat brought the letter to him, and the Caribbee went to sea instantly; but it was only to encounter The Starry Flag, lying in wait for her. The quick eye of Levi immediately recognized her, and his orders to come about were given in sharp, quick tones. He was excited; Bessie was almost within hail of him; indeed, he saw her standing on deck, with Mrs. Vincent and the children. The wind was fresh, and the Caribbee had spread every inch of her canvas. Levi arranged his plan to cut her off while she was still nearly half a mile distant from him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HALF ROUND THE WORLD.

The wind was fresh, and The Starry Flag was under easy sail when the Caribbee was discovered. Though Levi immediately ordered the foresail to be hoisted, he saw, with intense chagrin, that the advantage was against him. He had hauled down the fly, and he hoped, as Dock Vincent was not on board of the Caribbee, that her people would not recognize the yacht. The wind was east, and the vessel was beating out, while The Starry Flag had the wind on the beam.

Levi, trusting that his craft would not be identified, intended to crowd the Caribbee so as to oblige her to tack, and then, while she was in stays, to lay alongside, and board her. Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier stood, with his revolver in his hand, ready to follow his "excellent captain," who was similarly armed, to the deck of the chase. Three other men were also detailed to join the party, though Levi did not expect much, if any, resistance.

The young skipper kept out of sight himself, that he might not be recognized before the decisive moment came. His heart bounded with excitement. He saw Bessie standing on the deck with Dock's wife, and a few moments more would restore her to him, and he should have the proud satisfaction of sailing up New York Bay, and giving her back to her father. The steward was ready to do greater wonders than ever before. Thus far he had done all the hard fighting, and he was prepared to do it unto the end.

The decisive moment did not come then. The quick eye of Mat Mogmore had recognized the yacht, and the Caribbee suddenly tacked, and stood away to the south-east. But Levi did not give up the chase. He had the weather-gage, and his foresail was now drawing well. In spite of Dock's brags about the speed of his vessel, the young skipper believed the yacht would outsail her; but this was only a blind confidence.

The Caribbee was headed directly towards a shoal place called the "Oil Spot," and as it was dead low tide, Levi thought she could not pass over it. Farther to the southward was a ledge, with only nine feet of water on it. But Captain Gauley knew all about the dangers of the navigation on this part of the coast. He went just to the southward of the Oil Spot; and, instead of gaining anything, Levi was obliged to keep away, and lose the weather-gage, in order to avoid the shoal himself.

He was disappointed and felt cheap after his failure. The Caribbee, close-hauled, was standing off to the south-east, while The Starry Flag was a quarter of a mile astern of her. Neither had the advantage, and it was still an open question which could make the best time. Levi soon found that the Caribbee was running away from him; but she carried a main gaff-topsail and a staysail. Fortunately he had similar sails on board, though he seldom used them. They were set when the two vessels were about a mile apart.

The wind held fresh and steady, and Levi was happy when he realized that the Caribbee was no longer gaining upon him. Hour after hour he followed her, without any perceptible change in the distance between them. It was plain now that the two vessels were about equally matched, and day and night Levi held his course. On the third day out he spoke a ship bound to New York. He knew what agony Mr. Watson was suffering, and he wrote two letters to him, one directed to New York, and the other to Rockport; "I shall follow the Caribbee round the world if necessary, and I will not return without Bessie," he wrote. These letters he sent on board of the ship, and in due time both were received by Mr. Watson.

For weeks and weeks The Starry Flag followed the Caribbee; but the voyage would be as tedious to the reader as it was to Bessie Watson. From the summer time, the yacht went into the heat of the torrid zone, and from that to the spring time of the south temperate. A week out from New York she encountered a heavy gale, and lost sight of the chase; but Levi, true to his promise, did not give up the pursuit, though he did not see the Caribbee again for weeks. As the yacht was getting short of water and provisions, he put in at the Island of St. Helena for fresh supplies, and learned that the Caribbee had left the port only the day before.

Again he made a harbor at Cape Town; but the chase had not been there. With fresh provisions, he sailed again, not expecting to see the Caribbee till he found her at Melbourne, the port for which she had cleared; but as he went out of the harbor, he discovered her coming in. The Caribbee went about, and stood on her course again to the eastward. Levi was in high spirits now. He had outsailed his rival from St. Helena. He had profited by an attentive study of the current chart, and gained a day. Proud of this triumph over the skilful seaman who was in charge of the chase, he persevered in

the pursuit.

Bessie saw The Starry Flag from the deck of the Caribbee, and understood why Captain Gauley put about. She was amazed at the persistent devotion of Levi in following her so far, and hope brightened and inspired her. Captain Gauley and Mat laughed at what they called the folly of Levi, and assured Bessie he would never find her.

Week after week both vessels held on their course, through sunshine and tempest. Off the southern coast of Australia a fearful storm burst upon them, and for the third time since leaving the Cape of Good Hope, they parted company; but both of them weathered the tempest. One hundred and seven days from New York, in the spring time of the southern hemisphere, The Starry Flag was approaching Bass Straits. The navigation was difficult and dangerous. Levi had read up his nautical library, and carefully studied the charts he had obtained at Cape Town. The wind was blowing a fresh gale from the southward and westward, and the young commander was full of doubt and anxiety. The night was coming on, with the promise of thick and heavy weather. Another day would enable him to reach Melbourne; but it was hazardous to attempt to thread his way among the rocks and coral reefs in the night and the storm. Prudently, therefore, he put about, and stood away to the southward, close-hauled, with the heavy seas washing his decks, for his bulwarks had been stove in the tempest a week before.

"Sail, ho!" shouted the man on the lookout forward.

"Where away?" asked Levi.

"On the weather bow."

"It's the Caribbee!" exclaimed Levi to Bob Thomas, who had been made first mate of the yacht.

"Ay, ay! It is," replied the mate.

"She went to the southward of Hammetts, while we went to the northward, after the great storm. The southerly current has carried her off her course, I should judge," added Levi.

The captain and the mate watched her with the most intense interest. The Caribbee stood on her course, and it was evident that she intended to enter the Straits, regardless of the perils before her. Levi could not do less than follow, reckless as it seemed to him. He did follow; but he took extraordinary precautions. He bent on his heavy anchor, and made other preparations for trying events. But the Caribbee, instead of entering the Straits in the darkness, stood away to the northward. All night long the gale piped its angry notes, and The Starry Flag again lost sight of the chase in the gloom.

The weather moderated in the morning, though the gale only partially subsided. Again the Caribbee was discovered, hull down, in the south. She was then entering the Straits, to the southward of King's Island, where no prudent navigator would venture in bad weather. The yacht was headed in that direction, and anxiously did Levi watch the chase. He had no intention of following her through the intricacies of that rock-bounded channel. Two hours later, the cry ran through the yacht that the Caribbee had struck on a hidden reef!

The heart of the young skipper was in his mouth. Bessie was in great peril, and he was almost distracted as he thought of her, perishing in the angry waves, surrounded only by enemies. The yacht dashed madly on towards the scene of the disaster. Trembling with anxiety, Levi went below to consult his chart, which lay all the time on the cabin table. He found the locality, and the ledge on which the Caribbee had struck. There was no other peril very near it, and he stood on confidently till The Starry Flag was within hail of the wreck, or would have been in less tempestuous weather.

The foremast of the Caribbee had gone by the board, and the waves were making a clean sweep over her decks. The life-boat, which swung at the port davits of the yacht, had been cleared away, in readiness to be lowered. Finding he had good holding-ground under him, Levi ordered the men to let go the heavy anchor. Fortunately it brought her up; but the other anchor was also thrown over. The sails were lowered, and the yacht rode tolerably easy. The gale was abating, and Levi was satisfied that the two anchors would hold her.

The life-boat was manned with four men, and Levi took his place in the stern-sheets. It was no easy matter to board the wreck while the sea was making a clean breach over her. She had struck her bow upon the sharp rock, and stove in her bottom. She had filled, and her stern had settled down, and the water was over her taffrail, while her stem projected up into the air. Her hull had swung round a little, so that there was a choice of sides in approaching her. The foremast had been jammed up by the breaking of the keelson where it was set, and hung over the side. To this the life-boat was made fast, and Levi, followed by Bob Thomas, climbed on board.

Crouching under the lee of the camboose, the young skipper found Bessie, Mrs. Vincent, and the two children, while the crew were clinging to the rigging of the bowsprit to prevent being washed overboard.

"O, Levi!" cried Bessie, when she saw the manly form of her true friend.

In the blast and the spray, Levi clasped her hands, and both of them wept. It was more than three months since they had parted in the house of Mr. Watson. There was no time to think of the past, or even of the future; the present absorbed all the energies of the young seaman. With the assistance of Bob Thomas, Levi conveyed Bessie along the fallen spar, and lowered her into the life-boat. Mrs. Vincent and her two children were assisted into the boat in the same manner. Mat Mogmore and two men--all that were left of the crew--were then permitted to enter the boat, which pulled back to the yacht.

With much difficulty, and the exercise of no little skill, the life-boat was kept right side up, and the rescued party were safely placed on board of The Starry Flag, though the females had to be hoisted up in slings over the stern.

"You are safe, Bessie," said Levi, as he conducted her to the cabin.

"Thanks to our Good Father, and to you, Levi, I am!"

"I have the inexpressible happiness of greeting you again," said Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier, as he threw open the door of her state-room.

The gale rapidly subsided, and in the afternoon, after the wreck had been boarded again, the yacht sailed for Melbourne.

CHAPTER XXV.

A HAPPY REUNION.

The sea in the Strait was comparatively smooth, and the yacht sped on her way to Melbourne. Mrs. Vincent and her children had been installed in Mr. Watson's state-room, while Bessie occupied her own. From her Levi had obtained all the particulars of her voyage. She told him what she had suffered, what she had feared, and what she had hoped.

"Who had charge of the Caribbee?" asked Levi, when, after Bessie and Mrs. Vincent had been made comfortable, they gathered in the cabin.

"Captain Gauley," replied Bessie.

"Who was he?"

"He was a pilot on a steamer," replied Mrs. Vincent. "He and my husband became acquainted while they were on a boat near New York. I never saw him till just before we sailed from the Cape. He is a bad man."

"That is plain enough," added Levi; "but where is he now?"

"He and three other men were washed overboard when the vessel struck on the rocks."

"And three of the men were saved?"

"Yes; Mat Mogmore, the steward, and another man."

"Why did you sail without your husband, Mrs. Vincent?" asked Levi.

"I don't know anything about this business. I hadn't anything to do with it," replied the poor woman; and Levi and Bessie pitied her because she was the wife of such a bad man.

"I am sure she had nothing to do with carrying me off, Levi," interposed Bessie. "She has been very kind to me from the moment I went on board of the Caribbee, and would have assisted me to escape, if there had been any chance."

"I am very glad indeed to know that," added Levi. "I don't see why this Captain Gauley sailed without your husband."

"Captain Vincent sent a letter to him, saying that things were going wrong with him, and ordered him to sail at once."

Levi wondered how Dock had sent the letter. When told that it was written in pencil, and that the address on the envelope was not in her husband's hand, he was satisfied that Constable Cooke had rendered him this important service.

"My husband was to come to Australia by the steamer from England," added Mrs. Vincent. "Perhaps he is here now."

"I think not," replied Levi.

"Why so?"

"Because he was arrested, and committed to jail before I left the Cape. Augustus caught him."

"I had that honor," said the steward, who was standing near the party; and the incident was fully described.

"I suppose my poor father and mother do not know what has become of me," continued Bessie, the tears starting to her eyes.

"Yes, they do. I sent two letters by a ship we spoke. If this vessel reached New York, I am sure he knows where you are. I wrote him that I should follow you round the world, if need be."

"How brave and noble you are, Levi!" she said, bestowing a glance of admiration upon him. "And this Starry Flag has rendered me a greater service than the other Starry Flag."

"She has indeed! She is the finest little craft that ever floated; and I shall love her as long as I live. In that great gale a week ago, she was under water half the time, I believe. We had to batten down everything, and lash ourselves to the

deck."

"That was a fearful storm. I hope I shall never see another such. How grateful we ought to be for our preservation!"

"I trust we are grateful to God for his goodness and his mercy," replied Levi, devoutly.

On the following day the yacht took a pilot, and came to anchor in the harbor of Melbourne. Mat Mogmore had kept out of sight since he came on board, spending all his time in the forecabin; but when the anchor was dropped he appeared on deck.

"I think I will go on shore now, Levi," said he, with an assumed coolness.

"I think not," replied Levi, decidedly.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded the young villain.

"I mean that you shall not leave this vessel, unless you leave it in irons. I shall state the case to the American consul; and I think you will return to the United States as a prisoner."

"Why, what have I done?" asked Mat.

"What have you done!" exclaimed Levi, indignantly. "Besides being guilty of meanness and treachery, you have committed a crime which will send you to the state prison for the next ten years."

"Do you mean to say that I stole your uncle's money?"

"I didn't say anything of the kind. You and Dock Vincent conveyed Miss Watson on board of the Caribbee. That's a state-prison offence, to say nothing of stealing the money."

"Don't be hard on me, Levi."

"Hard on you! I'm not half so hard on you as you are on yourself. You were employed as a hand on board of this vessel, and you used your position to deceive Miss Watson, and get her on board of the Caribbee. You then came to me, with your mouth full of lies, and told me she had gone to Portland with her father, by railroad. I trusted you, and you betrayed me. I can forgive you, but I can never respect you again," said Levi, warmly.

"Don't be too hard on me, Levi," pleaded Mat. "I got into a scrape, and Dock helped me out; but he made me do everything he said after that."

"You needn't commit yourself to me. I don't ask you to make any confessions. Dock Vincent is in jail now, and the whole truth will come out in due time."

"What's the use!" exclaimed Mat, in despair. "I'm ruined now. If you'll let me go ashore here, I'll try to be an honest man."

"It is not for me to let you go, though I have no doubt you were the tool of Dock Vincent. I have no right to let you escape."

"I'll tell you all about it, Levi; and you will see what a bad scrape I was in," said Mat, fixing his eyes on the planks of the deck. "Your uncle borrowed a screw-driver in the shop----"

"Levi! Levi!" shouted Bessie Watson, who was in the standing-room, looking at the shipping in the vicinity.

The young skipper sprang towards her, fearful that some terrible event was about to happen; for Bessie was waving her handkerchief, and dancing about the deck like an insane person. A boat, with two gentlemen in the stern-sheets, was approaching the yacht, and at this Bessie was gazing with intense earnestness.

"What is the matter, Bessie?" asked he, looking at her, rather than the boat, to assure himself that her trials had not affected her reason.

"Why, don't you see, Levi?"

"I don't see anything. What is it?"

"My father! My father!" cried she, laughing, almost in hysterics.

Levi glanced at the boat. One of the gentlemen was certainly Mr. Watson, though he was not quite willing to believe the evidence of his own senses. The boat had approached near enough to enable him to be sure of the fact.

"It is my father!" repeated Bessie, as the boat ran up to the accommodation ladder, and Mr. Watson leaped on board of the yacht.

"My child! My child!" ejaculated the fond father, as he folded her in his arms.

"O, father!" exclaimed she, as she hugged him in a transport of joy.

Twined in each other's arms, they wept and laughed, in the exuberance of delight, at this happy reunion. Levi could hardly restrain his own tears as he gazed upon the affecting scene, and in the depths of his heart he thanked God, who had guided his little bark over the stormy ocean, half round the world, and enabled him to save Bessie from the hands of her grasping enemies.

"Levi!" said Mr. Watson, gently disengaging himself from his daughter's embrace, and giving the young captain his hand.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Watson," replied Levi, grasping the offered hand.

"If Levi hadn't followed me, you would never have seen me again," added Bessie, throwing herself upon her father's breast again.

"God bless you, Levi!" exclaimed the delighted father, wringing the young man's hand again.

Mr. Watson seemed to be bewildered by the ecstasy of his joy. He grasped the hand of Augustus, who was so pleased that he forgot to use any high-flown speech. The gentleman who had come in the boat with Bessie's father was introduced to the party as the American consul.

"We did not expect to see you, Mr. Watson," said Levi.

"I have been in Melbourne for three weeks," replied he. "This is the port for which the Caribbee cleared at the Custom House. But where is the Caribbee?"

"She struck on a rock to the southward of King's Island, in the gale, yesterday morning. She has broken up before this time."

"And I was on board of her at the time," said Bessie.

"Though the Caribbee was twenty tons larger than The Starry Flag, we were just a match for her in sailing," added Levi. "We lost her a week out of New York, saw her again at the Cape of Good Hope, and then lost sight of her three or four times; but we arrived at the entrance of Bass Strait about the same time."

"I think I will not stop to hear the story now. Bessie, there is some one on shore who wishes to see you," replied Mr. Watson.

"Who? O, I know, father! It is mother! Come, let us go on shore, this minute!" exclaimed the bewildered girl, dancing about again, as this new joy dawned upon her.

Levi informed the consul that one of the conspirators had been saved from the wreck, and this gentleman promised to attend to the matter. The life boat was lowered; and leaving his mate in charge of the vessel, with strict injunctions not to let Mat Mogmore escape, Levi went on shore with Bessie and her father.

"My mother in Australia!" exclaimed Bessie.

"And Mrs. McGilvery, too!" added Mr. Watson.

"Why, then the whole family are here! Only think of it! I didn't expect to see you or mother for months yet."

"We could not do anything but come, for every hour seemed like an age to us," replied Mr. Watson. "When I received Levi's letter, I saw that nothing more could be done on our side of the world, and I decided to follow you. Dock Vincent assured me I should never see my daughter again; and I was satisfied by the confidence he exhibited, and the persistency with which he urged me to pay his demand, that the Caribbee had indeed sailed upon her long voyage. Levi's letter, written when he had been three days at sea, with the Caribbee in sight, fully confirmed my view. I was sorry Levi did not return to New York, instead of following the vessel."

"Why so?" asked Levi, blushing under the implied censure.

"If I had known the result in season, I might have sent a steamer in pursuit of the Caribbee. As it was, I did not get the letter till a week after her departure."

"The chances of a steamer finding the Caribbee were not more than one in fifty," replied Levi.

"I was sorry then, Levi; but I am not now. You have achieved almost a miracle, and I am willing to believe now that your course was the best and the safest. I decided at once to be in Melbourne when the Caribbee arrived. I sailed for England in the steamer with your mother and your aunt. We came from there by the way of Egypt, and landed here three weeks ago. I have an agent in every principal port in Australia on the lookout for the Caribbee. When any fore-and-aft vessel came into this harbor I was informed of the fact, and you may judge my surprise when I saw The Starry Flag. I will not tell you what I feared when I recognized her, for all that passed away when I saw Bessie on the deck;" and the devoted father clasped her in his arms again.

The party landed. In a few moments they reached the hotel, and Bessie was folded in the embrace of her mother.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCLUSION.

Mrs. Watson wept tears of joy over her lost child, now restored to her. Mrs. McGilvery declared that the pleasure of witnessing such a joyful meeting was worth a voyage half round the world, or, indeed, all the way round the world.

"Well, Levi, what shall we do next?" asked Mr. Watson, when the young skipper had been thanked and extolled by the ladies till his cheeks burned with blushes.

"Go home, I suppose, sir, unless the ladies desire to settle here," replied Levi.

"Doubtless we shall go home," added Mr. Watson; "but how shall we do it? I think the ladies will not care to be kept on board of the yacht for three months or more."

"I will do what I can to make them comfortable if they will return in The Starry Flag; but that is saying only a little."

"You would arrive on the coast of the United States in the middle of the winter, and you will see many heavy storms, and much bad weather," suggested Mr. Watson.

"Yes, sir; it was bad enough coming out here, especially after we left the Cape of Good Hope; but it would be worse returning. I cannot honestly advise them to go back in the yacht, glad as I should be of their company;" and Levi glanced at Bessie. "I think they had better go by the way you came."

"I am very clear of that," added Mr. Watson. "But, Levi, I can't bear the idea of your knocking about for three or four months, perhaps six, in such a small vessel."

"It won't hurt me any. I rather like it," laughed Levi. "I will have a stove put up in the cabin for use when we get into the cold region, and we shall be as comfortable as a bug in a rug."

"I'll tell you my plan, Levi. I can sell the yacht, and you can return with us by steamer."

"Sell The Starry Flag!" exclaimed Levi. "I should as soon think of selling my mother, if I had one. I love her, after the good service she has done, and I don't think any builder could get up another as good as she is. I know what she is now. She has weathered a hurricane, and don't mind an ordinary gale any more than a summer zephyr. Besides, I have a crew of six men, without the cook and steward. If you want to sell her, I'll buy her."

"She is yours now, and you may do as you please with her."

"Then I shall certainly take her home. She needs some repairs, and then she will be as good as new."

"If the ladies are willing, we will all go on board of her," said Mr. Watson. "We must make some arrangements for Mrs. Vincent and her children, and attend to Mat Mogmore's case."

The party went on board of the yacht. Mr. Watson summoned the crew, as soon as they reached the deck, and gave each of them a check for a thousand dollars. This little incident made the day a happy one to them, as well as to the members of Mr. Watson's family. He then asked Mrs. Vincent what she purposed to do; and Levi offered her a return passage in the yacht. She had been kind to Bessie, had been her companion and friend in her distress, and her conduct merited a grateful recognition. The poor woman did not know what to do. She had no idea what her husband had done with all the money he had collected. It was not to be found, and no one knew anything about it. It was afterwards ascertained that the proceeds of the sale of his house and furniture had been expended upon the fitting out of the Caribbee, and he had deposited the ten thousand borrowed of Mr. Fairfield in Boston until he was ready to leave the country.

Mrs. Vincent did not wish to return to her native land. Her husband had ruined himself and disgraced his family, and she did not care to meet the obloquy which awaited her in the midst of her friends. The consul informed her, when she had stated her views, that she could make a good living, and perhaps a competency, by keeping a boarding-house in Melbourne. Mr. Watson promptly offered to assist her to the means for making a beginning. Before the yacht sailed on her home voyage, the consul had purchased for her such an establishment as she needed, and she was in a fair way to do better for herself than her husband had ever done for her.

The consul met the family in the cabin of the yacht, and Mat Mogmore's case came up for discussion. The steward, and the other seamen from the Caribbee, had gone on shore to shift for themselves, as Mat would have done if he had been permitted.

"Mat says he got into a scrape, and Dock helped him out," said Levi, when the matter was brought up. "The old rascal had him in his power then, and made a tool of him in this business."

"What scrape did he get into?" asked Mr. Watson.

"I don't know. He began to tell me when your boat came alongside," replied Levi. "He said my uncle borrowed a screw-driver of him; but I don't know what this had to do with it."

"Send for him, Levi," added Mr. Watson. "If he tells the truth, and means to do well, perhaps we may do something to help him."

The steward was called, and directed to bring the prisoner--for such he was--into the cabin. Mat was on the stool of repentance. All his expectations had been blasted; and, whichever way he turned, the prospect was dark and forbidding, as it must sooner or later be to all evil-doers. Even if permitted to go on shore, he was alone and friendless in a strange land. The share he was to receive of Bessie's ransom had failed him; another evil speculation had also come to nought. If he returned to his native land in the yacht, it was only to be covered with merited disgrace, and to spend years of his life in the state prison.

When Mat Mogmore entered the cabin under the escort of the steward, he felt like a ruined man--one who, by his own folly and wickedness, had sacrificed all his hopes in this world. Mr. Watson and the consul spoke to him with the utmost plainness, the latter informing him that, if he declined to return home in the yacht, he should procure his arrest on a criminal charge.

"I will return in her, if you say so," blubbered Mat, whose pluck was all gone.

"If you wish to explain your conduct, you may do so," added Mr. Watson.

"I don't know as it's any use. I wish I had been drowned in the Caribbee."

"You began to tell me your story," said Levi.

"I was going to tell you how I happened to help Captain Vincent. He made me do it. I'll tell you about it, if you like."

"Go on," added Mr. Watson.

"Perhaps I'm worse than you think I am; but I'll tell the whole truth."

"That's what we want."

"Levi's uncle borrowed a screw-driver of me in the shop. I wanted to use it pretty soon, and I went over to Mr. Fairfield's after it. He was fixing a board to put over a hole in the plastering in his chamber. I saw he had cut away the laths, and I knew he wasn't putting up the piece to keep the cold out, as he said. I made up my mind he had money hid in that hole. At the fire, when the folks had left the room, and all the men were on the roof, I took off that board, for I thought the money would be all lost if there was any there. I found the four bags of gold. I dropped them out the window into the lilac bushes, and put the board up again. I didn't mean to steal it then. I never stole anything in my life, not even a pin."

"What did you put the board up again for?" asked Levi.

"I didn't screw it up till afterwards. I carried the gold over to the shop, and hid it under the floor. Then I went back and fastened up the board, just as I found it. While I was doing this Dock Vincent came in, and saw what I was doing. I turned it off as well as I could, and helped move the furniture where the water was coming down upon it. There was a lot of money in those bags, and I didn't like to give them up. Dock had said something to me about going to Australia with him, and I thought I could take the money out here with me.

"Just as soon as it came out that the gold was gone, Captain Vincent pitched into me. He knew then what I was screwing up that board for. It wasn't any use to deny it to him after what he had seen. I said I would give it back to the old man, and tell him I had taken it to keep it from being lost in the fire. Dock said it wan't worth while to do that; the old man had lost it, and he wouldn't feel any worse if he didn't find it. We talked it over, and after a while I agreed to divide with him.

"Then he began to tell me, a little at once, about carrying off Miss Watson again. I didn't like the job; but Dock said

he'd send me to jail for stealing the gold if I didn't go in with him; and I had to go. When the new Starry Flag came round, he told me Levi wanted to hire me before the mast, and told me to engage with him, so as to help him get Miss Watson when the time came. All along, Dock said that Levi was in his way. If he could get rid of him, he could carry her off without any trouble. So he laid the stealing to him, and tried to prove it on him.

"Dock told me to put the bag and some of the gold in the state-room, but I hadn't any chance to do it; the steward was in my way all the time. The yacht was going off the next day, and Dock wanted to have Levi taken up before he started. I handed the bag I had fixed to Ben Seaver, and told him I had forgotten to do what the captain had ordered. I asked him to give it to the steward, and tell him Levi wanted him to put it into a locker in his state-room. Ben did just what I told him; and I knew he was going off that day. Levi was taken up; but things didn't work as Dock wanted. He was discharged.

"All this time the money was hid under the shop. After the examination, Dock wanted the money divided. I had taken out one hundred and fifty dollars. We put fifty in the bag before, and divided a hundred. I agreed to meet him at the old fish-house, that was burned, and I carried the bags down, and put them under an old sail, where I could get the money when we wanted it.

"Dock and I met in the fish-house at ten o'clock. He had a lantern, so that we could see to count the money. We sat down on the rocks to talk the matter over, for Dock wanted the whole of the money then, and promised to give me my share when we got to Australia. I didn't like this; and while we were talking about it, the steward tumbled down through the floor of the loft right between us. I never was so scared in my life. I thought the evil one was after me for what I had done. Dock was as scared as I was, and we both ran off as fast as our legs would carry us.

"We went into Dock's back kitchen, and staid there till the alarm of fire was given. We meant to go back, but neither of us dared to do so. The fish-house got afire, and burned up; and that was the last we saw of the gold. Augustus can tell you better than I can where it went to."

"I have told that already," interposed the steward.

"When the Caribbee was ready to sail," continued Mat, "Dock went to New York, and told Captain Gauley to follow as soon as Miss Watson was on board. I was told to watch my chance when Levi was on board the yacht, and go to her, saying he had sent me for her. I waited three days without having such a chance, when the race at Portland fixed things just as I wanted them. You know how I worked it. I wouldn't have done it if I hadn't been afraid Dock would send me to jail. As soon as we got to New York, Captain Gauley sent a letter to Boston, where Dock was keeping himself out of sight till he could get the money. I suppose he sent his letter to Mr. Watson as soon as he heard Miss Watson was missing. We waited ten days below New York; but Dock didn't come. Then Captain Gauley got a letter from him, saying things were going wrong with him, and ordering the vessel to sail without him. He was to come out here by steamer."

Mat Mogmore's confession made everything plain. What was not understood before was clear enough now. Dock Vincent did not believe in the power of goodness; and when he took advantage of the robbery to charge the crime upon Levi, he did not realize that a young man's character is his tower of strength. He failed to break down his reputation, failed to ruin him, failed to injure him in the opinion of any for more than a brief period. Perhaps, if he could have ruined Levi, and got him out of the way, as he desired, he might have succeeded in his wicked intention, though God does not often permit such iniquity to prosper.

By the next steamer Mr. Watson's family departed for home. The Starry Flag was carefully repaired, an abundant supply of provisions put on board, and she sailed for the United States. Mat Mogmore returned voluntarily in her. As Mr. Watson had decided to spend two or three months in Europe on his return, Levi did not hasten his homeward voyage. At the Cape of Good Hope he staid a couple of weeks, to see the country. He remained about the same time at St. Helena, at Ascension, at the Cape Verde Islands, and at the Bermudas, thus avoiding the winter storms of the North Atlantic, besides seeing the wonders of the sunny isles of the ocean.

About the middle of May The Starry Flag was discovered entering Sandy Bay. Mr. Watson and his family, who had arrived a month before, had gone to their summer home; and when those who cast frequent glances to seaward discovered the yacht, Mr. Watson was informed of her arrival. With Bessie on his arm, he hastened down to the Point, where hundreds of Levi's friends had already gathered to welcome him. The anchor of the yacht went down among the rocks off the Point, the sails were furled, and all hands went on shore.

Levi's reception was worthy of a hero. He was cheered as though he had been a great admiral coming home from his conquest of the seas; but the tearful welcome which Bessie Watson bestowed upon him was more grateful than the plaudits of the multitude. He went with her to her father's house, and the rest of the day and a long evening were spent in relating the incidents of their return from that distant land, half round the world.

"How is my uncle now?" asked Levi of Mr. Gayles, who formed one of the party.

"He is about the same as usual," replied the constable. "He has lost ten thousand dollars by Dock Vincent, and he groans about that night and day."

"That money can be recovered," said Mr. Watson. "Vincent did not use it."

"The trial of Dock has been postponed from time to time on account of your absence," added Mr. Gayles. "The case will be called again next week."

When it was assigned the next time, the witnesses were in the court-room. Dock and Mr. Fairfield were arraigned. Mat Mogmore was permitted to testify for the government. Both were found guilty; but, while Dock was sentenced to the longest term of imprisonment provided by law for his crimes, the old man was sentenced to the shortest, with a fine of one thousand dollars. Dock's term was ten years. It broke his spirit. His little plan was a total failure, and too late he found that the way of the wicked shall not prosper. He was sent to the state prison, and disappeared from public view.

Mr. Fairfield was sent to the common jail; but it was evident that he was dying by inches of mental disorder, and his pardon was procured by the influence of Mr. Watson. He went back to his home. The ten thousand dollars which Dock had borrowed of him was recovered, in process of law, of the person with whom the swindler had deposited it. The old man had really lost but a thousand dollars, the amount of his fine; but he was too miserable to survive long, and died two years after his discharge from prison. Levi was his heir; but he gave his aunt the use of the money while she lived. Her Bible and her religious newspaper were her best friends, and she learned to open her heart and open her purse-strings. She had nothing to do now, and she became, under Levi's good advice, a blessing to the poor and the suffering.

When Levi was twenty-one, Mr. Gayles's function as guardian ceased, and he paid over to his ward his entire fortune. But this was a trivial event compared with another, which occurred a few months later, in Boston; when, in Mr. Watson's elegant mansion, Levi and Bessie received the congratulations of all their friends. Rockport was strongly represented on this interesting occasion.

"May all angels, celestial and terrestrial, keep perpetual vigil over you, Mrs. Fairfield," said Mr. C. Augustus Ebenier, as he touched the gloved hand of the bride, whom he did not presume to kiss, as others did. "And the next time you attempt the semi-circumnavigation of this mundane sphere, may I have the honor to be the cabin steward of the bark that bears you o'er the stormy sea."

"May prosperity and happiness be yours, Mrs. Fairfield," said Squire Saunders. "Levi, this time I must commit you--to the care of this lady."

"I have taken care of Levi for a good many years, Mrs. Fairfield," added Mr. Gayles; "but I cheerfully resign in your favor."

"I never saw so many grand people and sech nice things in all my born days," said aunt Susan; "but Levi's wuth the whole on 'em. I know he'll make you a good husband, and you'll make him a good wife;" and the old lady planted a hearty smack on the cheek of each.

When Levi and Bessie returned from their bridal tour in Europe, in the following spring, they took up their residence in the mansion of Mr. Watson, on the Point. The Starry Flag and The Starry Flag, Jr., both lie in sight of the house, and both of them are frequently used for long and short trips. While Captain Fairfield--as he is generally called--and his beautiful wife hope the day is far distant which will make him a *millionnaire*, this event, in the course of nature, must occur; yet is he richer now, in the possession of a noble character and a true Christian spirit, than he can be made by any FREAKS OF FORTUNE.

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