

FICTION

Kirk Munroe

Rick Dale

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FICTION

RICK DALE

A STORY OF THE NORTHWEST COAST

BY KIRK MUNROE

**AUTHOR OF "SNOW-SHOES AND SLEDGES" "THE FUR-SEAL'S TOOTH" THE "MATES"
SERIES ETC.**

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THE ICE ABOVE GIBRALTAR

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"BONNY WAS JERKED BACKWARD"

"THEY WERE PARALYZED WITH TERROR"

RICK DALE

CHAPTER I

A POOR RICH BOY

Alaric Dale Todd was his name, and it was a great grief to him to be called "Allie." Allie Todd was so insignificant and sounded so weak. Besides, Allie was a regular girl's name, as he had been so often told, and expected to be told by each stranger who heard it for the first time. There is so much in a name, after all. We either strive to live up to it, or else it exerts a constant disheartening pull backward.

Although Alaric was tall for his age, which was nearly seventeen, he was thin, pale, and undeveloped. He did not look like a boy accustomed to play tennis or football, or engage in any of the splendid athletics that develop the muscle and self-reliance of those sturdy young fellows who contest interscholastic matches. Nor was he one of these; so far from it, he had never played a game in his life except an occasional quiet game of croquet, or something equally soothing. He could not swim nor row nor sail a boat; he had never ridden horseback nor on a bicycle; he had never skated nor coasted nor hunted nor fished, and yet he was perfectly well formed and in good health. I fancy I hear my boy readers exclaim:

"What a regular muff your Alaric must have been! No wonder they called him 'Allie!'"

And the girls? Well, they would probably say, "What a disagreeable prig!" For Alaric knew a great deal more about places and people and books than most boys or girls of his age, and was rather fond of displaying this knowledge. And then he was always dressed with such faultless elegance. His patent-leather boots were so shiny, his neckwear, selected with perfect taste, was so daintily arranged, and while he never left the house without drawing on a pair of gloves, they were always so immaculate that it did not seem as though he ever wore the same pair twice. He was very particular, too, about his linen, and often sent his shirts back to the laundress unworn because they were not done up to suit him. As for his coats and trousers, of which he had so many that it actually seemed as though he might wear a different suit every day in the year, he spent so much time in selecting material, and then in being fitted, and insisted on so many alterations, that his tailors were often in despair, and wondered whether it paid to have so particular a customer, after all. They never had occasion, though, to complain about their bills, for no matter how large these were or how extortionate, they were always paid without question as soon as presented.

From all this it may be gathered that our Alaric was not a child of poverty. Nor was he; for Amos Todd, his father, was so many times a millionaire that he was one of the richest men on the Pacific coast. He owned or controlled a bank, railways, steamships, and mines, great ranches in the South, and vast tracts of timber lands in the North. His manifold interests extended from Alaska to Mexico, from the Pacific to the Atlantic; and while he made his home in San Francisco his name was a power in the stock-exchanges of the world. Years before he and his young wife had made their way to California from New England with just money enough to pay their passage to the Golden State. Here they had undergone poverty and hardships such as they determined their children should never know.

Of these Margaret, the eldest, was now a leader of San Francisco society, while John, who was eight years older than Alaric, had shown such an aptitude for business that he had risen to be manager of his father's bank. There were other children, who had died, and when Alaric came, last of all, he was such a puny infant that there was little hope of his ever growing up. Because he was the youngest and a weakling, and demanded so much care, his mother devoted her life to him, and hovered about him with a loving anxiety that sought to shield him from all rude contact with the world. He was always under the especial care of some doctor, and when he was five or six years old one of these, for want of something more definite to say, announced that he feared the child was developing a weak heart, and advised that he be restrained from all violent exercise.

From that moment poor little "Allie," as he had been called from the day of his birth, was not only kept from all forms of violent exercise and excitement, but was forbidden to play any boyish games as well. In place of these his doting mother travelled with him over Continental Europe, going from one famous medical spring, bath, or health resort to another, and bringing up her boy in an atmosphere of luxury, invalids, and doctors. The last-named devoted themselves to trying to find out what was the matter with him, and as no two of them could agree upon any one ailment, Mrs. Todd came to regard him as a prodigy in the way of invalidism.

Of course Alaric was never sent to a public school, but he was always accompanied by tutors as well as physicians, and spent nearly two years in a very select private school or *pension* near Paris. Here no rude games were permitted, and the only exercise allowed the boys was a short daily walk, in which, under escort of masters, they marched in a dreary procession of twos.

During all these years of travel and study and search after health Alaric had never known what it was to wish in vain

for anything that money could buy. Whatever he fancied he obtained without knowing its cost, or where the money came from that procured it. But there were three of the chief things in the world to a boy that he did not have and that money could not give him. He had no boy friends, no boyish games, and no ambitions. He wanted to have all these things, and sometimes said so to his mother; but always he was met by the same reproachful answer, "My dear Allie, remember your poor weak heart."

At length it happened that while our lad was in that dreary *pension*, Mrs. Todd, worn out with anxieties, cares, and worries of her own devising, was stricken with a fatal malady, and died in the great chateau that she had rented not far from the school in which her life's treasure was so carefully guarded. A few days of bewilderment and heart-breaking sorrow followed for poor Alaric. Many cablegrams flashed to and fro beneath the ocean. There was a melancholy funeral, at which the boy was sole mourner, and then one phase of his life was ended. In another week he had left France, and, escorted by one of his French tutors, was crossing the Atlantic on his way to the far-distant San Francisco home of which he knew so little.

He had now been at home for nearly three months, and of all his sad life they had proved the most unhappy period. His father, though always kind in his way, was too deeply immersed in business to pay much attention to the sensitive lad. He did not understand him, and regarded him as a weakling who could never amount to anything in the world of business or useful activity. He would be kind to the boy, of course, and any desire that he expressed should be promptly gratified; at the same time he could not help feeling that Alaric was a great trial, and wishing him more like his brother John.

This bustling, dashing elder brother had no sympathy with Alaric, and rarely found time to give him more than a nod and a word of greeting in passing, while his sister Margaret regarded him as still a little boy who was to be kept out of sight as much as possible. So the poor lad, left to himself, without friends and without occupation, found time hanging very heavily on his hands, and wondered why he had ever been born.

Once he ventured to ask his father for a saddle-horse, whereupon Amos Todd provided him with a pair of ponies, a cart, and a groom, which he said was an outfit better suited to an invalid. Alaric accepted this gift without a protest, for he was well trained to bearing disappointments, but he used it so rarely that the business of giving the horses their daily airing devolved almost entirely upon the groom.

It was not until Esther Dale, one of the New England cousins whom he had never seen, and a girl of his own age, made a flying visit to San Francisco as one of a personally conducted party of tourists, that Alaric found any real use for his ponies. Esther was only to remain in the city three days, but she spent them in her uncle's house, which she refused to call anything but "the palace," and which she so pervaded with her cheery presence that Amos Todd declared it seemed full of singing birds and sunshine.

Both Margaret and John were too busy to pay much attention to their young cousin, and so, to Alaric's delight, the whole duty of entertaining her devolved on him. He felt much more at his ease with girls than with boys, for he had been thrown so much more into their society during his travels, and he thought he understood them thoroughly; but in Esther Dale he found a girl so different from any he had ever known that she seemed to belong to another order of beings. She was good-looking and perfectly well-bred, but she was also as full of life and frisky antics as a squirrel, and as tireless as a bird on the wing.

On the first morning of her visit the cousins drove out to the Cliff House to see the sea-lions; and almost before Alaric knew how it was accomplished he found Esther perched on the high right-hand cushion of the box-seat in full possession of reins and whip, while he occupied the lower seat on her left, as though he were the guest and she the hostess of the occasion. At the same time the ponies seemed filled with an unusual activity, and were clattering along at a pace more exhilarating than they had ever shown under his guidance.

After that Esther always drove; and Alaric, sitting beside her, listened with wondering admiration to her words of wisdom and practical advice on all sorts of subjects. She had never been abroad, but she knew infinitely more of her own country than he, and was so enthusiastic concerning it that in three days' time she had made him feel prouder of being an American than he had believed it possible he ever would be. She knew so much concerning out-of-door life, too--about animals and birds and games. She criticised the play of the baseball nines, whom they saw one afternoon in Golden Gate Park; and when they came to another place where some acquaintances of Alaric's were playing tennis, she asked for an introduction to the best girl player on the ground, promptly challenged her to a trial of skill, and beat her three straight games.

During the play she presented such a picture of glowing health and graceful activity that pale-faced Alaric sat and watched her with envious admiration.

"I would give anything I own in the world to be able to play tennis as you can, Cousin Esther," he said, earnestly, after

it was all over and they were driving from the park.

"Why don't you learn, then?" asked the girl, in surprise.

"Because I have a weak heart, you know, and am forbidden any violent exercise."

The boy hesitated, and even blushed, as he said this, though he had never done either of those things before when speaking of his weak heart. In fact, he had been rather proud of it, and considered that it was a very interesting thing to have. Now, however, he felt almost certain that Esther would laugh at him.

And so she did. She laughed until Alaric became red in the face from vexation; but when she noticed this she grew very sober, and said:

"Excuse me, Cousin Rick. I didn't mean to laugh; but you did look so woe-begone when you told me about your poor weak heart, and it seems so absurd for a big, well-looking boy like you to have such a thing, that I couldn't help it."

"I've always had it," said Alaric, stoutly; "and that is the reason they would never let me do things like other boys. It might kill me if I did, you know."

"I should think it would kill you if you didn't, and I'm sure I would rather die of good times than just sit round and mope to death. Now I don't believe your heart is any weaker than mine is. You don't look so, anyway, and if I were you I would just go in for everything, and have as good a time as I possibly could, without thinking any more about whether my heart was weak or strong."

"But they won't let me," objected Alaric.

"Who won't?"

"Father and Margaret and John."

"I don't see that the two last named have anything to do with it. As for Uncle Amos, I am sure he would rather have you a strong, brown, splendidly built fellow, such as you might become if you only would, than the white-faced, dudish Miss Nancy that you are. Oh, Cousin Rick! What have I said? I'm awfully sorry and ashamed of myself. Please forgive me."



CHAPTER II

THE RUNAWAY

For a moment it seemed to Alaric that he could not forgive that thoughtlessly uttered speech. And yet the girl who made it had called him Cousin "Rick," a name he had always desired, but which no one had ever given him before. If she had called him "Allie," he knew he would never have forgiven her. As it was he hesitated, and his pale face flushed again. What should he say?

In her contrition and eagerness to atone for her cruel words Esther leaned towards him and laid a beseeching hand on his arm. For the moment she forgot her responsibility as driver, and the reins, held loosely in her whip-hand, lay slack across the ponies' backs.

Just then a newspaper that had been carelessly dropped in the roadway was picked up by a sudden gust of wind and whirled directly into the faces of the spirited team. The next instant they were dashing madly down the street. At the outset the reins were jerked from Esther's hand; but ere they could slip down beyond reach Alaric had seized them. Then, with the leathern bands wrapped about his wrists, he threw his whole weight back on them, and strove to check or at least to guide the terrified animals. The light cart bounded and swayed from side to side. Men shouted and women screamed, and a clanging cable-car from a cross street was saved from collision only by the prompt efforts of its gripman. The roadway was becoming more and more crowded with teams and pedestrians. Alaric's teeth were clinched, and he was bareheaded, having lost his hat as he caught the reins. Esther sat beside him, motionless and silent, but with bloodless cheeks.

They were on an avenue that led to the heart of the city. On one side was a hill, up which cross streets climbed steeply. To keep on as they were going meant certain destruction. All the strain that Alaric could bring to bear on the reins did not serve to check the headlong speed of the hard-mouthed ponies. With each instant their blind terror seemed to increase. Several side streets leading up the hill had already been passed, and another was close at hand. Beyond it was a mass of teams and cable-cars.

"Hold on for your life!" panted Alaric in the ear of the girl who sat beside him.

As he spoke he dropped one rein, threw all his weight on the other, and at the same instant brought the whip down with a stinging cut on the right-hand side of the off horse. The frenzied animal instinctively sprang to the left, both yielded to the heavy tug of that rein, and the team was turned into the side street. The cart slewed across the smooth asphalt, lunged perilously to one side, came within a hair's-breadth of upsetting, and then righted. Two seconds later the mad flight of the ponies was checked by pure exhaustion half-way up the steep hill-side. There they stood panting and trembling, while a crowd of excited spectators gathered about them with offers of assistance and advice.

"Do they seem to be all right?" asked Alaric.

"All right, sir, far as I can see," replied one of the men, who was examining the quivering animals and their harness.

"Then if you will kindly help me turn them around, and will lead them to the foot of the hill, I think they will be quiet enough to drive on without giving any more trouble," said the boy.

When this was done, and Alaric, after cordially thanking those who had aided him, had driven away, one of the men exclaimed, as he gazed after the vanishing carriage:

"Plucky young chap that!"

"Yes," replied another; "and doesn't seem to be a bit of a snob, like most of them wealthy fellows, either."

Meanwhile Alaric was tendering the reins to the girl who had sat so quietly by his side without an outcry or a word of suggestion during the whole exciting episode.

"Won't you drive now, Cousin Esther?"

"Indeed I will not, Alaric. I feel ashamed of myself for presuming to take the reins from you before, and you may be certain that I shall never attempt to do such a thing again. The way you managed the whole affair was simply splendid. And oh, Cousin Rick! to think that I should have called *you* a Miss Nancy! Just as you were about to save my life, too! I can never forgive myself--never."

"Oh yes you can," laughed Alaric, "for it is true--that is, it was true; for I can see now that I have been a regular Miss Nancy sort of a fellow all my life. That is what made me feel so badly when you said it. Nobody ever dared tell me

before, and so it came as an unpleasant surprise. Now, though, I am glad you said it."

"And you will never give anybody in the whole world a chance to say such a thing again, will you?" asked the girl, eagerly. "And you will go right to work at learning how to do the things that other boys do, won't you?"

"I don't know," answered Alaric, doubtfully. "I'd like to well enough; but I don't know just how to begin. You see, I'm too old to learn from the little boys, and the big fellows won't have anything to do with such a duffer as I am. They've all heard too much about my weak heart."

"Then I'd go away to some place where nobody knows you, and make a fresh start. You might go out on one of your father's ranches and learn to be a cowboy, or up into those great endless forests that I saw on Puget Sound the other day and live in a logging camp. It is such a glorious, splendid life, and there is so much to be done up in that country. Oh dear! if I were only a boy, and going to be a man, wouldn't I get there just as quickly as I could, and learn how to do things, so that when I grew up I could go right ahead and do them?"

"All that sounds well," said Alaric, dubiously, "but I know father will never let me go to any such places. He thinks such a life would kill me. Besides, he says that as I shall never have to work, there is no need for me to learn how."

"But you must work," responded Esther, stoutly. "Every one must, or else be very unhappy. Papa says that the happiest people in the world are those who work the hardest when it is time for work and play the hardest in play-time. But where are you driving to? This isn't the way home."

"I am going to get a new hat and gloves," answered the boy, "for I don't want any one at the house to know of our runaway. They'd never let me drive the ponies again if they found it out."

"It would be a shame if they didn't, after the way you handled them just now," exclaimed Esther, indignantly.

Just then they stopped before a fashionable hat-store on Kearney Street, and while Alaric was debating whether he ought to leave the ponies long enough to step inside he was recognized, and a clerk hastened out to receive his order.

"Hat and gloves," said Alaric. "You know the sizes."

The clerk answered, "Certainly, Mr. Todd," bowed, and disappeared in the store.

"See those lovely gray 'Tams' in the window, Cousin Rick!" said Esther. "Why don't you get one of them? It would be just the thing to wear in the woods."

"All right," replied the boy; "I will."

So when the clerk reappeared with a stylish derby hat and a dozen pair of gloves Alaric put the former on, said he would keep the gloves, and at the same time requested that one of the gray Tams might be done up for him.

As this order was filled, and the ponies were headed towards home, Esther said: "Why, Cousin Rick, you didn't pay for your things!"

"No," replied the boy, "I never do."

"You didn't even ask the prices, either."

"Of course not," laughed the other. "Why should I? They were things that I had to have anyway, and so what would be the use of asking the prices? Besides, I don't think I ever did such a thing in my life."

"Well," sighed the girl, "it must be lovely to shop in that way. Now I never bought anything without first finding out if I could afford it; and as for gloves, I know I never bought more than one pair at a time."

"Really?" said Alaric, with genuine surprise. "I didn't know they sold less than a dozen pair at a time. I wish I had known it, for I only wanted one pair. I've got so many at home now that they are a bother."

That very evening the lad spoke to his father about going on a ranch and learning to be a cowboy. Unfortunately his brother John overheard him, and greeted the proposition with shouts of laughter. Even Amos Todd, while mildly rebuking his eldest son, could not help smiling at the absurdity of the request. Then, turning to the mortified lad, he said, kindly but decidedly:

"You don't know what you are asking, Allie, my boy, and I couldn't think for a moment of allowing you to attempt such a thing. The excitement of that kind of life would kill you in less than no time. Ask anything in reason, and I shall be only too happy to gratify you; but don't make foolish requests."

When Alaric reported this failure to Esther a little later, she said, very gravely:

"Then, Cousin Rick, there is only one thing left for you to do. You must run away."

CHAPTER III

ALARIC TAKES A FIRST LESSON

On the day following that of the runaway, Esther Dale resumed her position as a personally conducted tourist, and departed from San Francisco, leaving Alaric to feel that he had lost the first real friend he had ever known. Her influence remained with him, however, and as he thought of her words and example his determination to enter upon some different form of life became indelibly fixed.

That very day he drove again to the park, this time with only his groom for company, and went directly to the place where the game of baseball had been in progress the afternoon before. As he hoped, another was about to begin, though there were not quite enough players to make two full nines. Hearing one of the boys say this, and discovering an acquaintance among them, Alaric jumped from his cart, and, going up to him, asked to be allowed to fill one of the vacant positions.

Reg Barker was freckle-faced and red-headed, clad in flannels, with sleeves rolled up to his elbows, and was adjusting a catcher's mask to his face when Alaric approached. As the latter made known his desire, Reg Barker, who was extremely jealous of the other's wealth and fame as a traveller, regarded him for a moment with amazement, and then burst into a shout of laughter.

"Hi, fellows!" he called, "here is a good one--best I ever heard! Here's Allie Todd, kid gloves and all, wants to play first base. What do you say--shall we give him a show?"

"Yes," shouted one; "No," cried another, as the boys crowded about the two, gazing at Alaric curiously, as though he belonged to some different species.

"We might make him captain of the nine," called out one boy, who had just gone to the bat.

"No, he'd do better as umpire," suggested Reg Barker. "Don't you see he's dressed for it? I don't know, though; I'm afraid that would come under the head of cruelty to children, and we'd have the society down on us."

As Alaric, with a crimson face and a choking in his throat, sought in vain for some outlet of escape from his tormentors who surrounded him, and at the same time longed with a bitter longing for the power to annihilate them, a lad somewhat older than the others forced his way through the throng and demanded to know what was the row. He was Dave Carncross, the pitcher, and one of the best amateur players of his age on the coast.

"It's Miss Allie Todd," explained Reg Barker, "and her ladyship is offering to show us how to play ball."

"Shut up, Red Top," commanded the new-comer, threateningly. "When I want any of your chaff I'll let you know." Then turning to Alaric, he said, pleasantly, "Now, young un, tell me all about it yourself."

"There isn't much to tell," replied the boy, in a low tone, and with an instinctive warming of his heart towards the sturdy lad who had come to his rescue. "I wanted to learn how to play ball, and knowing Reg Barker, asked him to teach me; that's all."

"And he insulted you, like the young brute he is. I see. Red Top, if you won't learn manners any other way I shall have to thrash them into you. So look out for yourself. Now, you new fellow, your name's Todd, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"And your father is Amos Todd, the millionaire?"

Alaric admitted that such was the case.

"Well, I know you, or, rather, my father knows your father. In fact, I think they have some business together; and after this whenever you choose to come out here if I'm around I'll see that you are treated decently. As for learning to play ball, the mere fact that you want to shows that you are made of good stuff, and I don't mind giving you a lesson right now. So, stand out here, and let's see if you can catch."

Thus saying, the stalwart young pitcher, who held a ball in his hand, ran back a few rods, and, with a seemingly careless swing of his arm, threw the ball straight and swift as an arrow directly at Alaric, who instinctively held out his hands.

Had he undertaken to stop a spent cannon-ball the boy could hardly have been more amazed at the result. As the ball

dropped to the ground he felt as though he had grasped a handful of red-hot coals. Both his kid gloves were split right across the palms, and the smart of his hands was so great that, in spite of his efforts to restrain them, unbidden tears sprang to his eyes.

A shout of laughter arose from the spectators of this practical lesson; but Dave Carncross, running up to him and recovering the dropped ball, said, cheerily: "Never mind those duffers, young un. They couldn't do any better themselves once, and you'll do better than any of them some time. First lessons in experience always come high, and have to be paid for on the spot; but they are worth the price, and you'll know better next time than to stop a hot ball with stiff arms. What you want to do is to let 'em give with the ball. See, like this."

Here Dave picked up a bat, struck the ball straight up in the air until it seemed to be going out of sight, and running under it as it descended, caught it as deftly and gently as though it had been a wad of feathers.

"There," said he, "you have learned by experience the wrong way of catching a ball, and seen the right way. I can't stop to teach you any more now, for our game is waiting. What you want to do, though, is to go down town and get a ball--a 'regulation dead,' mind--take it home, and practise catching until you have learned the trick and covered your hands with blisters. Then come back here, and I will show you something else. Good-bye--so long!"

With this the good-natured fellow ran off to take his place in the pitcher's box, leaving Alaric filled with gratitude, and glowing with the first thrill of real boyish life that he had ever known. For a while he stood and watched the game, his still-tingling hands causing him to appreciate as never before the beauty of every successful catch that was made. He wondered if pitching a ball could be as difficult as catching one, or even any harder than it looked. It certainly appeared easy enough. He admired the reckless manner in which the players flung themselves at the bases, sliding along the ground as though bent on ploughing it with their noses; while the ability to hit one of those red-hot balls with a regulation bat seemed to him little short of marvellous. In fact, our lad was, for the first time in his life, viewing a game of baseball through his newly discovered loophole of experience, and finding it a vastly different affair from the same scene shrouded by an unrent veil of ignorance.

After he had driven away from the fascinating game, his mind was still so full of it that when, in passing the children's playground, he was invited by Miss Sue Barker, sister of red-headed Reg, to join in a game of croquet, he declined, politely enough, but with such an unwonted tone of contempt in his voice as caused the girl to stare after him in amazement.

He procured a regulation baseball before going home, and then practised with it in the court-yard behind the Todd palace until his hands were red and swollen. Their condition was so noticeable at dinnertime that his father inquired into the cause. When the boy confessed that he had been practising with a baseball, his brother John laughed loud and long, and asked him if he intended to become a professional.

His sister only said, "Oh, Allie! How can you care to do anything so common? And where did you pick up the notion? I am sure you never saw anything of the kind in France."

"No," replied the boy; "I only wish I had."

His father said, "It's all right, my son, so long as you play gently; but you must be very careful not to over-exert yourself. Remember your poor weak heart and the consequences of too violent exercise."

"Oh, bother my weak heart!" cried the boy, impatiently. "I don't believe my heart's any weaker than anybody else's heart, and the doctor who said so was an old muff."

At this unheard-of outbreak on the part of the long-suffering youngest member of the family, John and Margaret glanced significantly at each other, as though they suspected his mind was becoming affected as well as his body; while his father said, soothingly, as though to an ailing child:

"Well, well, Allie, let it go. I am sorry that you should forget your manners; but if the subject is distasteful to you, we won't talk of it any more."

"But I want to talk of it, father. I am sorry that I spoke as I did just now; but you can't know what an unhappy thing it is to be living on in the way I am, without doing anything that amounts to anything, or will ever lead to anything. Won't you let me go on to a ranch, or somewhere where I can learn to be a man?"

"Of course, my boy," replied Amos Todd, still speaking as soothingly as he knew how. "I will let you go anywhere you please, and do what you please, just as quickly as I can find the right person to take care of you, and see that you do nothing injurious. How would you like to go to France with Margaret and me this summer? I am thinking of making the trip."

"I would rather go to China, or anywhere else in the world," replied the boy, vehemently. "I am tired to death of France and Germany and Switzerland and Italy, and all the other wretched European places, with their *bads* and *bains* and *spas* and Herr Doctors and *malades*. I want to go into a world of live people, and strong people, and people who don't know whether they have any hearts or not, and don't care."

"Well, well, son, I will try and arrange something for you, only don't get excited," said Amos Todd, at the same time burying himself in his evening paper so as to put an end to the uncomfortable interview.

In spite of the unsatisfactory ending of this conversation, Alaric felt greatly encouraged by it, and during the week that followed he devoted himself as assiduously to learning to catch a baseball as though that were the one preparation needful for plunging into a world of live people. Morning, noon, and evening he kept his groom so busy passing ball with him that the exercising of the ponies was sadly neglected in consequence. With all this practice, and in spite of bruised hands and lame fingers, he at length became so expert that he began to think of hunting up his friend Dave Carncross, and presenting himself for an examination in the art of ball-catching.

Every now and then he asked his father if he had not thought of some plan for him, and the invariable answer was: "It's all right, Allie; I've got a scheme on foot that's working so that I can tell you about it in a few days."

In the meantime the date of Amos Todd's departure for Europe with his daughter was fixed. Shortly before its arrival the former called Alaric aside, and, with a beaming face, announced that he had at length succeeded in making most satisfactory arrangements.

"You said you wanted to go to China, you know," he continued; "so I have laid out a fine trip for you to China, and India, and Egypt, and all sorts of places, and persuaded a most excellent couple, a gentleman and his wife, to go along and take care of you. He is a professor and she is a doctor, so you will be well looked after, and won't have the least bit of responsibility or worry."



CHAPTER IV

THE "EMPRESS" LOSES A PASSENGER

Professor Maximus Sonntag, a big man with a beard, and his wife, Mrs. Dr. Ophelia Sonntag, who was thin and mysterious, had come out of the East to seek their fortunes in the Golden City about a year before, but up to this time without any great amount of success. The former was a professor of almost everything in the shape of ancient and modern art, languages, history, and a lot of other things, concerning all of which he wrote articles for the papers, always signing his name to them in full. The Mrs. Doctor had learned the art of saying little, looking wise, and shaking her head as she felt the pulse of her patients.

These people had managed to scrape an acquaintance with Amos Todd, whom the Professor declared to be the only patron of art in San Francisco worth knowing, and to whom he gave some really valuable advice concerning the purchase of certain paintings. Thus it happened that when the busy millionaire, in seeking to provide a safe and congenial amusement for the son whom he firmly believed to be an invalid, conceived the idea of sending him around the world by way of China, he also thought of the Sonntags as most suitable travelling companions for him. Where else could he find such a combination of tutor and physician, a man of the world to take his place as father, and a cultivated woman to act as mother to his motherless boy?

When he proposed the plan to the Sonntags, they declared that they would not think of giving up the prosperous business they had established in San Francisco, even for the sake of obliging their dear friend Mr. Amos Todd. With this the millionaire made them an offer of such unheard-of munificence that, with pretended reluctance, they finally accepted it, and he went on his way rejoicing.

The next evening the Sonntags dined at Amos Todd's house for the purpose of making Alaric's acquaintance. The Professor patted him on the shoulder, and, in a patronizing manner, hoped they should learn much and enjoy much together. The Mrs. Doctor surveyed him critically, and held his hand until the boy wondered if she would ever let it go. Finally she shook her head, sighed deeply, and, turning to his father, said:

"I understand the dear boy's case thoroughly. What he needs is intelligent treatment and motherly care. I can give him both, and unhesitatingly promise to restore him to you at the end of a year, if nothing occurs to prevent, strong, well, and an ornament to the name of Todd."

Alaric found no difficulty in forming an opinion of the Sonntags, and wondered if going to France with his father and sister would not be preferable to travelling in their company. So occupied was he with this question that he hardly ate a mouthful of the sumptuous dinner served in honor of the guests--a fact that was noted with significant glances by all at the table.

It was planned that very evening that the Pacific should be crossed in one of the superb steamships sailing from Vancouver, in British Columbia, and a despatch was sent off at once to engage staterooms. The journey was to be begun two days later, for that was the date on which Amos Todd and his daughter were to start for France; and though the *Empress* would not sail from Vancouver for a week after that, the house would be closed, and it was thought best for Alaric to travel up the coast by easy stages.

During those two days of grace the poor lad's mind was in a ferment. He had no desire to go to China or anywhere else outside of his own country. Having travelled nearly all his life, he was so tired of it that travelling now seemed to him one of the most unpleasant things a boy could be compelled to undertake. He did not want to go to France, of course, and decided that even China in company with the Sonntags would be better than Europe.

Still, he tried to escape from going away at all, and asked his brother John to let him stay with him and go to work in the bank; but John Todd answered that he was too busy a man to have the care of an invalid, and that their father's plan was by far the best. Then, as a last resort, Alaric went to the park, hoping to meet Dave Carncross, and determined, if he did, to lay the whole case before him, and ask his advice. Even here fate seemed against him; for, from a strange boy of whom he made inquiry, he learned that Carncross had left the city a day or two before, though where he had gone the boy did not know.

So preparations for the impending journey went busily forward, and Alaric, who felt very much like a helpless victim of misfortune, could find no excuse for delaying them. Even in the preparations being made for his own comfort he was given no active part. Everything that he was supposed to need and did not already possess was procured for him. His father presented him with a superb travelling-bag, fitted with all possible toilet accessories in silver and cut glass, but the boy would infinitely have preferred a baseball bat, and a chance to use it.

At length the day for starting arrived, and, with as great reluctance as he had ever felt in his life, Alaric entered the carriage that was to convey the Todds to the Oakland ferry. Crossing the bay, they found the Sonntags awaiting them on the other side, where the whole party entered Amos Todd's palatial private car that was attached to the Overland Express. In this way they travelled together as far as Sacramento, where Alaric bade his father and sister good-bye. Then he and his newly appointed guardians boarded the special car provided for them, and in which they were to proceed by the famous Shasta route to the far North.

Up to this point the Sonntags had proved very attentive, and had striven by every means to make themselves agreeable to their fellow-travellers. From here on, however, the Professor spent most of his time in smoking and sleeping, while his wife devoted herself to reading novels, a great stack of which had been provided for the journey. Alaric, thus left to his own devices, gazed drearily from the car window, rebelling inwardly at the lonely grandeur with which he was surrounded, and wishing with all his heart that he were poor enough to be allowed to travel in one of the ordinary coaches, in which were several boys of his own age, who seemed to be having a tantalizingly good time. They were clad in flannels, knickerbockers, and heavy walking-shoes, and Alaric noted with satisfaction that they wore gray Tam o' Shanter caps, such as he had procured at Esther Dale's suggestion, and was now wearing for the first time.

They left the train at Sisson, and Alaric, standing on the platform of his car, gathered from their conversation that they were about to climb Mount Shasta, the superb rock-ribbed giant that lifted his snow-crowned head more than fourteen thousand feet in the air a few miles from that point. What wouldn't he give to be allowed to join the merry party and make the adventurous trip with them? He had been familiar with mountains by sight all his life, and had always longed to climb one, but had never been given the opportunity.

It was small consolation to notice one of the boys draw the attention of the others to him, and overhear him say: "Look at that chap travelling in a special car like a young millionaire. I say, fellows, that must be great fun, and I'd like to try it just for once, wouldn't you?"

The others agreed that they would, and then the group passed out of hearing, while Alaric said to himself: "I only wish they could try travelling all alone in a special car, just to find out how little fun there is in it."

The following morning Portland, Oregon, was reached, and here the car was side-tracked that its occupants might spend a day or two in the city. The Sonntags seemed to have many acquaintances here, for whom they held a reception in the car, gave a dinner at the Hotel Portland, and ordered carriages in which to drive about, all at Amos Todd's expense. In these diversions Alaric was at liberty to join or not, as he pleased, and he generally preferred to remain behind or to wander about by himself.

The same programme was repeated at Tacoma and Seattle, in the State of Washington, and at Vancouver, in British Columbia. In the last-named place Alaric's chief amusement lay in watching the lading of the great white ship that was to bear him away, and the busy life of the port, with its queer medley of Yankees and Britishers, Indians and Chinamen, tourists, sailors, and stevedores. The last-named especially excited his envious admiration--they were such big men, and so strong.





ALARIC MAKES HIS FIRST DECISION

At length the morning of sailing arrived, and as the mighty steamship moved majestically out of the harbor, and, leaving the brown waters of Burrard Inlet behind, swept on into the open blue of the Gulf of Georgia, the boy was overwhelmed with a great wave of homesickness. Standing alone at the extreme after end of the promenade-deck, he watched the fading land with strained eyes, and felt like an outcast and a wanderer on the face of the earth.

After a while the ship began to thread a bewildering maze of islands, in which Professor Sonntag made a slight effort to interest his moody young charge; but finding this a difficult task, he quickly gave it up, and joined some acquaintances in the smoking-room.

Alaric had not known that the *Empress* was to make one stop before taking her final departure from the coast. So when she was made fast to the outer wharf at Victoria, on the island of Vancouver, the largest city in British Columbia, and its capital, he felt like one who receives an unexpected reprieve from an unpleasant fate.

As it was announced that she would remain here two hours, the Sonntags, according to their custom, at once engaged a carriage to take them to the most interesting places in the city. This plan had been suggested by Amos Todd himself, who had bidden them spare no expense or pains to show his son all that was worth seeing in the various cities they might visit; and that the boy generally declined to accompany them on these excursions was surely not their fault—at least, they did not regard it so.

The truth was that Alaric had taken a dislike to these pretentious people from the very first, and it had grown so much stronger on closer acquaintance that now he was willing to do almost anything to avoid their company. Thus on this occasion he allowed them to drive off without him, while he strolled alone to the head of the wharf, tossing his beloved baseball, which he had carefully brought with him on this journey, from hand to hand as he walked.

"Hello! Give us a catch," shouted a cheery voice; and, looking up, Alaric saw a merry-faced, squarely built lad of his own age standing in an expectant attitude a short distance from him. Although he was roughly dressed, he had a bright, self-reliant look that was particularly attractive to our young traveller, who without hesitation tossed him the

ball. They passed it back and forth for a minute, and then the stranger lad, saying, "Good-bye; I must be getting along; wish I could stop and get better acquainted, though," ran on with a laugh, and disappeared in the crowd.

An hour later Alaric was nearly half a mile from the wharf, when the steamer's hoarse whistle sounded a warning note that signified a speedy departure. He turned and began to walk slowly in that direction, and a few minutes later a carriage containing the Sonntags dashed by without its occupants noticing him.

At sight of them Alaric paused. A queer look came into his face; it grew very pale, and then he deliberately sat down on a log by the way-side. There came another blast of the ship's whistle, and then the tall masts, which he could just see, began slowly to move. The *Empress*, with the Sonntags on board, had started for China, and one of her passengers was left behind.



CHAPTER V

FIRST MATE BONNY BROOKS

Alaric Todd's sensations as he sat on that log and watched the ship, in which he was supposed to be a passenger, steam away without him were probably as curious as any ever experienced by a boy. He had deliberately abandoned a life of luxury, as well as a position that most people are striving with all their energies to obtain, and accepted in its place--what? He did not know, and for the moment he did not care. He only knew that the Sonntags were gone beyond a chance of return at least for some weeks, and that during that time there was no possible way in which they could reach him or communicate with his family.

He realized that he was in a strange city, not one of whose busy population either knew or cared to know a thing about him. But what of that? If they did not know him they could never call him by the hated name of "Allie." If he succeeded in making friends, it would be because of himself, and not on account of his father's wealth. Above all, those now about him did not know and should never know, if he could keep it, that he was thought to be possessed of a weak heart. Certainly if excitement could injure his heart, it ought to be completely ruined at the present moment, for he had never been so excited in his life, and doubted if he ever should be again.

With it all the lad was filled with such an exulting sense of liberty that he wanted to jump and shout and share with every passer-by the glorious news that at length he was free--free to be a boy among boys, and to learn how to become a man among men. He did not shout, nor did he confide his happiness to any of those who were coming up from the wharf, where they had just witnessed the departure of the great ship; but he did jump from the log on which he had been sitting and fling his baseball high in the air. As it descended and he caught it with practised skill, he was greeted by the approving remark: "Good catch! Couldn't do it better myself!" and looking round he saw the lad with whom he had passed ball a short time before.

"It seems mighty good," continued the stranger, "to see a baseball again, and meet a fellow who knows how to catch one. These chaps over here don't know anything about it, and I've hardly seen a ball since I left Massachusetts. You don't throw, though, half as well as you catch."

"No," replied Alaric, "I haven't learned that yet. You see, I've only just begun."

"That so? Wish I had a chance to show you something about it, then, for I used to play on the nine at home."

"I wish you could, for I want awfully to learn. Why can't you?"

"Because I don't live here, and, do you know, I didn't think you did, either. When I saw you awhile ago, I had a sort of idea that you belonged aboard the *Empress*, and were going in her to China, and I've been more than half envying you ever since. Funny, wasn't it?"

"Awfully!" responded Alaric. "And I'm glad it isn't true, for I don't know of anything I should hate more than to be going to China in the *Empress*. But I say, let's stop in here and get something to eat, for I'm hungry--aren't you?"

"Of course I am," laughed the other; and with this the two boys, who were already strolling towards the city together, turned into the little road-side bake-shop that had just attracted Alaric's attention. Here he ordered half a sheet of buns, two tarts, and two glasses of milk. These being served on a small table, Alaric paid for them, and the newly made acquaintances sat down to enjoy their feast at leisure.

"What I want to do," said Alaric, continuing their interrupted conversation, "is to get back to the States as quickly as possible."

"That's easy enough," replied the other, holding his tart in both hands and devouring it with infinite relish. "There's a steamer leaves here at eight o'clock this evening for Seattle and Tacoma. But you don't live here then, after all?"

"No, I don't live here, nor do I know any one who does, and I want to get away as quickly as I can; for I am looking for work, and should think the chances for finding it were better in the States than here."

"*You* looking for work?" said the other, slowly, and as though doubting whether he had heard aright. At the same time he glanced curiously at Alaric's white hands and neatly fitting coat. "You don't look like a fellow who is looking for work."

"I am, though," laughed Alaric; "and as I have just spent the last cent of money I had in the world, I must find something to do right away. That's the reason I want to get back to the States; but I don't know about that steamer. I

suppose they'd charge something to take me, wouldn't they?"

"Well, rather," responded the other. "But I say, Mister--By-the-way, what is your name?"

"Dale--Rick Dale," replied Alaric, promptly, for he had anticipated this question, and was determined to drop the Todd part of his name, at least for the present. "But there isn't any Mister about it. It's just plain Rick Dale."

"Well, then, plain Rick Dale," said the other, "my name is Bonny Brooks--short for Bonnicastle, you know; and I must say that you are the most cheerful-appearing fellow to be in the fix you say you are that I ever met. When I get strapped and out of a job I sometimes don't laugh for a whole day, especially if I don't have anything to eat in that time."

"That's something I never tried, and I didn't know any one ever did for a whole day," remarked Alaric. "How queer it must seem!"

"Lots of people try it; but they don't unless they have to, and it don't seem queer at all," replied Bonny, soberly. "But what kind of work are you looking for, and what pay do you expect?"

"I am looking for anything I can find to do, and will work for any pay that is offered."

"It would seem as if a fellow ought to get plenty to do on those terms," said Bonny, "though it isn't so easy as you might think, for I've tried it. How do you happen to be looking for work, anyway? Where is your home, and where are your folks?"

"My mother is dead," replied Alaric, "and I suppose my father is in France, though just where he is I don't know. Our home was in San Francisco, and before he left he tried to fix things all right for me; but they turned out all wrong, and so I am here looking for something to do."

"If that don't beat anything I ever heard of!" cried Bonny Brooks, in a tone of genuine amazement. "If I didn't know better, I should think you were telling my story, or that we were twins; for my mother is dead, and my father, when last heard from, was on his way to France. You see, he was a ship captain, and we lived in Sandport, on Cape Cod, where, after my mother died, he fixed up a home for me with an aunt, and left money enough to keep me at school until he came back from a voyage to South America and France. We heard of his reaching Brazil and leaving there, but never anything more; and when a year passed Aunt Nancy said she couldn't support me any longer. So she got me a berth as cabin-boy on a bark bound to San Francisco, and then to the Sound for lumber to China. I wanted to go to China fast enough, but the captain treated me so badly that I couldn't stand it any longer, and so skipped just before the ship sailed from Port Blakely. The meanest part of it all was that I had to forfeit my pay, leave my dunnage on board, and light out with only what I had on my back."

"That's my fix exactly," cried Alaric, delightedly. "I mean," he added, recollecting himself, "that my baggage got carried off, and as I haven't heard from it since, I don't own a thing in the world except the clothing I have on."

"And a baseball," interposed Bonny.

"Oh yes, a baseball, of course," replied Alaric, soberly, as though that were a most matter-of-fact possession for a boy in search of employment. "But what did you do after your ship sailed away without you?"

"Starved for a couple of days, and then did odd jobs about the river for my grub, until I got a chance to ship as one of the crew of the sloop *Fancy*, that runs freight and passengers between here and the Sound. That was only about a month ago, and now I'm first mate."

"You are?" cried Alaric, at the same time regarding his young companion with a profound admiration and vastly increased respect. "Seems to me that is the most rapid promotion I ever heard of. What a splendid sailor you must be!"

Although the speaker was so ignorant of nautical matters that he did not know a sloop from a schooner, or from a full-rigged ship, for that matter, he had read enough sea stories to realize that the first mate of any vessel was often the most important character on board.

"Yes," said Bonny, modestly, "I do know a good deal about boats; for, you see, I was brought up in a boating town, and have handled them one way and another ever since I can remember. I haven't been first mate very long, though, because the man who was that only left to-day."

"What made him?" asked Alaric, who could not understand how any one, having once attained to such an enviable position, could willingly give it up.

"Oh, he had some trouble with the captain, and seemed to think it was time he got paid something on account of his

wages, so that he could buy a shirt and a pair of boots."

"Why didn't the captain pay him?"

"I suppose he didn't have the money."

"Then why didn't the man get the things he wanted, and have them charged?"

"That's a good one," laughed Bonny. "Because the storekeeper wouldn't trust him, of course."

"I never heard of such a thing," declared Alaric, indignantly. "I thought people could always have things charged if they wanted to. I'm sure I never found any trouble in doing it."

"Didn't you?" said Bonny. "Well, I have, then," and he spoke so queerly that Alaric realized in a moment that he had very nearly betrayed his secret. Hastening to change the subject, he asked:

"If you took the mate's place, who took yours?"

"Nobody has taken it yet, and that's what I'm after now--hunting for a new hand. The captain couldn't come himself, because he's got rheumatism so bad that it's all he can do to crawl out on deck and back again. Besides, it's the first mate's place to ship the crew, anyhow."

"Then," asked Alaric, excitedly, "why don't you take me? I'll work hard and do anything you say?"

"You?" cried Bonny, regarding his companion with amazement. "Have you ever sailed a boat or helped work a vessel?"

"No," replied Alaric, humbly; "but I am sure I can learn, and I shouldn't expect any pay until I did."

"I should say not," remarked the first mate of the *Fancy*, "though most greenhorns do. Still, that is one thing in your favor. Another is that you can catch a ball as well as any fellow I ever knew, and a chap who can do that can learn to do most anything. So I really have a great mind to take you on trial."

"Do you think the captain will agree to it?" asked Alaric, anxiously.

"Of course he will, if I say so," replied Bonny Brooks, confidently; "for, as I just told you, the first mate always hires the crew."



CHAPTER VI

PREPARING TO BE A SAILOR

During the conversation just recorded the boys by no means neglected their luncheon, for both of them had been very hungry, and by the time they arrived at an understanding in regard to Alaric's engagement not a crumb of food nor a drop of milk was left before them. While to Bonny Brooks this had proved a most welcome and enjoyable repast, to Alaric it marked a most important era of his life. To begin with, it was the first meal he had ever paid for out of his own pocket, and this alone was sufficient to give it a flavor that he had never discovered in the rich food by which his appetite had heretofore been tempted.

Then during this simple meal he had entered upon his first friendship with a boy of his own age, for the liking that he had already taken for Bonny Brooks was evidently returned. Above all, during that brief lunch-hour he had conducted his first independent business operation, and now found himself engaged to fill a responsible position in active life. To be sure, he was only taken on trial, but if good intentions and a determination to do his very best could command success, then was his position assured. How fortunate he was, after all! An opening, a chance to prove what he could do, was all that he had wanted, and behold! it was his within the first hour of his independent life. How queer that it had come through his baseball too, and how strangely one thing seemed to lead to another!

Now Alaric was impatient for a sight of the vessel that was to be the scene of his future labors, and anxious to begin them. He had so little idea of what a sloop was that he even wondered if it would be propelled by sails or steam. He was inclined to think that it must be the latter, for Bonny had spoken of his craft as carrying passengers, and Alaric had never known any passenger boats except such as were driven by steam. So he pictured the *Fancy* as a steamer, not so large as the *Empress*, of course, but fairly good-sized, manned by engineers, stokers, stewards, and a crew of sailors. With this image in his mind, he regarded his companion as one who had indeed attained a lofty position.

So busy was our hero with these thoughts that for a full minute after the lads left the bake-shop he did not utter a word. Bonny Brooks was also occupied with a line of thought that caused him to glance reflectively at his companion several times before he spoke. Finally he broke out with:

"I say, Rick Dale, I don't know about shipping you for a sailor, after all. You see, you are dressed altogether too fine. Any one would take you for the captain or maybe the owner if you were to go aboard in those togs."

"Would they?" asked Alaric, gazing dubiously down at his low-cut patent-leather shoes, black silk socks, and light trousers accurately creased and unbaggied at the knees. Besides these he wore a vest and sack-coat of fine black serge, an immaculate collar, about which was knotted a silk neck-scarf, and a narrow-striped cheviot shirt, the cuffs of which were fastened by gold sleeve-links. Across the front of his vest, from pocket to pocket, extended a slender chain of twisted gold and platinum, at one end of which was his watch, and at the other a gold and platinum pencil-case.

"Yes, they would," answered Bonny, with decision; "and you've got to make a change somehow, or else our bargain must be called off, for you could never become a sailor in that rig."

Here was a difficulty on which Alaric had not counted, and it filled him with dismay. "Couldn't I change suits with you?" he asked, anxiously. "I shouldn't think mine would be too fine for a first mate."

"Not if I know it," laughed Bonny. "They'd fit me too much one way and not enough another. Besides, they are shore togs any way you look at 'em, and not at all the things to go to sea in. The cap'n would have a fit if you should go aboard dressed as you are. So if you want to ship with us, I'm afraid you'll have to buy a new outfit."

"But I haven't any money, and you say they won't charge things in this town."

"Of course they won't if they don't know you; but you might spout your ticker, and make a raise that way."

"Might what?"

"Shove up your watch. Leave it with your uncle, you know, until you earned enough to buy it back."

"Do you mean sell it?"

"No. They'd ask too many questions if you tried to sell it, and wouldn't give much more, anyway. I mean pawn it."

"All right," replied Alaric. "I'm willing, only I don't know how."

"Oh, I'll show you quick enough, if you really want to do it."

As Alaric insisted that he was willing to do almost anything to procure that coveted sailor's outfit, Bonny led him to a mean-looking shop, above the door of which hung three golden balls. The dingy windows were filled with a dusty miscellany of watches, pistols, and all sorts of personal property, while the opening of the door set loose a musty odor of old clothing. As this came pouring forth Alaric instinctively drew back in disgust; but with a sudden thought that he could not afford to be too fastidious in the new life he had chosen, he conquered his repugnance to the place and followed Bonny inside.

A gaunt old Hebrew in a soiled dressing-gown stood behind a small counter. As Alaric glanced at him hesitatingly, Bonny opened their business by saying, briskly:

"Hello, uncle! How are you to-day? My friend here wants to make a raise on his watch."

"Let's see dot vatch," replied Mr. Isaacs, and Alaric handed it to him, together with the chain and pencil-case. It was a fine Swiss chronometer, with the monogram A.D.T. engraved on its back; and as the pawnbroker tested the quality of its case and peered at the works, Alaric noted his deliberate movements with nervous anxiety. Finally the man said:

"I gifs you den tollars on dot vatch mit der chain und pencil trown in."

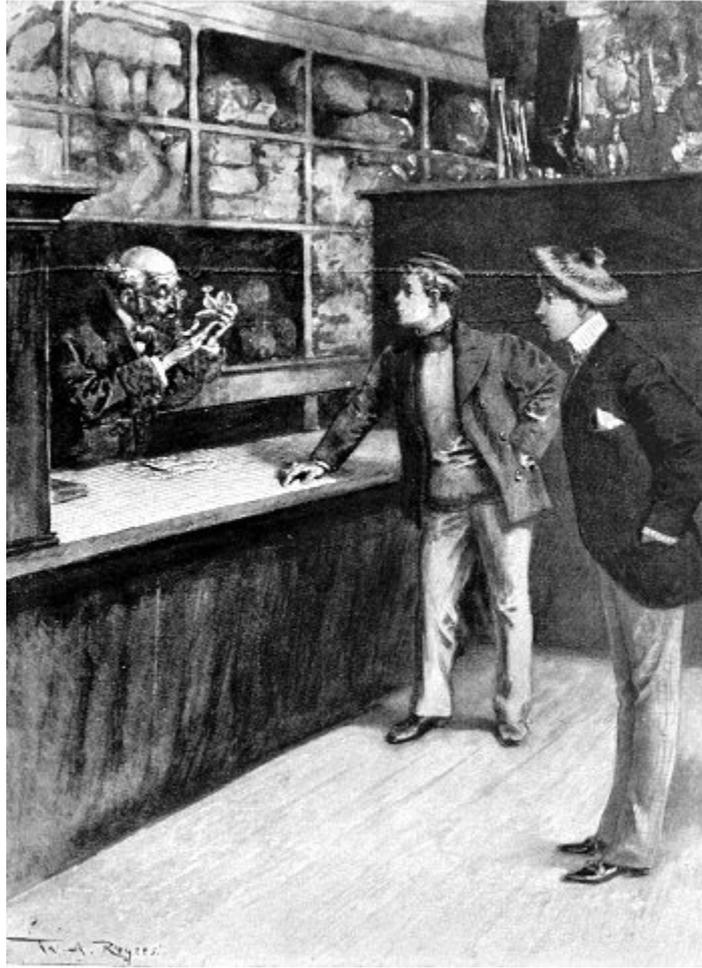
Alaric would have accepted this offer at once, but Bonny knew better.

"Ten nothings!" he said. "You'll give us fifty dollars, uncle, or we'll take it down to Levi's."

"Feefty tollar! So hellup me grashus! I would be aretty bankrupted of I gif feefty tollars on effery vatch. Vat you dake me for?"

"Take you for an old fraud," replied the unabashed first mate of the *Fancy*. "Of course you would be bankrupted, as you ought to have been long ago, if you gave fifty dollars on every turnip that is brought in; but you could well afford to advance a hundred on this watch, and you know it."

"\u00c0eil, I tell you; I gifs t'venty-fife."



"VELL, I TELL YOU. I GIFS YOU TVENTY-FIFE"

"Fifty," said Bonny, firmly.

"Dirty, und nod von cend more, so hellup me."

"Fifty."

"Dirty-fife?"

"We'll split the difference, and call it forty-five."

"I gifs you fordy oud of charidy, seeing you is so hart up."

"It's a bargain," cried Bonny. "Hand over your cash."

"How could you talk to him that way?" asked Alaric, admiringly, as the boys left the shop, he minus his watch and chain, but with forty dollars and a pawn-ticket in his pocket.

"I couldn't once," laughed Bonny; "but it's one of the things poor folks have to learn. If you are willing to let people impose on you they'll be mighty quick to do it, and the only way is to bluff'em from the start."

The next place they entered was a sailor's slop-shop, in which were kept all sorts of seafaring garments and accessories. Here, advised by Bonny, Alaric invested fourteen dollars and seventy-five cents in a blue knit jersey, or sweater, a pair of stout woollen trousers, two flannel shirts, two suits of heavy underclothing, several pairs of cotton socks, and a pair of canvas shoes.

Expressing a desire to make a change of clothing at once, he was shown a retired corner where he might do so, and from which he emerged a few minutes later so altered in appearance that it is doubtful if his own father would have

recognized him.

"That's something like it!" cried Bonny.

"Isn't it?" replied Alaric, surveying himself with great satisfaction in a mirror, and fully convinced that he now looked so like a sailor that no one could possibly mistake him for anything else. "Don't you think, though, that I ought to have the name of the sloop embroidered across the front of this sweater? All the sailors I have ever seen had theirs fixed that way."

"I suppose it would be a good idea," replied Bonny, soberly, though filled with inward laughter at the suggestion. "But perhaps you'd better wait until you see if the ship suits you, and whether you stay with us or not."

"Oh, I'll stay," asserted Alaric. "There's no fear but what I will, if you'll only keep me."

"Going yachting, sir?" asked the shopkeeper, politely, as he carefully folded Alaric's discarded suit of fine clothing.

"No, indeed," replied the boy, scornfully; "I'm going to be a sailor on the sloop *Fancy*, and I wish you would send those things down to her at once."

Ere the man could recover from his astonishment at this request sufficiently to make reply, Bonny interrupted, hastily:

"Oh no, Rick! we'll take them with us. There isn't time to have 'em sent."

"I should guess not," remarked the shopkeeper, in a very different tone from the one he had used before. "But say, young feller, if you're going to be a sailor you'll want a bag, and I've got a second-hand one here almost as good as new that I'll sell cheap. It come to me with a lot of truck from the sale of a confiscated sealer; and seeing that it's got another chap's name painted on it, I'll let you have it for one bob tuppence-ha'penny, and that'll make even money between us."

Thus saying, the man produced a stout canvas bag, such as a sailor uses in place of a trunk. The name plainly painted across it, in black letters, was "Philip Ryder", but Alaric said he didn't mind that, so he took the bag, thrust his belongings, including his cherished baseball, into it, and the two boys left the shop.

"By-the-way," asked Alaric, hesitatingly, "don't I need to get some brushes and things?"

"What for?"

"Why, to brush my hair, and--"

"Oh no," interrupted the other. "There's a comb on board, and, besides, we can't stop for anything more. I've been gone so long now that I expect the old man is madder'n a wet hen by this time."

So Bonny led the way to the wharves, and to a narrow slip between two of them that just then was occupied by but a single craft. She was a small sloop, not over forty feet long, though of good beam, evidently very old, and so dingy that it was hard to believe she had ever been painted. Her sails, hanging unfurled in lazy jacks, were patched and discolored; her running rigging was spliced, the standing rigging was sadly in need of setting up, her iron-work was rusted, and her spars were gray with age.

"There's the old packet," said Bonny, cheerfully.

"Where?" asked Alaric, gazing vaguely down the slip and utterly ignoring the disreputable craft close at hand.

"Why, right here," answered the other, a trifle impatiently. "Don't you see the name '*F-A-N-C-Y*' on her stern? She isn't much to look at, I know, but she's a hummer to go, and a mighty good sea-boat. She's awfully comfortable, too. Come aboard and I'll show you."

With this the cheery young fellow, who had actually come to a belief that the shabby old craft was all he claimed for her, tossed his friend's recent purchase to the deck of the sloop, and began to clamber after it down a rickety ladder.

With all his bright visions of a minute before rudely dispelled, and with a heart so heavy that he could find no words to express his feelings, Alaric followed him.



CHAPTER VII

CAPTAIN DUFF, OF THE SLOOP "FANCY"

As the newly engaged crew of the sloop *Fancy* slowly and awkwardly descended the slippery ladder leading down to his ship, he experienced his first regrets at the decisive step he had taken, and doubts as to its wisdom. The real character of the sloop as shown by a single glance was so vastly different from his ideal, that for a moment it did not seem as though he could accept the disreputable old craft as even a temporary home. Never before had he realized how he loathed dirt and disorder, and all things that offended his delicately trained senses. Never before had he appreciated the cleanly and orderly forms of living to which he had always been accustomed. He could not imagine it possible to eat, sleep, or even exist on board such a craft as lay just beneath him, and his impulse was to fly to some remote place where he should never see nor hear of the *Fancy* again. But even as he was about to do this the sound of Bonny's reassuring voice completely changed the current of his thoughts.

Was not the lad who had brought him to this place a very picture of cheerful health, and just such a strong, active, self-reliant boy as he longed to become? Surely what Bonny could endure he could! Perhaps disagreeable things were necessary to the proper development of a boy. That thought had never come to him before, but now he remembered how much his hands had suffered before they were trained to catch a regulation ball.

Besides all this, had not Bonny hesitated before consenting to give him a trial, and had he not insisted on coming? Had he not also confidently asserted that all he wanted was a chance to show what he was good for, and that nothing save a dismissal should cause him to relinquish whatever position was given him? After all, no matter how bad things might prove on the sloop, there would always be plenty of fresh air and sunshine, besides an unlimited supply of clean water. He could remember catching glimpses, in foreign cities, of innumerable pestilential places in which human beings were compelled to spend whole lifetimes, where none of these things was to be had.

Yes, he would keep on and make the best of whatever presented itself, for perhaps things would not prove to be as bad as they seemed; and, after all, he was willing to endure a great deal for the sake of continuing the friendship just begun between himself and Bonny Brooks. He remembered now having once heard his father say that a friendship worth having was worth fighting for. If that were the case, what a coward he would be to even think of relinquishing his first real friendship without making an effort to retain it.

By the time all these thoughts had flashed through the boy's mind he had gained the sloop's deck, where he was startled by an angry voice that sounded like the bellow of an enraged bull. Turning quickly, he saw his friend Bonny confronted by a big man with a red face and bristling beard. This individual, supported by a pair of rudely made crutches, was standing beside the after companion-way, and glaring at the bag containing his own effects that had been tossed down from the wharf.

"Ye've got a hand, have ye?" roared this man, whom Alaric instinctively knew to be the captain. "Is this his dunnage?"

"Yes, sir," replied the first mate. "And I think--"

"Never mind what you think," interrupted the captain, fiercely. "Send him about his business, and pitch his dunnage back on the wharf or pitch it overboard, I don't care which. Pitch it! d'ye hear?"

"But Captain Duff, I think--"

"Who asked ye to think? I do the thinking on board this craft. Don't ye suppose I know what I'm talking about? I tell ye I had this Phil Ryder with me on one cruise, and I'll never have him on another! An impudent young puppy as ever lived, and a deserter to boot. Took off two of my best men with him, too. Oh, I know him, and I'd Phil him full of his own rifle-bullets ef I had the chance. I'd like to Ryder him on a rail, too."

"You are certainly mistaken, sir, this time, for--"

"Who, I? You dare say I'm mistaken, you tarry young swab you!" roared the man, his face turning purple with rage. "Oh, ef I had the proper use of my feet for one minute I'd show ye! Put him ashore, I tell ye, and do it in a hurry too, or you'll go with him without one cent of wages--not one cent, d'ye hear? I'll have no mutiny where I'm cap'n."

Poor Alaric listened to this fierce outbreak with mingled fear and dismay. Now that the situation he had deemed so surely his either to accept or reject was denied him, it again seemed very desirable. He was about to speak up in his own behalf when the angry man's last threat caused him to change his mind. He could not permit Bonny to suffer on his account, and lose the position he had so recently attained. No, the very first law of friendship forbade that; and so,

stepping forward to claim his bag, he said, in a low tone: "Never mind me, Bonny; I'll go."

"No, you won't!" retorted the young mate, stoutly, "or, if you do, I'll go with you; and I'll have my wages too, Captain Duff, or know the reason why."

Without paying the slightest attention to this remark, the man was staring at Alaric, whom he had not noticed until this moment. "Who is that land-lubber togged out like a sporty salt?" he demanded.

"He's the crew I hired, and the one you have just bounced," replied Bonny.

"What's his name?"

"Rick Dale."

"What made you say it was Phil Ryder, then?"

"I didn't, sir. You--"

"Don't contradict me, you unlicked cub! Can he shoot?"

"No, sir," replied Alaric, as Bonny looked at him inquiringly.

"All right. I wouldn't have him aboard if he could. Why don't he take his thundering dunnage and go for'ard, where he belongs, and cook me some grub when he knows I haven't had anything to eat sence sunup? Why don't he, I say?"

With this Captain Duff turned and clumped heavily to the other side of the deck; while Bonny, hastily picking up the bag that had been the innocent cause of all this uproar, said, in a low voice: "Come on, Rick; it's all right."

As they went forward together he dropped the bag down a tiny fore-castle hatch. Then, after asking Alaric to cut some kindlings and start a fire in the galley stove, which was housed on deck, he dove into the cabin to see what he could find that could be cooked for dinner.

When he reappeared a minute later he found his crew struggling with an axe and a chunk of hard wood, from which he was vainly attempting to detach some slivers. He had already cut two deep gashes in the deck, and in another moment would probably have needed crutches as badly as the captain himself.

"Hold on, Rick!" cried the young mate, catching the axe-helve just as the weapon was making another erratic descent. "I find those grocery chaps haven't sent down any stores. So do you just run up there. It's two doors this side of Uncle Isaac's, you know, and hurry them along. I'll 'tend to the fire while you are gone."

Gladly exchanging his unaccustomed, and what he considered to be very dangerous, task of wood-chopping for one that he felt sure he could accomplish creditably, Alaric hastened away. He found the grocer's easily enough, and demanded of the first clerk he met why the stores for the sloop *Fancy* had not been sent down.

"Must have been the other clerk, sir, and I suppose he forgot all about 'em; but I'll attend to the order at once, sir," replied the man, who took in at a glance Alaric's gentlemanly bearing and the newness of his nautical garb. "Have 'em right down, sir. Hard bread, salt junk, rice, and coffee, I believe. Anything else, sir?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Alaric.

"Going to take a run on the *Fancy* yourself, sir?"

"Yes."

"Then of course you'll want some soft bread, a few tins of milk, half a dozen jars of marmalade, and a dozen or so of potted meats?"

"I suppose so," assented the boy.

"Step this way, sir, and let me show you some of our fine goods," suggested the clerk, insinuatingly.

In another part of the building he prattled glibly of pate-de-foie-gras, and Neufchatel cheese, truffles, canned mushrooms, Albert biscuit, anchovy paste, stuffed olives, Wiesbaden prunes, and a variety of things--all of which were so familiar to the millionaire's son, and had appeared so naturally on all the tables at which he had ever sat, that he never for a moment doubted but what they must be necessities on the *Fancy* as well. Of ten million boys he was perhaps the only one absolutely ignorant that these luxuries were not daily articles of food with all persons above the grade of paupers; and as he was equally without a knowledge of their cost, he allowed the clerk to add a dozen jars of this, and as many pots of that, to his list, until even that wily individual could think of nothing else with which to tempt

this easy-going customer. So, promising that the supplies just ordered should be sent down directly, he bowed Alaric out of the door, at the same time trusting that they should be honored with his future patronage.

Bethinking himself that he must have a toothbrush, and that it would also be just as well to have his own comb, in spite of Bonny's assurance that the ship's comb would be at his service, the lad went in search of these articles. When he found them he was also tempted to invest in what he regarded as two other indispensables--namely, a cake of fine soap and a bottle of eau-de-Cologne.

He had gone quite a distance for these things, and occupied a full half-hour in getting them. As he retraced his steps towards the wharves he passed the slop-shop in which his first purchases of the day had been made, and was greeted by the proprietor with an inquiry as to whether old Duff had taken aboard his cargo of "chinks and dope" yet. Not understanding the question, Alaric did not answer it; but as he passed on he wondered what sort of a cargo that could be.

By the time he regained the wharf to which the *Fancy* was moored the flooding tide had raised her to a level with it, and on her deck Alaric beheld a scene that filled him with amazement. The stores that he had ordered had arrived. The wagon in which they had come stood at one side, and they had all been taken aboard. One of the two men who had brought them was exchanging high words and even a shaking of fists with the young first mate of the sloop, while the other was presenting a bill to the captain and insisting upon its payment.

Captain Duff, foaming at the mouth and purple in the face, was speechless with rage, and could only make futile passes with one of his crutches at the man with the bill, who dodged each blow with great agility. As Alaric appeared this individual cried out:

"Here's the young gent as ordered the goods now!"

"Certainly," said Alaric, advancing to the sloop's side. "I was told to order some stores, and I did so."

"Oh, you did, did ye! you thundering young blunderbuss?" roared Captain Duff, finding his voice at last. "Then suppose you pay for 'em."

"Very well," replied the lad, quietly, thinking this an official command that must be obeyed.

A minute later peace was restored, Captain Duff was gasping, and his first mate was staring with amazement. The bill had been paid, the wagon driven away, and Alaric was again without a single cent in his pockets.



CHAPTER VIII

AN UNLUCKY SMASH

Captain Duff's first order after peace was thus restored and he had recovered the use of his voice, temporarily lost through amazement at the spectacle of a sailor before the mast paying out of his own pocket for a ship's stores, and stores of such an extraordinary character as well, was that the goods thus acquired should be immediately transferred to his own cabin. So Bonny, with Alaric to assist, began to carry the things below.

The cabin was very small, dirty, and stuffy. It contained two wide transom berths, one on each side, a table bearing the stains of innumerable meals and black with age, and two stools. There was a clock nailed to the forward bulkhead; beneath it was fastened a small, cheap mirror, and beside this, attached to a bit of tarred twine, hung the ship's comb.

One of the two berths was overlaid with a mattress, several soiled blankets, and a tattered quilt. It formed the captain's bed, and it also served as a repository for a number of tobacco-boxes and an assortment of well-used pipes. In the other berth was a confusion of old clothing, hats, boots, and whatever else had been pitched there to get it out of the way. Here the captain proposed to have stored the providential supply of food that had come to him as unexpectedly as that furnished by the ravens to the prophet Elijah.

The air of the place was so pervaded with a combination odor of stale tobacco smoke, mouldy leather, damp clothing, bilge-water, kerosene, onions, and other things of an equally obtrusive nature, that poor Alaric gasped for breath on first descending the short but steep flight of steps leading to it. He deposited his burden and hurried out as quickly as possible, in spite of the fact that Captain Duff, who sat on his bunk, had begun to speak to him.

On his next trip below the lad drew in a long breath of fresh air just before entering the evil-smelling cabin, and determined not to take another until he should emerge from it. In his haste to execute this plan he dropped his armful of cans, and, without waiting to stow them, had gained the steps before realizing that the captain was ordering him to come back.

Furious at hearing his command thus disregarded, the man reached out with one of his crutches, caught it around the boy's neck, and gave him a violent jerk backward.

The startled lad, losing his foothold, came to the floor with a crash and a loud escaping "Ah!" of pent-up breath. At the same moment the cabin began to be pervaded with a new and unaccustomed odor so strong that all the others temporarily withdrew in its favor.

"Oh murder! Let me out," gasped Captain Duff, as he scrambled for the companion-way and a breath of outer air. "Of all the smells I ever smelled that's the worst!"

"What have you broken, Rick?" asked Bonny, anxiously, thrusting his head down the companion-way. He had been curiously reading the unfamiliar labels on the various jars, pots, and bottles, and now fancied that his crew had slipped down the steep steps with some of these in his arms.

"Whew! but it's strong!" he continued, as the penetrating fumes greeted his nostrils. "Is it the truffles or the pate grass or the cheese?"

"I'm afraid," replied Alaric, sadly, as he slowly rose from the cabin floor and thrust a cautious hand into one of his hip-pockets, "that it is a bottle of eau-de-Cologne."

"Cologne!" cried Bonny, incredulously, as he caught the word. "If these foreign kinds of grub are put up in cologne, it's no wonder that I never heard of them before. Why, it's poison, that's what it is, and nothing less. Shall I heave the rest of the truck overboard, sir?"

"Hold on!" cried Alaric, emerging with rueful face from the cabin in time to catch this suggestion. "It isn't in them. It was in my pocket all by itself."

"I wish it had stayed there, and you'd gone to Halifax with it afore ever ye brought the stuff aboard this ship!" thundered the captain. "Avast, ye lubber! Don't come anigh me. Go out on the end of the dock and air yourself."

So the unhappy lad, his clothing saturated with cologne, betook himself to the wharf, where, as he slowly walked up and down, filling the air with perfume, he carefully removed bits of broken glass from his moist pocket, and disgustedly flung them overboard.

While he was thus engaged, the first mate, under the captain's personal supervision, was fumigating the cabin by

burning in it a bunch of oakum over which was scattered a small quantity of tobacco. When the atmosphere of the place was thus so nearly restored to its normal condition that Captain Duff could again endure it, Bonny finished stowing the supplies, and then turned his attention to preparing supper.

Meanwhile Alaric had been joined in his lonely promenade by a stranger, who, with a curious expression on his face as he drew near the lad, changed his position so as to get on the windward side, and then began a conversation.

"Fine evening," he said.

"Is it?" asked Alaric, moodily.

"I think so. Do you belong on that sloop?"

"Yes."

"Able looking craft, and seems to have good accommodations. Where does she run to from here?"

"The Sound," answered Alaric, shortly, for he was not in a humor to be questioned.

"What does she carry?"

"Passengers and cargo."

"Indeed. And may I ask what sort of a cargo?"

"You may."

"Well, then, what sort?" persisted the stranger.

"Chinks and dope," returned Alaric, glancing up with the expectation of seeing a look of bewilderment on his questioner's face. But the latter only said:

"Um! About what I thought. Good-paying business, isn't it?"

"If it wasn't we wouldn't be in it," replied the boy.

"No, I suppose not; and it must pay big since it enables even the cabin-boy to drench himself with perfumery. Good-night; you're too sweet-scented for my company."

Ere Alaric could reply the stranger was walking rapidly away, and Bonny was calling him to supper.

The first mate apologized for serving this meal on deck, saying that the sloop's company generally ate together in the cabin, but that Captain Duff objected to the crew's presence at his table on this occasion. "So," said Bonny, "I told him he might eat alone, then, for I should come out and eat with you."

"I hope he will always feel the same way," retorted Alaric, "for it doesn't seem as though I could possibly stay in that cabin long enough to eat a meal."

"Oh, I guess you could," laughed Bonny. "Anyway, it will be all right by breakfast-time, for the smell is nearly gone now. But I say, Rick Dale, what an awfully funny fellow you are anyway! What in the world made you pay for all that truck? It must have taken every cent you had."

"So it did," replied Alaric. "But what of that? It was the easiest way to smooth things over that I knew of."

"It wouldn't have been for me, then," rejoined Bonny, "for I haven't handled a dollar in so long that it would scare me to find one in my pocket. But why didn't you let them take back the things we didn't need?"

"Because, having ordered them, we were bound to accept them, of course, and because I thought we needed them all. I'm awfully tired of such things myself, but I didn't know you were."

"What! olives and mushrooms and truffles, and the rest of the things with queer names? I never tasted one of them in my life, and don't believe the captain did, either."

"That seems odd," reflected Alaric.

"Doesn't it?" responded Bonny, quizzically. "And that cologne, too. What ever made you buy it?"

"I don't know exactly. Because I happened to see it, I suppose, and thought it would be a useful thing to have along. A little of it is nice in your bath, you know, or to put on your handkerchief when you have a headache."

"My stars!" exclaimed Bonny. "Listen to that, will you! Why, Rick, to hear you talk, one would think you were a prince in disguise, or a bloated aristocrat of some kind!"

"Well, I'm not," answered Alaric, shortly. "I'm only a sailor on board the sloop *Fancy*, who has just eaten a fine supper and enjoyed it."

"Have you, really?" asked the other, dubiously. "It didn't seem to me that just coffee without any milk, hard bread, and fried salt pork were very fine, and I was afraid that perhaps you wouldn't like 'em."

"I do, though," insisted Alaric. "You see, I never tasted any of those things before, and they are first-class."

"Well," said Bonny, "I don't think much of such grub, and I've had it for more than a year, too; but, then, every one to his liking. Now, if you are all through, let's hustle and clear away these dishes, for we are going to sail to-night, you know, and I've got to notify our passengers. You may come with me and learn the ropes if you want to."

"But we haven't any cargo aboard," objected Alaric.

"Oh, that won't take long. A few minutes will fix the cargo all right."

Alaric wondered what sort of a cargo could be taken aboard in a few minutes, but wisely concluded to wait and see.

So the dishes were hastily washed in a bucket of sea-water and put away. Then, after a short consultation with Captain Duff in the cabin, Bonny reappeared, and, beckoning Alaric to follow him, both lads went ashore and walked up into the town.

Although it was now evening, Bonny did not seek the well-lighted business streets, but made his way to what struck Alaric as a peculiarly disreputable neighborhood. The houses were small and dingy, and their windows were so closely shuttered that no ray of light issued from them.

At length they paused before a low door, on which Bonny rapped in a peculiar manner. It was cautiously opened by a man who held a dim lamp over his head, and who evidently regarded them with suspicion. He was reassured by a few words from the young mate; the door was closed behind them, and, with the stranger leading the way, while Alaric, filled with curiosity, brought up the rear, all three entered a narrow and very dark passage, the air of which was close and stifling.



CHAPTER IX

"CHINKS" AND "DOPE"

The dark passage into which the lads had just been ushered was short, and was ended by a door of heavy planking before Alaric found a chance to ask his companion why they had come to such a very queer and mysterious place. The opening of that second door admitted them to another passage equally narrow, but well-lighted, and lined with a number of tiny rooms, each containing two bunks arranged like berths one above the other. By the dim light in these rooms Alaric could see that many of these berths were occupied by reclining figures, most of whom were Chinamen, though a few were unmistakably white. Some were smoking tiny metal-bowled pipes with long stems, while others lay in a motionless stupor.

The air was heavy with a peculiarly sickening odor that Alaric recognized at once. He had met it before during his travels among the health resorts of Continental Europe, in which are gathered human wrecks of every kind. Of them all none had seemed to the lad so pitiable as the wretched victims of the opium or morphine habit, which is the most degrading and deadly form of intemperance.

This boy, so ignorant of many of the commonest things of life, and yet wise far beyond his years concerning other phases, had often heard the opium habit discussed, and knew that the hateful drug was taken in many forms to banish pain, cause forgetfulness of sorrow, and produce a sleep filled with beautiful dreams. He knew, too, of the sad awakenings that followed--the dulled senses, the return, with redoubled force, of all the unhappiness that had only been driven away for a short time, and the cravings for other and yet larger doses of the deadly stuff.

He had heard his father say that opium, more than any other one thing, was the curse of China, and that one of the principal reasons why the lower grades of Chinese ought to be excluded from the United States was that they were introducing the habit of opium smoking, and spreading it abroad like a pestilence.

Knowing these things, Alaric was filled with horror at finding himself in a Chinese opium den, and wondered if Bonny realized the true character of the place. In order to find out he gained his comrade's side, and asked, in a low tone: "Do you know, Bonny, what sort of a place this is?"

"Yes, of course. It is Won Lung's joint."

"I mean, do you know what the men in those bunks are doing?"

"Certainly," replied Bonny, cheerfully. "They're hitting the pipe."

Perplexed as he was by these answers, Alaric still asked another question.

"But do you know what they are smoking in those pipes?"

"To be sure I do," answered the other, a trifle impatiently. "It's dope. Most any one would know that. Didn't you ever smell it before?"

"Dope!" Once before had Alaric heard the word during that eventful day, and he had even used it himself, without knowing its meaning. Now it flashed across him. Dope was opium, and that hateful drug was to form the sloop's cargo. The idea of such a thing was so repugnant to him that he might have entered a protest against it then and there, had not a sudden change of scene temporarily diverted his attention from the subject.

The passage they had been traversing ended in an open court, so foreign in its every detail that it appeared like a bit from some Chinese city lifted bodily and transported to the New World. The dingy buildings surrounding it were liberally provided with balconies, galleries, and odd little projecting windows, all of which were occupied by Chinamen gazing with languid interest at the busy scene below. From most of the galleries hung rows of gayly colored paper lanterns, which gave the place a very quaint and festive aspect.

On the pavement were dozens of other Chinamen, with here and there a demure-looking little woman and a few children. Heaps of queer-looking luggage, each piece done up in matting and fastened with narrow strips of rattan, were piled in the corners. At one side was an immense stove, or rather a huge affair of brick, containing a score or more of little charcoal stoves, each fitted for the cooking of a single kettle of rice or pot of tea. About this were gathered a number of men preparing their evening meal. Many of the others were comparing certificates and photographs, a proceeding that puzzled Alaric more than a little, for he was so ignorant of the affairs of his own country that he knew nothing of its Chinese Exclusion Law.

He began to learn something about it right there, however, and subsequently discovered that while Chinese gentlemen, scholars, and merchants are as freely admitted to travel, study, or reside in the United States as are similar classes from any other nation, the lower grades of Chinese, rated as laborers, are forbidden by law to set foot on American soil. This is because there are such swarming millions of them willing to work for very small wages, and live as no self-respecting white man could live; that, were they allowed to enter this country freely, they would quickly drive white laborers from the field and leave them to starve. Then, too, they bring with them and introduce opium-smoking, gambling, lotteries, and other equally pernicious vices. Besides all this, the Chinese in the United States, with here and there an exception, have no desire to become citizens, or to remain longer than is necessary to scrape together the few hundreds of dollars with which they can return to their own land and live out the rest of their days in luxury.

Many thousands of Chinese laborers had come to the United States before the exclusion law was passed, and these, by registering and allowing themselves to be photographed for future identification, obtain certificates which, while not permitting them to return if they once leave the country, allow them to remain here undisturbed. Any Chinaman found without such a protection is liable to be arrested and sent back to his own land.

These certificates, therefore, are so valuable that Chinamen going home with no intention of ever returning to this country find no difficulty in selling their papers to others, who propose to try and smuggle themselves into the United States from Canada or Mexico. There are always plenty who are anxious to make this attempt, for if they once get a foothold they can earn better wages here than anywhere else in the world. Of course, the purchaser of a certificate must look something like the attached photograph, and correspond to the personal description contained in it. To do this a Chinaman will scar his features with cuts or burns if necessary, and will make himself up to resemble any particular photograph as skilfully as a professional actor.

This, then, is what many of those whom Alaric and Bonny now encountered were doing, for the place into which they had come was a Chinese hotel in which all newly arrived Chinamen found shelter while waiting for work or for a chance to smuggle themselves into the United States, which is what ninety-nine out of every one hundred of them propose to do if possible.

As the lads stood together on the edge of this novel scene, while their guide went from group to group making to each a brief announcement, Alaric, seizing this first opportunity for acquiring definite information, asked: "What on earth are we here for, Bonny?"

"To find out how many passengers are ticketed for to-night's boat and get them started," was the reply.

"You don't mean that our passengers are to be Chinamen?"

"Yes, of course. I thought I told you so first thing this morning when you asked me what the sloop carried."

"No. You only said passengers and freight."

"I ought to have said 'chinks.' But what's the odds? 'Chinks' are passengers, aren't they?"

"Do you mean Chinamen? Are 'chinks' Chinamen?"

"That's right," replied Bonny.

"Well," said Alaric, who had been on the Coast long enough to imbibe all a Californian's contempt for natives of the Flowery Kingdom, "if I'd known that 'chinks' meant Chinamen, and dope meant opium, I should have been too much ashamed of what the *Fancy* carried ever to tell any one about it."

"I hope you won't," responded Bonny. "There isn't any necessity for you to that I know of."

"But I have already. There was a man on the wharf while I was getting aired who asked me what our cargo was. Just to see what he would say I told him 'chinks and dope,' though I hadn't the slightest idea of what either of them meant."

"My! but that's bad!" cried Bonny, with an anxious look on his face. "I only hope he wasn't a beak. They've been watching us pretty sharp lately, and I know the old man is in a regular tizzy-wizzy for fear we'll get nabbed."

Before Alaric could ask why they should be nabbed, Won Lung, the proprietor of the establishment, who also acted as interpreter, came to where they were standing, greeted Bonny as an old acquaintance, looked curiously at Alaric, and announced that thirty-six of his boarders had procured tickets for a passage to the Sound on the *Fancy*.

"We can't take but twenty of 'em on this trip," said the young mate, decidedly. "And with their dunnage we'll have to stow 'em like sardines, anyway. The others must wait till next time."

"Mebbe you tlake some man in clabin, some mebbe in fo'c's'le," suggested Won Lung, blandly.

"Mebbe we don't do anything of the kind," replied Bonny. "The trip may last several days, and I know I for one am not going to be crowded out of my sleeping-quarters. So, Mr. Lung, if you send down one man more than twenty he goes overboard. You savey that?"

"Yep, me sabby. Allee same me no likee."

"Sorry, but I can't help it. And you want to hustle 'em along too, for we are going to sail in half an hour. Got the stuff ready?"

"Yep, all leddy. Two hun'l poun'."

"Good enough. Send it right along with us."

A few minutes later our lads had left Won Lung's queer hotel and were out in the quiet streets accompanied by two Chinese coolies, who bore heavy burdens slung from the ends of stout bamboo poles carried across their shoulders.

As Bonny seemed disinclined to talk, Alaric refrained from asking questions, and the little party proceeded in silence through unfrequented streets to the place where their sloop lay. Here the burdens borne by the coolies were transferred to the cabin, where this part of the cargo was left with Captain Duff, and Alaric had no knowledge of where it was stowed.

While the captain was thus busy below, Bonny was giving the crew his first lesson in seamanship by pointing out three ropes that he called jib, throat, and peak halyards, showing him how to make them fast about their respective belaying-pins, and impressing upon him the importance of remembering them.

Shortly after this the score of long-queued passengers arrived with their odd-looking packages of personal belongings, were taken aboard in silence, and stowed in the hold until Alaric wondered if they were piled on top of one another like sticks of cord-wood.

Then the mooring-lines were cast off, and the *Fancy* drifted noiselessly out of the slip with the ebbing tide. Once clear of it the jib was hoisted, and she began to glide out of the harbor before a gentle, off-shore breeze.



CHAPTER X

PUGET SOUND SMUGGLERS

The great landlocked body of salt water known as Puget Sound, penetrating for nearly one hundred miles the northwestern corner of Washington, the Northwest State, is justly termed a smuggler's paradise. It pierces the land in every direction with a perfect net-work of inlets, channels, and bays lined with endless miles of forest, frowning cliffs, and snugly hidden harbors. The upper end of the Sound, where its width entitles it to be called a gulf, is filled with an archipelago of rugged islands of all sizes and shapes, thinly settled, and offering innumerable secure hiding-places for small boats. Here and there along the shores of the Sound are Indian reservations uncleared and unoccupied save by dwindling remnants of the once populous coast tribes. These Indians, though retaining their tribal names among themselves, are all known to the whites under the one designation of "Siwash," a corruption of the French *sauvage*.

On the eastern side of the Sound are the important American cities of Seattle and Tacoma; while at its extreme southern end stands Olympia, Washington's capital. On its western side, and just north of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, that connects the Sound with the ocean, is located the Canadian city of Victoria, from which all the smuggling operations of these waters are conducted.

From Victoria to the American island of San Juan on the east, the largest of the archipelago already mentioned, the distance is only twelve miles, while it is but twenty miles across the Strait of Fuca to the American mainland on the south. These two points being so near at hand, it is easy enough to run a boat-load of opium or Chinamen over to either of them in a night. For such a passage each Chinaman is compelled to pay from fifteen to twenty dollars, while opium yields a profit of four or five dollars a pound. Smuggling from Victoria is thus such a lucrative business that many men of easy conscience are engaged in it.

Both the island route and that by way of the strait present the serious drawbacks of having their landing-places so remote from railroads and cities that, though the frontier has been passed, there is still a dangerous stretch of territory to be crossed before either of these can be reached. In view of this fact, it occurred to one of the more enterprising among the Victoria smugglers to undertake a greater risk for the sake of greater profits, and run a boat nearly one hundred miles up the Sound to some point in near vicinity to one of its large cities.

He had just the craft for the purpose, and finally secured a captain who, having recently lost a schooner through seizure by the American authorities for unlawful sealing in Bering Sea, was reckless and desperate enough for the new venture. As this man undertook the run for a share of the profits, he was inclined to reduce all expenses to their very lowest limits, and had already made a number of highly successful trips. Although the fare to each Chinaman by this new line was twenty-five dollars, it offered such superior advantages as to be liberally patronized, and the boat was always crowded.

In the meantime the American authorities had discovered that much illegal opium and many illegal Chinamen were entering their country through a new channel that seemed to lead to the vicinity of Tacoma. The recently appointed commander of a United States revenue-cutter determined to break up this route, and capture, if possible, these boldest of all the Sound smugglers. For some weeks he watched in vain, overhauled and examined a number of innocent vessels, and with each failure became the more anxious to succeed. At length he sent his third lieutenant to Victoria, of course out of uniform, to gain what information he could concerning any vessel that seemed likely to be engaged in smuggling.

This officer, after spending several days in the city without learning anything definite, was beginning to feel discouraged, when one afternoon, as he was strolling near the docks, he noticed two lads walking ahead of him who looked something like sailors. One of them had evidently just purchased a new outfit of clothing, and carried a canvas bag on which his name was painted in black letters. Making a mental note of this name, the officer followed the lads, out of curiosity to see what kind of a craft they would board.

When he saw the *Fancy* he said to himself: "Tough-looking old packet. I wonder if that young chap with the bag can be one of her crew?"

Without approaching the sloop so closely as to attract attention, he lingered in her vicinity until Alaric went up-town to procure supplies, when the officer still kept him in sight. He even entered the store in which the lad was dealing, and here his curiosity was stimulated by the young sailor's varied and costly order.

"That sloop must make an extraordinary amount of money somehow," he reflected.

So interested had he now become that he even followed Alaric while the lad made his subsequent purchases. Finally he

found himself again near the sloop just as the lad who had excited his curiosity was ordered to the wharf to air himself after his unfortunate experience with the bottle of cologne. At length the officer addressed him, and by dint of persistent questions became confirmed in his suspicions that the dingy old sloop cruised to the Sound with Chinamen and opium.

Having gained the information he wanted thus easily and unexpectedly, the officer returned to his hotel for supper and to write a despatch that should go by that night's boat. After delivering this on board the steamer, he determined to take one more look at the suspected sloop; and, strolling leisurely in that direction, reached the wharf just in time to see her glide out from the slip and head for the open sea.

Here was an emergency that called for prompt action; and, running back to the hotel, the young man paid his bill, secured his bag, and gained the steamer just as that fine American-built vessel was about to take her departure for ports of the upper Sound. Shortly afterwards, a little beyond the harbor mouth, the big, brilliantly lighted steamer swept past a small dimly outlined craft, on whose deck somebody was waving a lantern so that she might not be run down.

Of course it has been understood long ere this that the sloop *Fancy* was a smuggler. She was not only that, but was also the boldest, most successful, and most troublesome smuggler on Puget Sound. The one person at all acquainted with the shabby old craft and as yet unaware of her true character was Alaric Todd. His slight knowledge of smugglers having been gained through books, he thought of them as being only a sort of half pirates, either Spanish or French, who flourished during the last century. Thus, although he did not approve of either the sloop's passengers or cargo, it did not occur to him that they were being carried in defiance of law until about the time that the steamer's lights were disappearing in the distance.

The boy's hands were still smarting from an unaccustomed hauling on ropes that had resulted in hoisting the big main-sail, and now he lay on deck well forward, where he had been told to keep a sharp lookout and report instantly any vessel coming within his range of vision. Before a fresh beam wind the *Fancy* was slipping rapidly through the water, with Captain Duff steering, Bonny doing odd jobs about deck, and the passengers confining themselves closely to the hold. After the young mate had waved his signal lantern to the steamer, he extinguished both it and the side lights that had been burning until now, leaving the binnacle lamp carefully shaded as the only light on board. With nothing more to do at present, he threw himself down beside Alaric, and the boys began a low-voiced conversation.

"What made you put out those lights?" asked the latter. "I thought all ships carried lights at night."

"We don't," laughed Bonny. "They'd give us away to the cutters, and we'd be picked up in less'n no time. I'm mighty glad that steamer isn't a revenue-boat."

"Why?"

"Because she's so fast. There's only one craft on the Sound can beat her, and that's the *Flyer*, running between Tacoma and Seattle. This *City of Kingston* is a good one, though. She used to be a crack Hudson River boat, and came out here around the Horn; or, rather, not exactly that, but through the Strait of Magellan. That's a tough place, I can tell you."

"I suppose it is," replied Alaric. "But, Bonny, tell me something more about those cutters. Why should they want to catch us?"

"For running 'chinks' and 'dope.'"

"What harm is there in that? Is it against the law?"

"I should rather say it was. There's a duty of ten dollars a pound on one, and the others aren't allowed in at any price."

"Then I don't see how we are any different from regular smugglers."

"That's what some folks call us," replied Bonny, with a grin. "They are mostly on the other side, though. In Victoria they call us free-traders."

"It doesn't make any difference what anybody calls us," retorted Alaric, vehemently, "so long as we ourselves know what we are. It was a mean thing, Bonny Brooks, that you didn't tell me this before we started."

"Look here, Rick Dale! do you pretend you didn't know after seeing the 'chinks' and the 'dope' and all that was going on? Oh, come, that's too thin!"

"I don't care whether it's thin or thick," rejoined Alaric, stoutly. "I didn't know that I was shipping to become a pirate, or you may be very certain I'd have sat on that log till I starved before going one step with you."

"What do you mean by calling me a pirate?" demanded Bonny, indignantly. "I'm no more a pirate than you are, for all

your fine airs."

In his excitement Bonny had so raised his voice that it reached the ears of Captain Duff, who growled out, fiercely: "Stow yer jaw, ye young swabs, and keep a sharp lookout for'ard--d'ye hear?"

"Aye, aye, sir," responded the young mate, rising as though to end the unpleasant conversation, and peering keenly into the gloom.

But Alaric was not inclined to let the subject drop; and, with an idea of continuing their talk in so low a tone that it could not possibly reach the captain's ears, he too started to rise.

At that moment the sloop gave a quick lurch that caused him to plunge awkwardly forward. He was only saved from going overboard by striking squarely against Bonny, who was balancing himself easily in the very eyes of the vessel, with one foot on the rail. The force of the blow was too great for him to withstand. With a gasping cry he pitched headlong over the bows and disappeared from his comrade's horrified gaze.



CHAPTER XI

A VERY TRYING EXPERIENCE

"Stop her! Stop the boat, quick! Bonny is overboard" shouted Alaric, frantically, as he realized the nature of the catastrophe that had just occurred through his awkwardness. As he shouted he sprang to the jib-halyard, and, casting it off, allowed the sail to come down by the run, his sole idea of checking the headway of a sailing craft being to reduce her canvas.

He was about to let go both throat and peak halyards, and so bring down the big main-sail also, when, with a bellow of rage and a marvellous disregard of his lameness, Captain Duff rushed forward and snatched the ropes from the lad's hands.

"You thundering blockhead!" he roared. "What d'ye mean by lowering a sail without orders? H'ist it again! H'ist it, d'ye hear?"

"But Bonny is overboard!" cried Alaric.

"And you want to leave him to drown, do ye? Don't ye know that if he's alive he's drifted astarn by this time? Ef you had any sense you'd be out in the dinghy looking fur him."

Alaric knew that the dinghy was the small boat towing behind the sloop, for he had heard the young mate call it by that name, and now he needed no further hint as to his duty. He had pushed Bonny overboard, and he must save him if that might still be done. If not, he was careless of what happened to himself. Nothing could be worse than, or so bad as, to go through life with the knowledge that he had caused the death of a fellow-being--one, too, whom he had already come to regard as a dear friend.

Thus thinking, he ran aft, cast loose the painter of the dinghy, drew the boat to the sloop's stern, and, dropping into it, drifted away in the darkness. He had never rowed a boat, nor even handled a pair of oars, but he had seen others do so, and imagined that it was easy enough.

It is not often that a first lesson of this kind is taken alone, at midnight, amid the tossing waters of an open sea, and it could not have happened now but for our poor lad's pitiful ignorance of all forms of athletics, including those in which every boy should be instructed.

Without a thought for himself, nor even a comprehension of his own peril, Alaric fitted the oars that he found in the bottom of the boat to their row-locks, and began to pull manfully in what he supposed was the proper direction. He pulled first with one oar and then with the other; then making a wild stroke with both oars that missed the water entirely, he tumbled over backwards. Recovering himself, he prepared more cautiously for a new effort, and this time, instead of beating the air, thrust his oars almost straight down in the water. Then one entered it, while the other, missing it by a foot or so, flew back and struck him a violent blow.

Up to this time the lad had kept up a constant shouting of "Bonny! Oh, Bonny!" or "Hello, Bonny!" but that blow bereft him of so much breath that for a minute he had none left with which to shout.

Now, too, for the first time, he gained a vague idea of his own perilous situation. There was nothing in sight and nothing to be heard save the ceaseless dashing of waters and a melancholy moaning of wind. The sky was so overcast that not even a star could extend to him a cheery ray of light. The boy's heart sank, and he made another attempt at a shout, as much to raise his own spirits as with any hope of being heard. Only a husky cry resulted, for his voice was choked, and he again strove to row, with the thought that any form of action would be better than idleness amid such surroundings.

If his oars seemed vicious before, they were doubly so now that he was wearied, and they stubbornly resisted his efforts to make them work as he knew they could and ought. At length he let go of one of them for an instant, while he wiped the trickling perspiration from his eyes. The moment it was released, the provoking bit of wood, as though possessed of a malicious instinct, slid from its rowlock, dropped into the water, and floated away. Alaric made a wild but ineffectual clutch after it that allowed a quantity of water to slop into the boat, and gave him the idea that it was sinking.

With an access of terror the poor lad sprang to his feet, and, forgetful of the object that had brought him into his present situation, screamed: "Bonny! Oh, Bonny! Save me! Don't leave me here to drown!"

Then a spiteful wave so buffeted the boat that he was toppled over and fell sprawling in the bottom. That was the

blackest and most despairing moment of his life; but even as it came to him he fancied he heard a whispered answer to his call, and lifted his head to listen. Yes, he heard it again, so faint and uncertain that it might be only the mocking scream of some sea-bird winging a swift flight through the blackness. Still the idea filled him with hope, and he called again with a cry so shrill and long-drawn that its intensity almost frightened him. Now the echoing hail was certain, and it came to him with the unmistakable accents of a human voice.

Again he shouted: "Bonny! Oh, Bonny!" and again came the answer, this time much nearer:

"Hello, Rick Dale! Hello!"

"Hello, Bonny! Hello!"

How could it be that Bonny had kept himself afloat so long? What wonderful powers of endurance he must possess! How should he reach him? There was but a single oar left, and surely no one could propel a boat with one oar. He tried awkwardly to paddle, but after a few seconds of fruitless labor gave this up in despair. What could he do? Must he sit there idle, knowing that his friend was drowning within sound of his voice, and for want of the aid that he could give if he only knew how? It was horrible and yet inevitable. He was helpless. Once more was his own peril forgotten, and his sole distress was for his friend. Again he shouted, with the energy of despair:

"Bonny! Oh, Bonny! Can't you get to me? I'm in a boat."

Then came something so startling and so astonishing that he was almost petrified with amazement. Instead of a weak, despairing answer, coming from a long distance, there sounded a cheery hail from close at hand: "All right, old man! I'm coming. Cheer up."

What had happened? Was his friend endowed with supernatural powers that enabled him to traverse the sea at will?

Alaric gazed about him on all sides, almost doubting the evidence of his senses. Then, with a flutter of canvas and a rush of water from under her bows, the tall form of the sloop loomed out of the blackness almost beside him.

"Sing out, Rick. Where are you?"

"Here I am. Oh, Bonny, is it you?"

"Yes, of course. Look out! Catch this line."

The end of a rope came whizzing over the boat, and Alaric, catching it, held on tightly. He was seated on the middle thwart, and the moment a strain came on the line the boat turned broadside to it, heeled until water began to pour in over her gunwale, and Alaric, unable to hold on an instant longer, let go his hold.

He heard an exclamation of "Thundering lubber!" in Captain Duff's voice, and then the sloop was again lost to sight.

Again Alaric was in despair, though he could still hear the shouting of orders and a confused slatting of sails. After a little the sloop was put about, and a shouting to determine the locality of the drifting boat was recommenced. Still it seemed to Alaric a tedious while before she approached him for a second time, and Bonny once more sung out to him to stand by and catch a line.

"Make it fast in the bow this time," he called, as he flung the coil of rope.

Again Alaric succeeded in catching it, and, obeying instructions, he scrambled into the bow of the boat, where he knelt and clung to the line for dear life, not knowing how to make it fast.

In a moment there came a jerk that very nearly pulled him overboard; and the boat, with its bow low in the water from his weight, while its stern was in the air, took a wild sheer to one side. Again water poured in until she was nearly swamped, and again was the line torn from Alaric's grasp.

"You blamed idiot!" roared Captain Duff. "You don't deserve to be saved! I'll give ye just one more try, and ef you don't fetch the sloop that time we'll leave ye to navigate on your own hook."

As the previous manoeuvres were repeated for a third time, poor Alaric, sitting helplessly in his waterlogged dinghy, shivered with apprehension. How could he hold on to that cruel line that seemed only fitted to drag him to destruction? This time it took longer to find him, and he was hoarse with shouting before the *Fancy* again approached.

"He don't know enough to do anything with a line, Cap'n Duff," said Bonny. "So if you'll throw the sloop into the wind and heave her to, I'll bring the boat alongside."

With this, and without waiting for an answer, the plucky young sailor, who had already divested himself of most of his

clothing, sprang into the black waters and swam towards the vaguely discerned boat. In another minute he had gained her, clambered in, and was asking the amazed occupant for the other oar.

"It's lost overboard," replied Alaric, gloomily, feeling that the case was now more desperate than ever. "Oh, Bonny! Why--?"

"Never mind," cried the other, cheerily. "I can scull, and that will answer just as well as rowing. Perhaps better, for I can see where we are headed."

Alaric had deemed it impossible to propel a boat with a single oar; but now, to his amazement, Bonny sculled the dinghy ahead almost as rapidly as he could have rowed. The sloop was out of sight, but the flapping of her sails could be plainly heard, and five minutes later the young mate laid his craft alongside.

Captain Duff was too angry for words, and fortunately too busy in getting his vessel on her course to pay any attention just then to the lad whose awkwardness and ignorance had caused all this trouble and delay.

"Skip for'ard," said Bonny, in a low tone, "and I'll come directly."

As Alaric, with a thankful heart, obeyed this injunction, he marvelled at the size and steadiness of the sloop, and wondered how he could ever have thought her small or unstable.

A few minutes later Bonny, only half dressed, joined him, and said, "If you'll lend me your trousers, old man, you can turn in for the rest of the night, and I'll stand your watch; mine are too wet to put on just yet, and I think you'll be safer below than on deck, anyway."

Like a person in a dream, and without asking one of the many questions suggesting themselves, Alaric obeyed. Earlier in that most eventful day he had regarded that dark and stuffy fore-castle with disgust, and vowed he would never sleep in it. Now, as he snuggled shivering between the blankets of the first mate's own bunk, it seemed to him one of the coziest, warmest, and most comfortable sleeping-apartments he had ever known.

CHAPTER XII

A LESSON IN KEDGING

For a long time Alaric lay awake in his narrow bunk, listening to the gurgle of waters parted by the sloop's bow, but a few inches from his head, and reflecting upon the exciting incidents of the past hour. It had all been so terrible and yet so unreal. On one thing he determined. Never again would he enter a boat alone without having first learned how to row, and to swim also. How splendidly Bonny had come to his rescue, and yet how easily! What was it he had called making a boat go with only one oar? Alaric could not remember; but at any rate it was a wonderful thing to do, and he determined to master that art as well. What a lot he had to learn, anyhow, and how important it all was! He had longed for the ability to do such things, but never until now had he realized their value.

How well Bonny did them, and what a fine fellow he was, and how the heart of the poor rich boy warmed towards this self-reliant young friend of a day! Could it be but one day since their first meeting? It seemed as though he had known Bonny always. But how had the young sailor regained the sloop after being knocked overboard? That was unaccountable, and one of the most mysterious things Alaric had ever heard of. He longed for Bonny to come below, that he might ask just that one question; but the mate was otherwise engaged, and the crew finally dropped asleep.

Through the remainder of the night the sloop sailed swiftly on her course; but she could not make up for that lost hour, and by dawn, though she had passed the light on Admiralty Head, and was well to the southward of Port Townsend, the very stronghold of her enemies, for it is the port of entry for the Sound, she was still far from the hiding-place in which her captain had hoped to lie by for the day. However, he knew of another nearer at hand, though not so easy of access, and to this he directed the vessel's course.

It did not seem to Alaric that he had been asleep more than a few minutes when he was rudely awakened by being hauled out of his bunk and dropped on the fore-castle floor. At the same time he became conscious of a voice, saying:

"Wake up! Wake up, Rick Dale! I've been calling you for the last five minutes, and was beginning to think you were dead. Here it is daylight, with lots of work waiting, and you snoozing away as though you were a young man of elegant leisure. So tumble out in a hurry, or else you'll have the cap'n down on you, and he's no light-weight when he's as mad as he is this morning."

Never before in all his luxurious life had Alaric been subjected to such rough treatment, and for a moment he was inclined to resent it; but a single glance at Bonny's smiling face, and a thought of how deeply he was indebted to this lad, caused him to change his mind and scramble to his feet.

"Here are your trousers," continued the young mate, "and the quicker you can jump into them the better, for we've a jolly bit of kedging to attend to, and need your assistance badly."

Filled with curiosity as to what a "jolly bit of kedging" might be, and also pleased with the idea that he was not considered utterly useless, Alaric hastily dressed and hurried on deck. There the sight of a number of Chinamen recalled with a shock the nature of the craft on which he was shipped, and for an instant he was tempted to refuse further service as a member of her crew. A moment's reflection, however, convinced him that the present was not the time for such action, as it could only result in disaster to himself and in extra work being thrown upon Bonny.

The sun had not yet risen, and on one side a broad expanse of water was overlaid with a light mist. On the other was a bold shore covered with forest to the water's edge, and penetrated by a narrow inlet, off the mouth of which the sloop lay becalmed.

Bonny was already in the dinghy, which held a coil of rope having a small anchor attached to one end. The other end was on board the sloop and made fast to the bitts.

"When I reach the end of the line and heave the kedge overboard, you want to haul in on it," said the young mate, "and when the sloop is right over the kedge, let go your anchor. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I think so."

The tide had just turned ebb, and was beginning to run out from the inlet as Bonny dropped the kedge-anchor overboard, and Alaric, beginning to pull with a hearty will on that long, wet rope, experienced the first delights of kedging. Captain Duff, puffing at a short black pipe, sat by the tiller and steered, while the Chinese passengers, squatted about the deck, watched the lad's efforts with a stolid interest.

At length the end of the rope was reached, and Alaric, with aching back and smarting hands, but beaming with the

consciousness of a duty well performed, imagined his task to be ended.

"Let go your anchor," ordered Captain Duff.

When this was done, and the cable made fast so that the sloop should not drift back when the kedge was lifted, Bonny heaved up the latter and got it into the dinghy. Then he sculled still farther into the inlet until the end of the long line was once more reached, when he again dropped the small anchor overboard, and poor Alaric found, to his dismay, that the whole tedious operation was to be repeated. In addition to what he had done before, the heavy riding anchor was now to be lifted from the bottom.

As the boy essayed to haul in its cable with his hands, Captain Duff, muttering something about a "lubberly swab," stumped forward, and showing him how to use the windlass for this purpose, condescended to hold the turn while the perspiring lad pumped away at the iron lever. When the anchor was lifted, he was directed to again lay hold of the kedge-line and warp her along handsomely.

Alaric made signs to the Chinamen that they should help him; but they, being passengers who had paid for the privilege of idleness on this cruise, merely grinned and shook their heads. So the poor lad tugged at that heart-breaking line until his strength was so exhausted that the sloop ceased to make perceptible headway.

At this Captain Duff, who was again nodding over the tiller, suddenly woke up, rushed among his passengers with brandished crutch, roaring an order in pidgin English that caused them to jump in terror, lay hold of the line, and haul it in hand over hand.

Three times more was the whole weary operation repeated, until at length the sloop was snugly anchored behind a tree-grown point that effectually concealed her from anything passing in the Sound.

"Nice, healthy exercise, this kedging," remarked Bonny, cheerfully, as he came on board.

"You may call it that," responded Alaric, gloomily, "but I call it the most killing kind of work I ever heard of, and if there is any more of it to be done, somebody else has got to do it. I simply won't, and that's all there is about it."

"Oh phsaw!" laughed the young mate, as he lighted a fire in the galley stove and began preparations for breakfast. "This morning's job was only child's play compared with some you'll have before you've been aboard here a month."

"Which I never will be," replied Alaric, "for I'm going to resign this very day. I suppose this is the United States and the end of the voyage, isn't it?"

"It's the States fast enough; but not the end of the run by a good bit. We've another night's sail ahead of us before we come to that. But you mustn't think of resigning, as you call it, just as you are beginning to get the hang of sailing. Think how lonely I should be without you to make things lively and interesting--as you did last night, for instance."

"I shall, though," replied Alaric, decidedly, "just as quick as we make a port; for if you think I'm going to remain in the smuggling business one minute longer than I can help, you're awfully mistaken. And what's more, you are going with me, and we'll hunt for another job--an honest one, I mean--together."

"I am, am I?" remarked Bonny. "After you calling me a pirate, too. I shouldn't think you'd care to associate with pirates."

"But I do care to associate with you," responded Alaric, earnestly, "for I know I couldn't get along at all without you. Besides, after the splendid way you came to my rescue last night, I don't want to try. But I say, Bonny, how did you ever manage to get back on board after tumbling--I mean, after I knocked you--into the water? It seems to me the most mysterious thing I ever heard of."

"Oh, that was easy enough!" laughed the young mate, lifting the lid of a big kettle of rice, that was boiling merrily, as he spoke. "You see, I didn't wholly fall overboard. That is, I caught on the bob-stay, and was climbing up again all right when you let the jib down on top of me, nearly knocking me into the water and smothering me at the same time. When I got out from under it you were gone, and a fine hunt we had for you, during which the old man got considerably excited. But all's well that ends well, as the Japs said after the war was over; so now if you'll make a pot of coffee, I'll get the pork ready for frying."

"But I don't know how to make coffee."

"Don't you? I thought everybody knew that. Never mind, though; I'll make the coffee while you fry the meat."

"I don't know how to do that, either."

"Don't you know how to cook anything?"

"No. I don't believe I could even boil water without burning it."

"Well," said Bonny, "you certainly have got more to learn than any fellow old enough to walk alone that I ever knew."

The sloop remained in her snug hiding-place all that day, during which her captain and first mate devoted most of their time to sleeping. The Chinamen spent the greater part of the day on shore, while Alaric, following Bonny's advice, made his first attempt at fishing. So long as he only got bites he had no trouble; but when he finally caught an enormous flounder his occupation was gone, for he had no second hook, and could not imagine how the fish was to be removed from the one to which it was attached. So he let it carefully down into the water again, and made the line fast until Bonny should wake. When that happened, and he triumphantly hauled in his line, he found, to his dismay, that his hook was bare, and that the fish had solved his problem for him.

In the meantime there was much activity that day on board a certain revenue-cutter stationed in the upper Sound, and shortly after dark, about the time the smuggler *Fancy* was again getting under way, several well-manned boats left the government vessel to spend the night in patrolling certain channels.



CHAPTER XIII

CHASING A MYSTERIOUS LIGHT

The commander of the revenue-cutter had received from his lieutenant a detailed description of the sloop *Fancy*, together with what other information that officer had gathered concerning her destination, lading, and crew. As a result of this interview it was determined to guard all passages leading to the upper Sound; and during the hours of darkness the cutter's boats, under small sail, cruised back and forth across the channels on either side of Vashon Island, one of which the sloop must take. They showed no lights, and their occupants were not allowed to converse in tones louder than a whisper. While half of each crew got what sleep they might in the bottom of the boat, the others were on watch and keenly alert. In the stern-sheets of each boat sat an officer muffled in a heavy ulster as a protection against the chill dampness of the night.

The night was nearly spent and dawn was at hand when the weary occupants of one of these patrol-boats were aroused into activity by two bright lights that flashed in quick succession for an instant well over on the western side of their channel, which was the one known as Colvos Passage.

"It is a signal," said the officer, as he headed his boat in that direction. "Silence, men! Have your oars ready for a chase."

Shortly afterwards another light appeared on the water in the same general direction, but farther down the channel. It showed steadily for a minute, and was then lost to view, only to reappear a few moments later. After that its continued appearance and disappearance proved most puzzling, until the officer solved the problem to his own satisfaction by saying:

"The careless rascals have come to anchor, and are sending their stuff ashore in a small boat. That light is the lantern they are working by; but I wouldn't have believed even they could be so reckless as to use it. Douse that sail and unship the mast. So. Now, out oars! Give 'way!"

As the boat sprang forward under this new impulse, its oars, being muffled in the row-locks, gave forth no sound save the rhythmic swish with which they left the water at the end of each stroke.

The row was not a long one, and within five minutes the boat was close to the mysterious light. No sound came from its vicinity, nor was there any loom of masts or sails through the blackness. Were they close to it, after all? Might it not be brighter than they thought, and still at a distance from them? Its nature was such that the officer could not determine even by standing up, and for a few moments he was greatly puzzled. He could now see that the land was at a greater distance than a smuggler would choose to cover with his small boats when he might just as well run his craft much closer. What could it mean?

Suddenly he gave the orders: "Way enough! In oars! Look sharp there for'ard with your boat-hook!"

The next moment the twinkling light was alongside, and its mystery was explained. It was an old lantern lashed to a bit of a board that was in turn fastened across an empty half-barrel. A screen formed of a shingle darkened one side of the lantern, so that, as the floating tub was turned by wind or wave, the light alternately showed and disappeared at irregular intervals.

That the lieutenant who was the victim of this simple ruse was angry goes without saying. He was furious, and could he have captured its author just then, that ingenious person might have met with rough usage. But there seemed little chance of capturing him, for although the officer felt certain that this tub had been launched from the very smuggler he was after, he had no idea of where she now was, or of what direction she had taken. All he knew was that somebody had warned her of danger in that channel, and that she had cleverly given him the slip. He could also imagine the "chaff" he would receive from his brother officers on the cutter when they should learn of his mortifying experience.

When, after cruising fruitlessly during the brief remainder of the night, he returned to his ship and reported what had taken place, he was chaffed, as he expected, but was enabled to bear this with equanimity, for he had made a discovery. On the shingle that had shaded the old lantern he found written in pencil as though for the passing of an idle half-hour, and apparently by some one who wished to see how his name would look if he were a foreigner:

"Philip Ryder, Mr. Philip Ryder, Monsieur Philippe Ryder, Signor Filipo Ryder, Senor Felipe Ryder, and Herr Philip Ryder."

"It's the name of the young chap who led me such a chase in Victoria, and finally gave me the information I wanted

concerning the sloop *Fancy*," said the lieutenant to his commanding officer, in reporting this discovery.

"Which would seem to settle the identity of the sloop we are after, and prove that she is now somewhere close at hand," replied the commander.

"Yes, sir; and it also discloses the identity of the young rascal who is responsible for this trick, though from his looks I wouldn't have believed him capable of it. He is the one I told you of who was so scented with cologne as to be offensive. I remember well seeing the name Philip Ryder on his dunnage-bag."

The sun was just rising, and at this moment a report was brought to the cabin, from a masthead lookout, to the effect that a small sloop was disappearing behind a point a few miles to the southward.

"It may be your boat, and it may be some other," said the commander to the third lieutenant. "At any rate, it is our duty to look him up. So you will please get under way again with the yawl, run down to that point, and see what you can find. If you meet with your young friend Ryder either afloat or ashore, don't fail to arrest and detain him as a witness, for in any case his testimony will be most important."

The *Fancy* had hauled out of her snug berth soon after sunset that same night, and fanned along by a light breeze, held her course to the southward. Both our lads were stationed forward to keep a sharp lookout, though with a grim warning from Captain Duff that if either of them fell overboard this time, he might as well make up his mind to swim ashore, for the sloop would not be stopped to pick him up.

"Cheerful prospect for me," muttered Alaric. "Never mind, though, Mr. Captain, I'm going to desert, as did the Phil Ryder of whom you seem so fond. I am going to follow his example, too, in taking your first mate with me."

As on the previous night, the lads found an opportunity to talk in low tones; and filled with the idea of inducing Bonny to leave the sloop with him, Alaric strove to convince him of the wickedness of smuggling.

"It is breaking a law of your country," he argued; "and any one who breaks one law will be easily tempted to break another, until there's no saying where he will end."

"If we didn't do it, some other fellows would," replied Bonny. "The chinks are bound to travel, and folks are bound to have cheap dope."

"So *you* are breaking the law to save some other fellow's conscience?"

"No, of course not. I'm doing it for the wages it pays."

"Which is as much as to say that you would break any law if you were paid enough."

"I never saw such a fellow as you are for putting things in an unpleasant way," retorted the young mate, a little testily. "Of course there are plenty of laws I couldn't be hired to break. I wouldn't steal, for instance, even if I were starving, nor commit a murder for all the money in the world. But I'd like to know what's the harm in running a cargo like ours? A few Chinamen more or less will never be noticed in a big place like the United States. Besides, I think the law that says they sha'n't come in is an unjust one, anyway. We haven't any more right to keep Chinamen out of a free country than we have to keep out Italians or anybody else."

"So you claim to be wiser than the men who make our laws, do you?" asked Alaric.

Without answering this question, Bonny continued: "As for running in a few pounds of dope, we don't rob anybody by doing that."

"How about robbing the government?"

"Oh, that don't count. What's a few dollars more or less to a government as rich as ours?"

"Which is saying that while you wouldn't steal from any one person, you don't consider it wicked to steal from sixty millions of people. Also, that it is perfectly right to rob a government because it is rich. Wouldn't it be just as right to rob Mr. Vanderbilt or Mr. Astor, or even my--I mean any other millionaire? They are rich, and wouldn't feel the loss."

"I never looked at it in that way," replied Bonny, thoughtfully.

"I thought not," rejoined Alaric. "And there are some other points about this business that I don't believe you ever looked at, either. Did you ever stop to think that every Chinaman you help over the line at once sets to work to throw one of your own countrymen out of a job, and so robs him of his living?"

"No; I can't say I ever did."

"Or did it ever occur to you that every cargo of opium you help to bring into the country is going to carry sorrow and suffering, perhaps even ruin, to hundreds of your own people?"

"I say, Rick Dale, it seems to me you know enough to be a lawyer. At any rate, you know too much to be a sailor, and ought to be in some other business."

"No, Bonny, I don't know half enough to be a sailor; but I do know too much to be a smuggler, and I am going to get into some other business as quick as I can. You are too, now that you have begun to think about it, for you are too honest a fellow to hold your present position any longer than you can help. By-the-way, what would happen if a cutter should get after us to-night?"

"That depends," replied the first mate, sagely, glad to feel that there were some legal questions concerning which he was wiser than his companion. "They might fire on us, if we didn't stop quick enough to suit 'em, and blow us out of the water. They might capture us, clap us into irons, and put us into a dark lock-up on bread and water. The most likely thing is that we would all be sent to the government prison on McNeil's Island. From there the chinks would be hustled back to Victoria, and the old man would get out on bond; but you and I would be held as witnesses until a court was ready to condemn the vessel and cargo. That would probably take some months, perhaps a year. Then the case would be appealed, and we'd be kept in prison for another year or so.

"And I suppose if we ever got out we would always be watched and suspected," suggested Alaric, who had listened to all this with almost as much dismay as though it were an actual sentence. "Well, I'll never be caught, that's all. I'll drift away in the dinghy first." In saying this the boy threatened to do the very most desperate thing he could think of.

"I believe I'd go with you," said Bonny. "Now, though, I must go and get ready our private signal, for we are getting close to the most dangerous place."

CHAPTER XIV

BONNY'S INVENTION, AND HOW IT WORKED

Bonny walked aft, exchanged a few words with Captain Duff, and then disappeared in the cabin, where he remained for some minutes. When he again came on deck he bore a box in which was a lighted lamp provided with a bright reflector. Only one side of the box was open, and this space the lad carefully shielded with his hat. The sloop was just entering Colvos Passage, between Vashon Island and the mainland, and was nearer the western shore than the other.

Holding his box as far down as he could reach over the landward side of the vessel, Bonny turned its opening towards the shore, and allowed the bright light to stream from it for a single second. Then by quickly reversing the box the light was made to disappear. A moment later it was shown again, this time with a piece of red glass held in the front of the lamp. This red light, after appearing for a single second, was also made to vanish, and another quick flash of white light took its place. A minute or so later the whole operation was repeated, and the white, red, and white signal was again flashed to the wooded shore. At the fourth time of displaying the signal it was answered by two white flashes from the shore.

There was a moment of suspense, and then Bonny exclaimed, in a low tone, "Great Scott! They're after us!"

Extinguishing his light, he again dived below, this time into the forecastle. When he reappeared he bore the float and lighted lantern already described. Alaric had noticed this queer contrivance the day before, and, while wondering at its object, had amused himself by idly scribbling on a smooth shingle that he found inside the tub. Now this same shingle was hastily lashed to the lantern, and the whole affair was launched overboard. At the same time the sloop was put about, and leaving this decoy light floating and bobbing behind her as though it were in a boat, she sped away towards the eastern side of the channel.

When Bonny rejoined Alaric at the lookout station he asked, with a chuckle: "What do you think of that for a scheme, Rick? It's my own invention, and I've been longing for a chance to try it every trip; but this is the very first time we have needed anything of the kind. I only hope the light won't get blown out, or the whole business get capsized before the beaks capture it. My! how I'd like to see 'em creeping up to it, and hear their remarks when they find out what it really is!"

"What does all this flashing of lights and setting lanterns adrift mean, anyway?" asked Alaric, who was much puzzled by what had just taken place.

"Means there's a revenue-boat of some kind waiting for us in the channel, and that we are dodging him. The lights I showed made our private signal, and asked if the coast was clear. Skookum John didn't get on to 'em at first, or maybe he wasn't in a safe place for answering. When he saw us and got the chance, though, he flashed two lights to warn us of trouble. Three would have meant 'All right, come ahead'; but two was a startler. It was the first time we've had that signal; also it's the first chance I've had to test my invention."



"BONNY'S INVENTION STARTED ON ITS JOURNEY"

"Do you mean that you actually expect that floating lantern to attract the revenue people, so they will go to examine it, instead of coming after us?"

"Attract 'em! Of course it will. They'll go for it the same as June bugs go for street electrics, and then they'll wish they had spent their time hunting for us instead."

Ever since leaving the dancing light Bonny had not been able to take his eyes from it, so anxious was he to discover whether or not it served the purpose for which it was intended. It grew fainter and smaller as the sloop gained distance on her new course. Then all at once it seemed to rise from the water, and an instant later disappeared.

"They've got it, and lifted it aboard!" cried Bonny, delightedly. And in his exultation he called out, "The beaks have doused the glim, Cap'n Duff!"

"Douse your tongue, ye swab, and keep your eyes p'inted for'ard!" was the ungracious reply muttered out of the after darkness.

"What an old bear he is!" murmured Alaric, indignantly.

"Yes; isn't he?--a regular old sea-bear? But I don't mind him any more than I would a rumble of imitation thunder. I say, though, Rick, isn't this jolly exciting?"

"Yes," admitted the other, "it certainly is."

"And you want me to quit it for some stupid shore work that'll make a fellow think he's got about as much life in him as a clam?"

"No, I don't; for I am certain there are just as exciting things to be done on shore as at sea; and if you'll only promise to come with me I'll promise to find something for you to do as exciting as this, and lots honester."

"I've a mind to take you up," said Bonny, "and I would if I thought you had any idea how hard it is to find a job of any kind. You haven't, though, and because you got this berth dead easy you think you'll have the same luck every time. But we must look sharp now for another light from Skookum John."

By this time the sloop had again tacked, and was headed diagonally for the western shore.

"Who is Skookum John?" asked Alaric.

"Skookum? Why, he's our Siwash runner, who is always on the lookout for us, and keeps us posted."

"What is a Siwash?"

"Well, if you aren't ignorant! 'Specially about languages. Why, Siwash is Chinook for Indian. There's his light now! See? One, two, three. Good enough! We've given 'em the slip once more, and everything is working our way."

By the time Bonny had reported this bit of news to Captain Duff, and held the tiller while the old sea-dog cautiously lighted the pipe he had not dared smoke all night, dawn was breaking, and the skipper began to look anxiously for the harbor he had hoped to make by sunrise.

As it grew lighter Bonny pointed out the now distant masts of the cutter they had so successfully passed a short time before, and said, with a cheerful grin: "There's the old kettle that thought she could clip the *Fancy's* wings, and bring her to with a round turn. But she missed it this time, as she will many another if I'm not mistaken."

Captain Duff also sighted the far-away cutter, and, nervous as an owl at being caught outside his hiding-place by daylight, laid all the blame of their late arrival on poor Alaric.

"If it hadn't been for your fool antics of two nights ago," he said, "we'd made this port a good hour afore sun this morning. You're as wuthless as ye look, and ye look to be the most wuthless young swab I ever had aboard ship, barring one. He was another just such white-faced, white-handed, mealy-mouthed specimen as you be. Couldn't eat ship's victuals till I starved him to it, and finally got me into the wust scrape of my life. Now I shouldn't be one mite surprised ef you'd put me into another hole mighty nigh as deep. So you want to quit your nonsense and 'tend strictly to business, or I'll make ye jump. D'ye hear? I'll make ye jump, I say."

Alaric acknowledged that he heard, and then walked forward to light the galley fire and set a kettle of water on to boil, for he was very hungry, and proposed to have some breakfast as quickly as possible.

The sloop rounded a long point and came to anchor in a wooded cove, apparently as wild as though they were its discoverers. A couple of Chinamen, who had evidently camped there all night, waited to greet their countrymen on the beach, to which Bonny at once began to transfer his passengers, a few at a time, in the dinghy. As fast as they were landed they were led back into the woods and started towards Tacoma, which was but a few miles distant.

Alaric, who was determined not to remain aboard the sloop longer than was necessary to get the breakfast to which he felt entitled after his night's work, managed to get his canvas bag on deck unseen by Captain Duff, and slip it into the dinghy as the boat was about to make its last trip.

"Hide it on shore for me, Bonny," he said.

"All right; I will if you'll promise not to skip until we've had another talk on the subject."

"Of course I promise; for I'm not going without you."

"Then perhaps you won't go at all," laughed Bonny.

So the bag was taken ashore and concealed in a thicket a little to one side, and Bonny came back to prepare breakfast, for which Alaric had the water already boiling.

When this meal was nearly ready, and as the boys were sniffing hungrily at the odors of coffee and frying meat, Captain Duff suddenly appeared on deck.

"Go up on that point, you foremast hand--I can't remember your thundering name--and watch the cutter while me and the mate eats. After that one of us 'll relieve ye. Ef she moves, or even shows black smoke, you let me know, d'ye hear?"

Wishing to rebel, but not daring to, and feeling that he should surely starve if kept from his breakfast many minutes longer, Alaric obeyed this order. He managed to secure a couple of hard biscuit with which to comfort his lonely watch, and then Bonny set him ashore.

Picking up his bag and carrying it with him, the boy clambered to the point, and, selecting a place from which he could plainly see the cutter, began his watch, at the same time munching his dry biscuit with infinite relish. Much of the water intervening between him and the cutter was hidden from view by near-by undergrowth, and the necessity for scanning it never occurred to him.

After a while Bonny came to relieve him and allow him to go to breakfast.

"Have you really made up your mind to desert the ship?" asked the young mate, noticing that Alaric had his bag with him.

"Yes, I really have," answered the other; "and you will come with me, won't you, Bonny?"

"I don't know," replied the latter, undecidedly. "Somehow I can't make it seem right to desert Captain Duff and leave him in a fix. Seems to me we ought to stay with him until he gets back to Victoria, anyway. Besides, I'd lose my wages, and there must be nearly thirty dollars due me by this time. But you go along to your breakfast, and after that we'll talk it all over. Haven't seen anything, have you?"

"No, not a sign, but--Hello! What's that?"

"Caught, as sure as you're born!" cried Bonny, in a tone of suppressed excitement.

Then, the two lads, peering through the bushes, watched a boat, flying the flag of the United States Revenue Marine and filled with sturdy bluejackets, enter the cove and dash alongside the smuggler *Fancy*.



CHAPTER XV

CAPTURED BY A REVENUE-CUTTER

The sight of that armed boat making fast to the sloop, and its agile occupants springing on board, was so startling to the two lads taking in its every detail from their point of vantage on shore, that if excitement could have affected Alaric Todd's heart it would certainly have done so at that moment. As it was, he did not even realize that his heart was beating unusually fast. His mind was too full of other thoughts just then for him to remember that he had a heart. He only realized that the vessel of which he had formed the crew had fallen into the clutches of outraged law, and that for the present at least her career as a smuggler was at an end. Now that she was really captured, he was conscious of a regret that after successfully eluding her enemies so long she should, after all, fall into their hands. He even felt sorry for Captain Duff, surly old bear that he was.

At the same time he was thankful not to be on board the captured craft, and rejoiced in the thought that this sudden change of affairs would sweep away all Bonny's scruples, and leave him free to seek some occupation other than that of being a smuggler.

As for that young sailor himself, his feelings were equally contradictory with those of his companion, though his sympathies leaned more decidedly towards the side of the law-breaker.

"Poor Cap'n Duff!" he exclaimed, in a low tone. "This is tough luck for him; and I must say, Rick Dale, that the whole thing is pretty much your fault, too. If you'd kept a half-way decent lookout you'd have seen that yawl when she was two miles off. Then we could have got under way, and given her the slip as easy as you please. Now you and I have lost our job, while Cap'n Duff will lose his and his boat besides. I'll never see my wages, either; and, worst of all, in spite of my invention working so smooth, these revenue fellows have got the laugh on us. I say it's too bad, though to be sure it does let us out of the smuggling business. I expect it will be a long time, though, before I get another job as first mate, or any other kind of a job that will be worth having."

"But, Bonny," interposed Alaric, anxious to defend his own reputation, "I wasn't told to look out for boats, but only to watch the cutter, and I hardly took my eyes off of her until you came."

"That's all right; only by the time you've knocked round the world as much as I have you'll find out that any fellow who expects to get promoted has got to do a heap of things besides those he's told to do. What he is told to do is generally only a hint of what he is expected to do. But just listen to the old man. Isn't he laying down the law to those chaps, though?"

The voices of those on the sloop came plainly to the ears of the hidden lads, and above them all roared and bellowed that of Captain Duff, as though he expected to overwhelm his enemies by sheer force of bluster.

"Chinamen!" he shouted--"Chinamen! No, sir, you won't find no Chinamen about this craft, nor nothing else onlawful.

"Smell 'em, do ye? Smell 'em! So do I now, and hev ever sence you revenooers come aboard. Seems like ye can't get the parfume out of your clothing.

"Going to seize the sloop anyway, be ye? Wal, ye kin do it, seeing as I'm all alone and a cripple. There'll come a day of reckoning, though--a day of reckoning, d'ye hear? I'm a free-born American citizen, and I'll protest agin this outrage till they hear me clear to Washington."

"He's heard over a good part of Washington this minute," whispered Bonny. "But what are they talking about now?"

"Phil Ryder!" the captain was shouting. "Philip Ryder! No, sir, there ain't no one of that name aboard this craft, nor hain't ever been as I know of. I did know a Phil Ryder once, but--What's that ye say? That'll do? Wa'l, it won't do, ye gold-mounted swab, not so long as I choose to keep on talking. Look out there, or I'll brain ye sure as guns! Look out, I--"

This last exclamation was directed to a couple of sturdy bluejackets, who, obeying a significant nod from their officer, seized the irate captain by either arm, hustled him down into his own cabin, and drew the slide. Then leaving these two aboard the *Fancy*, the others re-entered their boat and began to pull towards shore, with the evident intention of making a search for the missing members of the sloop's crew as well as for her recent passengers.

"Hello!" cried Bonny, softly, "this thing is beginning to get rather too interesting for us, and the sooner we light out the better."

So the lads started on a run, and had gone but a few rods when Alaric, catching his toe on a projecting root, was tripped up and fell heavily. With such force was he flung to the ground that for several minutes he was too sick and dizzy to rise. When he finally regained his feet, and expressed a belief that he could again run, it was too late. The boat's crew were already scattering through the woods, and one man detailed to search the point was coming directly towards the place where the boys were concealed.

It seemed inevitable that they should be discovered, and Alaric, already giving himself up for lost, was beginning to see visions of the government prison on MacNeil's Island, when Bonny spied one avenue of escape that was still open to them.

"Scrooch low!" he whispered, "and follow me as softly as you can."

Alaric obeyed, and the young sailor began to move as rapidly as possible towards the beach. With inexcusable carelessness the lieutenant had left his boat hauled up on the shore without a man to guard her. Bonny noticed this, and also that the sloop's dinghy still lay where he had left it. If they could only reach the dinghy unobserved they would stand a much better chance of making an escape by water than by land.

So the boys crept cautiously through the undergrowth without attracting the attention of their only near-by pursuer, until they reached the beach, where a cleared space of about one hundred feet intervened between them and their coveted goal, and this they must cross, exposed to the full view of any who might be looking that way. They paused for an instant, drew long breaths, and then made a dash into the open.

Almost with the first sound of rattling pebbles beneath their feet came a yell from behind. The bluejacket had discovered them, and was leaping down the steep slope in hot pursuit.

"Run, Rick! You've got to run!" panted Bonny. "Give me the bag." Snatching the canvas bag from Alaric's hand as he spoke, the active young fellow darted ahead and flung it into the dinghy. "Now shove!" he cried. "Shove, with all your might!"

It was all they could do to move the boat, for the tide had fallen sufficiently to leave it hard aground, and with their first straining shove they only gained a couple of feet; the next put half her length in the water, and with a third effort she floated free.

"Tumble in!" shouted Bonny, and Alaric obeyed literally, pitching head foremost across the thwarts with such violence that but for his comrade's hold on the opposite side the boat would surely have been capsized.

With the water above his knees, Bonny gave a final shove that sent the boat a full rod from shore, and in turn tumbled aboard.

He was none too soon; for at that moment the sailor reached the spot they had just left, and, rushing into the water, began to swim after them with splendid overhand strokes. Bonny snatched up the dinghy's single oar, and, seeing that they would be overtaken before he could get the boat under way, brandished it like a club, threatening to bring it down on the man's head if he came within reach.

A single glance at the lad's resolute face convinced the swimmer that he was in dead earnest, and realizing his own helplessness, he wisely turned back. Then with a shout of derision Bonny began to scull the dinghy towards open water, while the sailor strove with unavailing efforts to launch the heavy yawl.

Without troubling themselves any further about him, the lads turned their attention to the sloop, which they were now approaching. The two men left in charge had watched with great interest the scene just enacted so close to them, but in which, having no boat at their disposal, they were unable to participate. Now one of them shouted: "Come aboard here, you young villains! What do you mean by running off with government property?"

"What do you mean by eating my breakfast?" replied Alaric, hungrily, as he noticed the men making a hearty meal off the food they had discovered in the sloop's galley.

"Your breakfast, is it, son? So you belong to this craft, do you? Come aboard and get it, then."

"Don't you wish we would?" retorted Bonny, jeeringly, as he stopped sculling and allowed the dinghy to drift just beyond reach from the sloop. "I say, though, you might toss us a couple of hardtack."

"What? Feed you young pirates with rations that's just been seized by the government? Not much. I'm in the service, I am."

Just then a bright object flashed from one of the little round cabin windows and fell in the dinghy. It was a box of

sardines. Tins of potted meat, mushrooms, and other delicacies followed in quick succession. One or two fell in the water and were lost; but most of them reached their destination, and were deftly caught by Alaric, whose baseball experience was thus put to practical use. So before the bewildered guards fully realized what was taking place the dinghy was fairly well provisioned. At length one of them seemed to comprehend the situation, and sprang in front of the open port just in time to stop with his legs a flying tumbler of raspberry jam. As it broke and streamed down over his white duck trousers the boys in the dinghy shouted with laughter, and nearly rolled overboard in their irrepressible mirth.

All at once there came a hoarse shout from the same cabin port. "Look astarn, ye lubbers! Look astarn!"

So occupied had the lads been with the sloop that they had given no thought to what might be taking place on shore, but at this warning a startled glance in that direction filled them with dismay.

Another sailor, attracted by the shouts on the beach, had returned to the assistance of his mate, and together they had succeeded in launching the yawl. Then, pulling very softly, they had slipped up on the unwary lads, until they were so close that one of them had quit rowing, and crept forward to the bow, where he crouched with an outstretched boat-hook, that in another second would be caught over the dinghy's sternboard.



CHAPTER XVI

ESCAPE OF THE FIRST MATE AND CREW

The situation certainly looked hopeless for our lads, and the men on the sloop were already shouting derisively at them. Alaric caught another mental glimpse of the government prison, and even Bonny's stout heart experienced an instant of despair. He was still standing and holding the oar that he had used in sculling. Moved by a sudden impulse, and just as the extended boat-hook was dropping over the stern of the dinghy, he struck it a smart blow with his oar, and had the good fortune to send it whirling from the sailor's grasp. With a second quick motion the lad set his oar against the stem of the yawl, that was within four feet of him, and gave a vigorous shove. The slight headway of the heavy craft was checked, and the lighter dinghy forged ahead.

"Oh, you will, will you, you young rascal?" cried the sailor, angrily, as he leaped back to his thwart, and bent to his oar with furious energy. His companion followed his example, and under the impetus of their powerful strokes the yawl sprang forward. At the same time Bonny, facing backward, and working his oar with both hands, was sculling so sturdily that the dinghy rocked from side to side until it seemed to Alaric that she must certainly capsize. She was making such splendid headway, though, that the much heavier yawl could not gain an inch. Its crew, unable to see the fugitive dinghy without turning their heads, and having no one to steer for them, were placed at a disadvantage that Bonny was quick to detect.

Watching his opportunity, he caused his craft to swerve sharply to one side, and the yawl, holding her original course for some seconds before his manoeuvre was discovered, his lead was thus materially increased.

Although not a very swift race, this novel chase proved as close and exciting a contest as had ever been seen on the Sound. The men on the sloop yelled with delight; and Alaric, filled with renewed hopes of escape on seeing that the distance between dinghy and yawl was not diminished, thrilled with excitement and shouted encouraging words to his comrade.

In spite of all this, Bonny's strength and powers of endurance were so much less than those of the sturdy fellows in the yawl that he realized the impossibility of maintaining his position much longer. With strained muscles, and his breath coming in panting gasps, he glanced wildly about like a hunted animal in search of some avenue of escape. There was none other than that he was taking; and with a sinking heart he knew that, unless some miracle were interposed in their behalf, he and his companion must speedily be captured.

But the miracle was interposed, and in the simplest possible manner; for just as Bonny was ready to drop his oar from exhaustion a shrill, long-drawn whistle sounded from the now distant beach. Its effect on the crew of the yawl was magical. They stopped rowing, looked at each other, and consulted. Then they gazed at the retreating dinghy and hesitated. They felt it to be their duty to continue the pursuit, but they also knew the penalty for disobeying an order from a superior, and that whistle was an unmistakable order for them to go back.

The cutter's third lieutenant had returned from his expedition into the woods with three wretched Chinamen, whom, despite their eagerly produced certificates, he had seen fit to make prisoners. He was amazed to find the yawl gone from where he had left it, and the details of the chase in which it was engaged being hidden from him by the intervening sloop, he gave the whistle signal for its immediate return.

As the crew of the yawl hesitated between duty and obedience, the peremptory whistle order was repeated louder and shriller than before. This decided the wavering sailors, and, reluctantly turning their boat, they began to pull towards shore, one of them shaking his fist at the boys as they went.

As for the fugitives, they could hardly believe the evidence of their senses. Was the chase indeed given over, and were they free to go where they pleased? It seemed incredible. Just as they were on the point of being captured, too, for Bonny now confided to Alaric that he couldn't have held out at that pace one minute longer. As he said this the tired lad sat down for a short rest.

Almost immediately he again sprang to his feet, and, thrusting his oar overboard, began to scull with one hand. "It won't do for us to be loafing here," he explained, "for I expect those fellows have been called back so that the whole crowd can chase us in the sloop."

"Oh, I hope not," said Alaric; "I'm awfully tired of running away."

"So am I," laughed Bonny--"tired in more ways than one; but if fellows bigger than we are will insist on chasing us, I don't see that there is anything for us to do but run. There! thank goodness we've rounded the point at last, and got

out of sight of them for a while at any rate."

"Where are you going now, and what do you propose to do next?" asked Alaric, who, fully realizing his own helplessness in this situation, was willing to leave the whole scheme of escape to his more experienced companion.

"That's what I'm wondering. Of course it won't do to stay out here very long, for in less than fifteen minutes the sloop will be shoving her nose around that point. Nor it wouldn't be any use to try and get to Tacoma--at least, not yet a while--for that's where they'll be most likely to hunt for us. So I think we'd better cross the channel, turn our boat adrift, and make our way overland to Skookum John's camp. It isn't very sweet-smelling, and they don't feed you any too well--that is, not according to our ideas--but just because it is such a mean kind of a place no one will ever think of looking for us there. Besides, Skookum's a very decent sort of a chap, and he'll keep us posted on all that happens in the bay. So if you don't mind roughing it a bit--"

"No, indeed," interrupted Alaric, eagerly. "I don't mind it at all. In fact, that is just what I want to do most of anything, and I've always wished I could live in a real Indian camp. The only Indians I ever saw were in the Wild West Show, in Paris."

"Have you been to Paris?" asked Bonny, wonderingly.

"Yes, of course, I was there for--I mean yes, I've been there. But, Bonny, what makes you think of turning this boat adrift? Wouldn't we find her useful?"

"I suppose we might; but she isn't our boat, you know, and you wouldn't keep a boat that didn't belong to you just because it might prove useful, would you?"

"No, certainly not," replied Alaric, rather surprised to have his companion take this view of the question. "I would try to hand her over to the rightful owner."

"So would I," agreed Bonny, "if I knew who he was; but after what has just happened I don't know, and so I am going to turn her adrift in the hope that he will find her. Besides, it wouldn't be safe to leave her on shore, because she would show anybody who happened to be looking for us just where we had landed."

"That's a much better reason than the other," said Alaric.

During this conversation the dinghy had been urged steadily across the channel, and was now run up to a bold bank, where the boys disembarked. After removing Alaric's bag and the several cans of provisions so thoughtfully furnished them by Captain Duff, Bonny gave the boat a push out into the channel, down which the ebbing tide bore her, with many a twist and turn, towards the more open waters of the Sound.

"To be left in this way in an unknown wilderness makes me feel as Cortez must have done when he burned his ships," reflected Alaric, as he watched the receding craft.

"I don't think I ever heard about that," said Bonny, simply. "Did he do it for the insurance?"

"Not exactly," laughed Alaric; "and yet in a certain way he did, too. I'll tell you all about it some time. Now, what are you going to do next?"

"Climb that bluff, lie down under those trees while you eat something, and watch for the sloop," answered Bonny, as though his programme had all been arranged beforehand.

They did this, and Alaric was so hungry that he made away with a whole box of sardines and a tin of deviled ham. He wondered a little if they would not make him ill, but did not worry much, for he was rapidly learning that while leading an out-of-door life one may eat with impunity many things that would kill one under ordinary conditions. He had just finished his ham, and was casting thoughtful glances towards a bottle of olives, when Bonny exclaimed, "There she is!"

Sure enough, the sloop, with the cutter's yawl in tow, was slowly beating out past the point on the opposite side of the channel. She stood well over towards the western shore, and the tide so carried her down that when she tacked she was close under the bluff on which the boys, stretched at full length and peering through a fringe of tall grasses, watched her. She came so near that Alaric grew nervous, and was certain her crew were about to make a landing at that very spot. With a vision of MacNeil's Island always before him, he wanted to run from so dangerous a vicinity and hide in the forest depths; but Bonny assured him that the sloop would go about, and in another moment she did so, greatly to Alaric's relief.

They could see that Captain Duff was still confined below, and they even heard one of the men sing out to the officer

in command: "There it is now, sir, about two miles down the channel. I can see it plain."

"Very good," answered the lieutenant; "keep your eye on it, and note if they make a landing. If they don't, we'll have them inside of half an hour."

"Yes, you will," said Bonny, with a grin.

As the sloop passed out of hearing the lads crept back from the edge of the bluff, gathered up their scanty belongings, and started through the forest towards the place where Bonny believed Skookum John's camp to be located. Although it lay somewhere down the coast in the same direction as that taken by the sloop, it never occurred to either of them that her new commander might stop there to make inquiries concerning them.

Thus when, after an hour of hard travel, they came suddenly on the camp, located beside a tumbling stream in a rocky hollow that opened directly on the water, they were terrified at sight of the cutter's yawl lying in the mouth of the creek, and the revenue-officer standing on shore engaged in earnest conversation with Skookum John himself. As they hastily drew back into the forest shadows they saw the former wave his arm comprehensively towards the country lying back of the camp. Then he shook hands with the Indian and stepped into his boat. Just as it was about to shove off, a villanous cur, scenting the newcomers, darted towards their hiding-place, barking furiously.



CHAPTER XVII

SAVED BY A LITTLE SIWASH KID

The attention of the departing revenue-officer being attracted by the barking dog, he paused, and glanced inquiringly in that direction. It was a critical moment for our lads, who knew not whether to run, which would be to reveal their presence at once, or to try and kill the dog, with probably the same result. Fortunately they were spared the necessity of a decision, for a little girl, whom up to this moment they had not noticed, though she was quietly at play with a family of clam-shell dolls directly in front of them, took the matter into her own hands. She had just arranged her score or so of dolls in *potlatch* order, with the most favored near at hand, when the dog, charging that way, threatened to upset the whole company. To avert such a catastrophe the child snatched up a stick, and springing forward in defence of her property, began to belabor him with such a hearty will, and scream at him so shrilly, as to entirely divert his attention from his original object.

Taking advantage of this diversion in their favor, the boys stole softly away, and after making a long detour through the forest, cautiously approached the coast a mile or more from Skookum John's camp, but where they could command a wide view of the Sound. Here they had the satisfaction of seeing the yawl, under sail, standing off shore, and a full half-mile from it. The sloop was not visible, nor was the cutter.

"How could he have known just where to look for us?" asked Alaric, who had been greatly alarmed at the imminence of their recent danger.

"He couldn't have known," replied Bonny. "It was only a good guess. I suppose he overhauled our boat, and, finding her empty, made up his mind that we had landed somewhere. Of course he couldn't tell on which shore to look, but, noticing John's camp, thought it would be a good idea to find out if the Indians had seen anything of us. Of course they hadn't, and now that he has left, it will be safe enough for us to go back."

"Do you really think so? Isn't there any other place to which we can go?" asked Alaric, whose dread of being captured by the revenue-officers was so great as to render him overcautious.

"Plenty of them, but no other that I know of within reach, where we could find food, fire to cook it, and a boat to carry us somewhere else; for there aren't any white settlers or any other Indians that I know of within miles of here."

In spite of this assurance Alaric was so loath to venture that the boys spent several hours in discussing their situation and prospects before he finally consented to revisit Skookum John's camp. By this time the day was drawing to its close, and the lengthening forest shadows, flung far out over the placid waters of the Sound, were so suggestive of a night of darkness and hunger amid all sorts of possible terrors as to outweigh all other considerations. So the boys plunged into the twilight gloom of the thick-set trees, and began the uncertain task of retracing the way by which they had come.

As neither of them was a woodsman, this soon proved more difficult than they had expected. The trees all looked alike, and they made so many turns to avoid prostrate trunks and masses of entangled branches that within half an hour they came to a halt, and each read in the troubled face of the other a confirmation of his own fears. They had certainly lost their way, and could not even tell in which direction lay the sea-shore they had so recently left. Bonny thought it was in front, while Alaric was equally certain that it still lay behind them.

"If we could only make a fire," said the former, "I wouldn't mind so much staying right where we are till daylight; but I should hate to do so without one. Haven't you any matches?"

"Not one," replied Alaric; "but I thought you always carried them."

"So I do; but I used them all on that old lantern last night. I almost wish now I'd never invented that thing, and that they had caught us. They wouldn't have starved us, at any rate, and perhaps the prison isn't so very bad, after all."

"I don't know about that," rejoined Alaric, stoutly. "To my mind a prison is the very worst thing, worse even than starving. After all, this doesn't seem to me so bad a fix as some from which I've already escaped. Going to China, for instance, or drifting alone at night in a small boat."

"What do you mean by going to China?" asked Bonny, wonderingly.

"Hark!" exclaimed the other, without answering this question. "Don't you hear something?"

"Nothing but the wind up aloft."

"Well, I do. I hear some sort of a moaning, and it sounds like a child."

"Maybe it's a bear or a wolf, or something of that kind," suggested Bonny, whose notions concerning wild animals were rather vague.

"Of course it may be," admitted Alaric; "but it sounds so human that we must go and find out, for if it is a child in distress we are bound to rescue it."

"Yes, I suppose we are; only if it proves to be a bear, I wonder who will rescue us."

Alaric had already set off in the direction of the moaning; and ere they had taken half a dozen steps Bonny also heard it plainly. Then they paused and shouted, hoping that if the sound came from a bear the animal would run away. As they could hear no evidences of a retreat, and as the moaning still continued, they again pushed on. It was now so dark that they could do little more than feel their way past trees, over logs, and through dense beds of ferns. All the while the sound by which they were guided grew more and more distinct, until it seemed to come from their very feet.

At this moment the moaning ceased, as though the sufferer were listening. Then it was succeeded by a plaintive cry that went straight to Alaric's heart. He could dimly see the outline of a great log directly before him. Stooping beside it and groping among the ferns, his hands came in contact with something soft and warm that he lifted carefully. It was a little child, who uttered a sharp cry of mingled pain and terror at being picked up by a stranger.

"Poor little thing!" exclaimed the boy. "I am afraid it is badly injured, and shouldn't be one bit surprised if it had broken a limb. I must try and find out so as not to hurt it unnecessarily."

"Well," said Bonny, in a tragic tone, "they say troubles fly in flocks. I thought we were in a pretty bad fix before; but now we surely have run into difficulty. Whatever are we to do with a baby?"

"Bonny!" cried Alaric, without answering this question, "I do believe it's the little Indian girl who drove away the dog, and something is the matter with one of her ankles."

"Skookum John's little Siwash kid!" exclaimed Bonny, joyfully. "Then we can't be so very far from his camp. Now if we only knew in which direction it lay."

As if in answer to this wish there came a cry, far-reaching and long drawn: "Nittitan! Nittitan! Ohee! Ohee!"

For several hours Skookum John and his eldest son, Bah-die, had been searching the woods for two white lads whom the third lieutenant of the cutter claimed to have lost. He had promised the Indian a reward of twenty-five dollars if he would bring them to the cutter, and Skookum John had at once set forth with the idea of earning this money as speedily as possible.

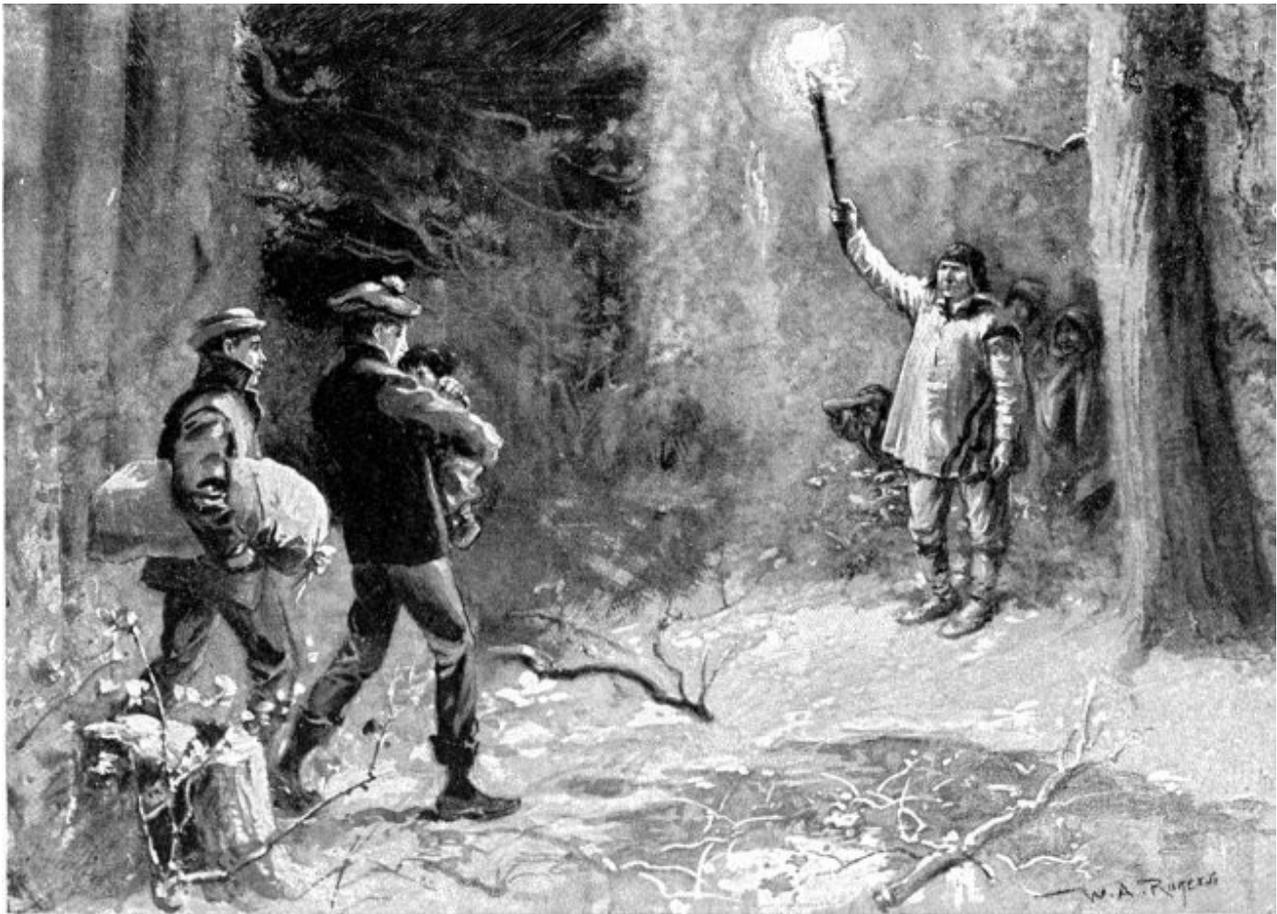
Little Nittitan, his youngest daughter, whom he loved above all others, noted his going, and after a while decided to follow him. When darkness put an end to the Indian's fruitless search and he returned to his camp, he found it in an uproar. Nittitan was missing, and no one could imagine what had become of her.

For a moment the bereaved father was stunned. Then he prepared several torches, and, accompanied by Bah-die, set forth to find her. At the edge of the forest he raised a mighty cry that he hoped would reach the little one's ears. To his amazement it was answered by a cheery "Hello! Hello there, Skookum John!"

"Ohee! Ohee!" shouted the Indian.

"Here's your *tenas kloodchman*" (little woman), came the voice from the forest, and the happy father knew that he who shouted had found the lost child and was bringing her to him.





THE ARRIVAL AT SKOOKUM JOHN'S

On the outskirts of his camp he stood and waited, with blazing torch uplifted above his head, and an expectant group of women and half-grown children huddled behind him. He was greatly perplexed when a few minutes later a tall white lad whom he had never before seen emerged from the forest bearing the lost child in his arms. There was another behind him, though, who was promptly recognized, for Skookum John knew Bonny Brooks well, and instantly it came to him that these were the boys whom the revenue-man claimed to have lost. And they had found his little one. How glad he was that his own search for them had been unsuccessful! But this was not the time to be thinking of them. There was his own little Nittitan. He must have her in his arms and hold her close before he could feel that she was really safe.

He stepped forward to take her, but the strange lad drew back, and Bonny cried out: "*Kloshe nanitsh, Skookum. Tenas kloodchman la pee, hyas sick,*" by which he conveyed the idea that the little woman had hurt her foot quite badly. Then he added, "It's all right, Rick. He understands that he must handle her gently."

So Alaric relinquished his burden, and the swarthy father, rejoicing but anxious, bore the child to a rude hut of brush and cedar mats, the open front of which was faced by a brightly blazing fire. Here he laid her gently down on a soft bear-skin and knelt beside her.

Alaric, who seemed to consider the child as still under his care, knelt on the opposite side and began to feel very carefully of one of the little ankles. He had not spent all his life in company with doctors without learning something of their trade, and after a brief examination he announced to Bonny that there were no broken bones, but merely a dislocation of the ankle-joint.

"I don't know anything about it," said Bonny, "but I should think that would be just as bad."

"No, indeed! A dislocation is not serious if promptly attended to. You explain to him that I am a sort of a doctor, and can make the child well in a few seconds if he will let me. Then I want him to hold her while I pull the joint into place."

So Bonny explained that his friend was a *hyas doctin* or great medicine-man who could make Nittitan well *hyak* (quick), and the anxious father, having implicit faith in the white man's skill, consented to allow Alaric to make the attempt.

The little one uttered a sharp cry, as, with a quick wrench, the dislocated bone was snapped into place, and Alaric, with flushed face, but very proud of what he had done, regained his feet.

"Now," he said, "let them bathe the ankle in water as hot as the child can bear, and by to-morrow she'll be all right. And, Bonny, if you know how to ask for anything to eat, for goodness' sake take pity on the starving poor, and say it quick."



CHAPTER XVIII

LIFE IN SKOOKUM JOHN'S CAMP

Skookum John, which in Chinook means "Strong John," was a Makah, or Neah Bay, Indian, whose home was at Cape Flattery, on the shore of the Pacific, and at the southern side of the entrance to the superb strait of Juan de Fuca. He was a *Tyhee*, or chief, among his people, for he was not only their biggest man, being a trifle over six feet tall, while very few of his tribe exceeded five feet nine inches in height, but he was the boldest and most successful hunter of whales among them. This alone would have given him high rank in the tribe, for to them the whales that frequent the warm waters of the coast are what buffalo were to the Indians of the great plains.

The Makahs are fish-eaters, and while they catch and dry or smoke quantities of salmon, halibut, and cod, they esteem the whale more than all other denizens of the sea, because there is so much of him, because he is so good to eat, and because he furnishes them with the oil which they use on all their food, as we use butter, and which they trade for nearly every other necessity of their simple life.

They hunt the whale in big open canoes hewn from logs of yellow-cedar, long-beaked and wonderfully carved, painted a dead black outside and bright red within. Formerly they used sails of cedar matting, but now they are made of heavy drilling or light duck. Eight men go in a whaling-boat—one to steer, one to throw the slender harpoons, and six to wield the long paddles, the blades of which are wide at the upper end and gradually narrow to a point below, which is the very best way to make all paddles except those used for steering. In these canoes Skookum John and his people chase whales far out to sea, sometimes following them for days without returning to land. Every time they get near enough to one of the monsters they hurl into him a harpoon, to the head of which is attached, by a length of stout kelp, a float made of a whole seal-skin sewn up and inflated. The heavy drag of these floats eventually so tires the whale that he is at the mercy of his enemies, and they tow him ashore in triumph.

The big Siwash, being an expert whaler, had much oil to trade, and made frequent visits to Victoria for this purpose. Here, being an intelligent man and keenly noticing all that he saw, he learned much concerning the whites and their ways, besides picking up a fair knowledge of their language.

So it happened that when the smugglers who proposed to operate in the upper Sound began to cast, about for some trustworthy person, who would also be free from suspicion, to look out for their interests in that section, and keep them posted as to the whereabouts of cutters, they very wisely selected Skookum John, and offered him inducements that he could not afford to refuse. He, of course, knew nothing of the laws they proposed to violate, nor did he care, for political economy had never been included in Skookum John's studies.

So the Makah Tyhee closed his substantial house of hewn planks on Neah Bay, and, with all his wives and children—of whom Bah-die was the eldest and little Nittitan the youngest—and his dogs and canoes, and much whale oil, and many mats, he made the long journey to the place in which we find him. Here he established a summer camp of brush huts, and ostensibly went into the business of fishing for the Tacoma market. He had brought his big whaling-boat, and the little paddling canoes in which his children were accustomed to brave the Pacific breakers apparently for the fun of being rolled over and over in the surf. Above all, he had brought a light sailing-boat which was fashioned with such skill that its equal for speed and weatherly qualities had never been seen among boats of its size on the coast. It was in this swift craft that he darted about the Sound at night to discover the movements of revenue-men, watch for signals from incoming smugglers, and flash in return the lights that told of safety or danger.

Although not possessed of a high sense of honor, Skookum John was loyal to his employers, because it paid him to be so, and because no one had ever tempted him to be otherwise. At the same time he was not above performing a service for the other side, provided it would also pay, and so he did not hesitate to promise the cutter's third lieutenant that in return for twenty-five dollars he would use every effort to find and return to him the lost boys. As the lieutenant had not seen fit to mention the capture of the smuggling sloop that morning, or to say that the boys in question formed part of her crew, he had no idea that one of them was the lad with whom he had arranged his entire system of night signals.

When he did learn of the blow that threatened to retire him from business, and the reason why the revenue-men were so desirous of finding the lost boys, he began to wish that he saw his way clear to the winning of that reward, for twenty-five dollars is a large sum to be made so easily. But the revenue-men wanted *two* boys, and the only other one besides Bonny at present available, was the young medicine-man, the *hyas doctin*, who had not only found his dearly loved Nittitan in the dark *hyas stick* (forest), but had so marvellously mended what he firmly believed to have been a broken leg.

The old Siwash was not honorable, and he was very mercenary. At the same time, he was grateful, and would have

suffered much to prevent harm from coming to the lad who had placed him under such obligations. He was also superstitious, and rather afraid of the powers of a *hyas doctin*. So he determined to make the boys as comfortable as possible, and keep them with him until he could communicate with the *Tyhee* of the *piah-ship* (steamer). If two lost boys were worth twenty-five dollars, one lost boy must be worth at least half that sum; while it was just possible that he might obtain the whole reward for one boy. In that case, Bonny must be handed over to those who were willing to pay for him; for business is business even among the Siwash, and charity begins at home all over the world. Of course, Skookum John did not use these expressions, for he was not acquainted with them, but what he thought meant exactly the same thing.

In consequence of these reflections, all of which passed the Indian's mind in the space of a few seconds, Bonny had no time to make a request for food before the very best that the camp afforded was placed before them. There were small square chunks of whale-skin, as black and tough as the heel of a rubber boot. It was expected that these would be chewed for a moment, until the impossibility of masticating them was discovered, and that they would then be swallowed whole. After them came boiled fishes heads, of which the eyes were considered the chief delicacy, and these were followed by several kinds of dried and smoked fish, including salmon and halibut, besides bits of smoked whale looking like so many pieces of dried citron. All of these were to be dipped in hot whale oil before being eaten.

Then came another course of fish--this time fresh and plain boiled--which the Indians ate with a liberal supply of whale oil. Then boiled potatoes which were also dipped in oil after each bite. The crowning glory of the feast was a small quantity of hard bread, which for a change was dipped in whale oil and eaten dripping, and with this was served a mixture of huckleberries and oil beaten to a paste.

In regard to this liberal use of oil it must be said that Skookum John's whale oil was universally acknowledged to be the sweetest and most skilfully prepared to prevent rancidity of any in the Neah Bay village, and his family regarded it with the same pride that the proprietors of the best Orange County dairy do the finest products of their churn. It was therefore a great disappointment to them that Alaric did not appreciate it, and after trying a small quantity on a bit of potato, refused a further supply. He even seemed to prefer pate-de-foie-gras, of which the boys had a single jar. This he opened in honor of the occasion, and with it to spread over his bread and potatoes, a liberal helping of the boiled fish, and an innumerable number of smoked halibut strips boiled after a manner taught him by Bonny, the millionaire's son made a supper that he declared was one of the very best he had ever eaten.

In order that their new-found friends might not feel too badly over Alaric's refusal to partake more liberally of their whale oil, Bonny gave them to understand that it was not because he disliked it, but not being accustomed to rich food, he was afraid of making himself ill if he indulged in it too freely.

At this meal the young sailor tasted both pate-de-foie-gras and whale oil for the first time, and after carefully considering the merits of the two delicacies, declared that he could not tell which was the worse, and that as it would be just as difficult to learn to like one as the other, he thought he would devote his energies to the oil.

After supper a rude shelter against the chill dampness of the night was constructed of small poles covered with a number of the useful bark mats, of which the Indian women of that coast make enormous quantities. A few armfuls of spruce-tips were cut and spread beneath it, a couple of mats were laid over these, two more were provided for covering, and Alaric's first camp bed was ready for him. Both lads were so dead tired that they needed no second invitation to fling themselves down on their sweet-scented couch, and were asleep almost instantly. As Skookum John and Bah-die had also been out all the night before, they were not long in following the example of their guests, and so within an hour after supper the whole camp was buried in a profound slumber.

By earliest daylight of the next morning the older Indian was up and stirring about very softly so as not to awaken the strangers. He was about to make an effort to earn that twenty-five dollars, and believed that by careful management it might be his before noon. He planned to notify the commander of the cutter that while he could deliver one of the desired lads into his hands, the other had taken a canoe and gone to Tacoma, where he would no doubt be readily found. If the *Tyhee* of the *piah-ship* agreed to pay him the offered reward or even half of it for one lad, he would ask that a boat might be sent to the camp for him. In the meantime he would return first and invite both boys to go out fishing--Bonny in a canoe with him, and the other in a second canoe with Bah-die, who would be instructed to take his passenger out of sight somewhere up the coast. Then the cutter's boat would be allowed to overtake his canoe, and Bonny would be handed over to those who wanted him, without trouble.

It was an admirably conceived plan, and the old Siwash chuckled over it as he softly launched his lightest canoe, stepped into it, and paddled swiftly away.

CHAPTER XIX

A TREACHEROUS INDIAN FROM NEAH BAY

To his great disappointment, Skookum John could not find the cutter that he had heretofore so carefully avoided and was now so anxious to discover. She no longer lay where he had seen her the day before. He even went far enough into Commencement Bay to take a look at Tacoma harbor and identify the several steamers lying at its wharves. The cutter was not among them, and he made the long trip back to his own camp in a very disgusted frame of mind. At the same time he was determined to redouble his efforts to gain that reward, for with the prospect of losing it it began to assume an increased value.

With one source of income cut off, it was clearly his duty to provide another. And how could he do this better than by securing the good-will of those on board the white *piah-ship*? There was no danger of them being captured and driven out of business, and if he could only get them into the habit of paying him for doing things, he could see no reason why they should not continue to do so indefinitely.

The old Siwash had already persuaded himself that they would give him twenty-five dollars for one *tenas man* (boy), and by the same course of reasoning he now wondered if they might not be induced to give him fifty dollars for two boys. It was possible, and certainly worth trying for. If they should consent, he could not see how, in justice to himself and his family, he could refuse to give up the *hyas doctin* (Alaric) along with the *tenas shipman* (young sailor). After all, the former had not placed him under such a very great obligation, for he would have found Nittitan himself in a very few minutes. As for curing her of her injury, the hurt could not have been anything serious or she would not have gone to sleep so quickly. Yes, for fifty dollars he would certainly deliver both of his young guests to the *shipman Tyhee*. He would be a fool to do otherwise, and Skookum John had never yet been called a fool. Besides, it was not likely that the boys would come to any harm on board the cutter, for the *Boston men* (whites) were very good to those of their own tribe, never treating them cruelly, as they did the poor Siwash, whom they had even forbidden to kill and rob shipwrecked sailors found on their coast. Yes, indeed, both boys must be given up, and that fifty dollars reward received as quickly as possible.

It was all a very rational process of reasoning, and one that even white people sometimes employ to convince themselves that a thing they want to do is the right thing to do, even though their consciences may assure them to the contrary.

So the cunning old Indian, having persuaded himself that his meditated treachery was pure benevolence, reached his camp in good spirits in spite of his disappointment, and determined to make the stay of the boys so pleasant that they should offer no objection to remaining with him until the return of the cutter to those waters.

It was a glorious morning, and the dimpled Sound was flooded with unclouded sunlight that even shot long golden shafts into the depths of its bordering forest. Myriads of fish were leaping from the sparkling water, cheerful voices sounded from the camp, and the smoke of burning cedar filled the air with its delicate perfume.

The boys had been awake and out for an hour, and Alaric was fairly intoxicated with the glorious freedom of that wild life, of which this was his first taste. Already had he taken a swimming-lesson, and although in his ignorance he had recklessly plunged into water that would have drowned him had not Bonny and Bah-die pulled him out, he was confident that he had swum one stroke before going down.

Upon Skookum John's return his guests sat down with him to a breakfast which their ravenous appetites enabled them to eat with a hearty enjoyment, though it consisted only of fish, fish, and yet more fish.

"But it is such capital fish!" explained Alaric.

"Isn't it?" replied Bonny, tearing with teeth and fingers at a great strip of smoked salmon. "And the oil isn't half bad, either."

After they had finished eating, and their host had lighted his pipe, he told Bonny that his early morning trip had been taken out of his anxiety for their safety, and to discover the whereabouts of their enemies, the revenue-men.

"*They mamook klatawa?*" (Have they gone away?) inquired Bonny.

"*No; piah-ship mitlite Tacoma illahie*" (No; steamer stay in Tacoma). "*Shipman Tyhee cultus wau wau*" (The sailor chief made much worthless talk).

"*Mesika wau wau Tyhee?*" (Did you talk to the captain?) inquired Bonny, anxiously.

"Ah ah, me wau wau no klap tenas man. Alta piah-ship kopet Tacoma illahie. Mesika mitlite Skookum John house."

By this sentence he conveyed to Bonny the idea that he had told the captain the boys were not to be found. At the same time he extended to them the hospitality of his camp for so long as the cutter should remain at Tacoma.

When Bonny repeated this conversation to Alaric, the latter exclaimed: "Of course we would better stay here, where we are safe until the cutter goes away, even if it is a week from now. I hope it will be as long as that, for I think this camp is one of the jolliest places I ever struck."

"All right," replied Bonny. "If you can stand it, I can."

So the boys settled quietly down and waited for something to happen, though it seemed to Alaric as though something of interest and importance were happening nearly all the time. To begin with, they built themselves a brush hut under Bah-die's instruction, the steep-pitched roof of which would shed rain. Then they both took lessons from the same teacher in sailing and paddling a canoe. The supply of fish for the camp had to be replenished daily, and this duty devolved entirely upon the younger children, for Bah-die went always with his father to draw the big seine net, in which they caught fish for market. As the lads were anxious to earn their board, they sometimes went in the big boat, and sometimes in the small canoes with the children, by which means they learned all the different ways known to the Indians of catching fish. With all this, Alaric's swimming-lessons were not neglected for a single day, and he often took baths both morning and evening, so fascinated was he with the novel sport.

In return for what Bah-die taught him, he undertook to train the young Siwash in the art of catching a baseball. The latter having watched him and Bonny pass the ball and catch it with perfect ease, one day held out his hands, as much as to say, "Here you go; give us a catch."

Alaric, who held the ball at that moment, let drive a swift one straight at him. When Bah-die dropped it, and clapped his smarting hands to his sides with an expression of pained astonishment on his face, the white lad knew just how he felt. He could plainly recall the sensations of his own experience on that not-very-long-ago day in Golden Gate Park; and while he sympathized with Bah-die, he could not help exulting in the fact that he had discovered one boy of his own age more ignorant than he concerning an athletic sport. Then he set to work to show the young Siwash how to catch a ball just as Dave Carncross had shown him, and in so doing he experienced a genuine pleasure. He was growing to be like other boys, and the knowledge that this was so filled him with delight.

Nearly every day Skookum John sailed over to Tacoma, ostensibly to carry his fish, but really to discover whether or not the cutter had returned, and each night he came back glum with disappointment. Bonny often asked to be allowed to go to the city with him, as he was impatient to be again at work; but the Indian invariably put him off on the plea that if the cutter-men discovered one whom they were so anxious to capture in his canoe, they would punish him for having afforded the fugitive a shelter.

The young sailor could not understand why the cutter remained so long in one place, for he had never known her to do such a thing before, and many a talk did he and Alaric have on the subject.

"They must be waiting in the hope of catching us," Alaric would say, "and the mere fact that they are so anxious to find us shows how important it is for us to keep out of the way."

So time wore on until our lads had spent two full weeks in the Siwash camp, and had become heartily sick of it. To be sure, Alaric had grown brown and rugged, besides becoming almost an adept in the several arts he had undertaken to master. His hands were no longer white, and their palms were covered with calloused spots instead of blisters. He was now a fair swimmer, could paddle a canoe with some skill, and understood its management under sail. He knew not only how to catch fish, but how to detach them from the hook. He could catch a baseball nearly as well as Dave Carncross himself, besides being able to throw one with swiftness and precision. He was learning to cook certain things, mostly of a fishy nature, in a rude way, and had gone through several trying experiences in trying to wash his own underclothing. Having broken his comb into half a dozen pieces by sitting down on it, he had allowed Bonny to cut his hair as short as possible with a pair of scissors borrowed from one of the squaws. The result, while wholly satisfactory to Alaric, who fortunately had no mirror in which to see himself, was so unique that Bonny was impelled to frequent laughter without apparent cause.

Two things, however, distressed Alaric greatly, and one was his clothing, which was not only ragged, but soiled beyond anything he had ever dreamed of wearing. His canvas shoes, from frequent soakings and much walking on rocks, were so broken that they nearly dropped from his feet. His woollen trousers were shrunken and bagged at the knees, while his blue sweater, besides being torn, had faded to a brownish red. With all this he was comforted by the reflection that he still had a good suit in reserve that he could wear whenever they should be free to go to the city.

His other great trial was the food of that Siwash camp. He had never been particularly fond of fish, and now, after eating it alone three times a day for two weeks, the very thought of fish made him ill. He loathed it so that it seemed to him he would almost rather go to prison, with a chance of getting something else to eat, than to remain any longer on a fish diet. From both these trials Bonny suffered nearly as much as his companion.

One day when the boys had just decided that they could not stand this sort of thing any longer, they were out fishing in the swift-sailing canoe with Bah-die, Skookum John having gone in the larger boat to Tacoma. While they gloomily pursued their now distasteful employment a sail-boat containing two white men ran alongside to obtain bait. As these were the first of their own race with whom the boys had found an opportunity to talk since coming to that place, Bonny began to ply them with questions. Among others he asked:

"What is the revenue-cutter doing at Tacoma all this time? Has she broken down?"

"She isn't there," replied one of the men.

"Isn't there?" repeated Bonny, incredulously.

"No; nor hasn't been for upwards of two weeks. We are expecting her back every day, though."

Then the men sailed away, leaving our lads to stare at each other in speechless amazement.

CHAPTER XX

AN EXCITING RACE FOR LIBERTY

"What do you suppose it all means?" asked Alaric, as the boat containing the two white men sailed away.

"If it is true, it means that somebody has been fooling us, and you know who he is as well as I do," replied Bonny, who did not care to mention names within Bah-die's hearing. "If I'm not very much mistaken, it means also that he is trying to hold on to us until the cutter comes back. You know they offered him a reward to find us."

"Only twenty-five dollars," interposed Alaric, who could not imagine anybody committing an act of treachery for so small a sum.

"That would be a good deal to some people. I don't know but what it would be to me just now."

"If I had once thought he was after the money," continued Alaric, "I would have offered him twice as much to deal squarely with us."

"Would you?" asked Bonny, with a queer little smile, for his comrade's remarks concerning money struck him as very absurd. "Where would you have got it?"

"I meant, of course, if I had it," replied the other, flushing, and wondering at his own stupidity. "But what do you think we ought to do now?"

"Sail over to Tacoma as quick as we can, and see whether the cutter is there or not. When we find that out we'll see what is to be done next."

"But we may meet John on the way."

"I don't care. That's a good idea, though. I've been wondering how we should get our friend here to agree to the plan." Then turning to Bah-die, and speaking in Chinook, Bonny suggested that as the fishing was not very good and there was a fine breeze for sailing, they should run out into the Sound and meet the big canoe on its way back from Tacoma, to which plan the young Siwash unsuspectingly agreed.

Half an hour later the swift canoe was dashing across the open Sound before a rattling breeze that heeled her down until her lee gunwale was awash, though her three occupants were perched high on the weather side. The city was dimly visible in the distance ahead, and near at hand the big canoe which they were ostensibly going to meet was rapidly approaching. Bonny was steering, and Bah-die held the main-sheet, while the jib-sheets were intrusted to Alaric.

Skookum John had already recognized them, and as they came abreast of him motioned to them to put about; but Bonny, affecting not to understand, resolutely maintained his course. They were well past the other craft, which was coming about as though to follow them, before Bah-die realized that anything was wrong. Then obeying an angry order shouted to him by his father, he let go the main-sheet without warning, causing the canoe to right so violently as to very nearly fling her passengers overboard, and attempted to wrest the steering-oar from Bonny's hand.

Seeing this, and with the desperate feeling of an escaped prisoner who sees himself about to be recaptured, Alaric sprang aft, seized the young Indian by the legs, and with a sudden output of all his recently acquired strength, pitched him headlong into the sea. Then catching the main-sheet, he trimmed it in. Down heeled the canoe until it seemed as though she certainly must capsize; but Alaric, looking very pale and determined, held fast to the straining rope, and would not yield an inch.

It was well that he had learned this lesson, and was possessed of the courage to apply it, for the canoe did not gather headway an instant too soon. Bah-die, emerging from his plunge furious with rage, was swimming towards her, and made a frantic attempt to grasp the gunwale as she slipped away. His clutching fingers only missed it by the fraction of an inch, and before he could make another effort the quick-moving craft was beyond his reach. He was too wise to attempt a pursuit, and turned, instead, to meet the big canoe, which was approaching him.

"That was a mighty fine thing to do, Rick Dale!" cried Bonny, admiringly, "and but for you we should be on our way back to that hateful camp at this very moment. Of course they may catch us yet with that big boat, but we've got a show and must make the most of it. So throw your weight as far as you can out to windward, and don't ease off that sheet unless you see solid water pouring in over the gunnel."

"All right," replied Alaric, shortly, almost too excited for words.

Both lads realized that after what had just taken place it would be nearly as unpleasant to fall into the hands of Skookum John as into those of the revenue-men themselves, and both were determined that this should not happen if they could prevent it. But could they? Fast as they were sailing, it seemed to Alaric as though the big canoe rushing after them was sailing faster. Bonny dared not take his attention from the steering long enough to even cast a glance behind. Managing the canoe was now more difficult than before, because they had lost one hundred and fifty pounds of live ballast.

When Alaric looked at the water flashing by them it seemed as though he had never moved so fast in his life, while a glance at the big boat astern almost persuaded him that they were creeping at a snail's pace. It was certain that the long, wicked-looking beak of the pursuing craft was drawing nearer. Finally it was so close at hand that he could distinguish the old Indian's scowling features and the expression of triumph on Bah-die's face. The lad's heart grew heavy within him, for the city wharves were still far away, and with things as they were the chase was certain to be ended before they could be reached.

All at once an exclamation from Bonny directed his attention to another craft coming up the Sound and bearing down on them as though to take part in the race. It was a powerful sloop-yacht standing towards the city from the club-house on Maury Island, and its crew were greatly interested in the brush between the two canoes.

Either by design or accident, the yacht, which was to windward of the chase, stood so close to the big canoe as to completely blanket her, and so take the wind from her sails that she almost lost headway. Then, as though to atone for her error, the yacht bore away so as to run between pursuer and pursued, and pass to leeward of the smaller canoe. As the beautiful craft swept by our lads with a flash of rushing waters, glinting copper, and snowy sails, a cheery voice rang out: "Well done, plucky boys! Stick to it, and you'll win yet!"

Alaric could not see the speaker, because of the sail between them, but the tones were so startlingly familiar that for a moment he imagined the voice to belong to the stranger who had talked with him on the wharf at Victoria, and whom he now knew for a revenue-officer. If that were the case, they were indeed hopelessly surrounded by peril. He was about to confide his fears to Bonny, when like a flash it came to him that the voice was that of Dave Carncross, whom he had not seen since that memorable day in Golden Gate Park.

Although he had no desire to meet this friend of the ball-field under the present circumstances, he was greatly relieved to find his first suspicion groundless, and again directed his attention to the big canoe, which, although she had lost much distance, was again rushing after them. The boy now noticed for the first time, not more than half a mile astern of her, a white steamer with a dense column of smoke pouring from her yellow funnel, and evidently bound for the same port with themselves.

Soon afterwards they had passed the smeltery, saw-mills, and lumber-loading vessels of the old town, and were approaching the cluster of steamships lying at the wharves of the Northern Pacific Railway, which here finds its western terminus. Off these the yacht had already dropped her jib and come to anchor. The big canoe was again overhauling them, and looked as though she might overtake them, after all. A boat from the yacht was making towards the wharves, and Bonny, believing that it would find a landing-place, slightly altered his course so as to follow the same direction.

All at once Alaric, who was again gazing nervously astern, cried out: "Look at that steamer! I do believe it is going to run down the big canoe."

Bonny glanced hastily over his shoulder, and uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"Great Scott! It's the cutter," he gasped. "And they are right on top of us. Now we are in for it."

"They are speaking to John, and he is pointing to us," said Alaric.

"Never mind them now," said Bonny. "Ease off your sheet a bit, and 'tend strictly to business. We've still a chance, and can't afford to make any mistakes."

A few minutes later, just as a yawl was putting off from the cutter's side, the small canoe rounded the end of a wharf and came upon a landing-stage. On it the yacht's boat had just deposited a couple of passengers, who, with bags in their hands, were hastening up a flight of steps.

"Here, you!" cried Bonny to one of the yacht's crew who stood on the float, "look out for this canoe a minute. We've got to overtake those gentlemen. Come on, Rick."

Without waiting to see whether this order would be obeyed, the boys ran up the flight of steps and dashed away down the long wharf. They had no idea of where they should go, and were only intent on finding some hiding-place from the

pursuers, whom they believed to be already on their trail.

As they were passing a great ocean steamer whose decks were crowded with passengers, and which was evidently about to depart, a carriage drew up in front of them, so close that they narrowly escaped being run over. As its door was flung open a voice cried out:

"Here, boys! Get these traps aboard the steamer. Quick!"

With this a gentleman sprang out and thrust a couple of bags, a travelling-rug, and a gun-case into their hands. A lady with a little boy followed him. He snatched up the child, and the whole party ran up the gang-plank of the steamer as it was about to be hauled ashore.

Our lads had accepted this chance to board the steamer without hesitation, and now ran ahead of the others. The clerk at the inner end of the gang-plank allowed them to pass, thinking, of course, that they would deposit their burdens on deck and immediately return to the wharf.

With an instinct born of long familiarity with ocean steamers, Alaric made his way through the throng of passengers to the main saloon, and Bonny followed him closely. Here they placed their burdens on a table, and, with Alaric still in the lead, disappeared through a door on the opposite side.

Two minutes later the great ship began to move slowly from the wharf, and our lads, from a snug nook on the lower deck, watched with much perturbation a revenue-officer, who had evidently just landed from the cutter, come hurrying down the wharf.



CHAPTER XXI

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

The revenue-cutter whose appearance caused Alaric and Bonny so much anxiety had, indeed, been absent from Tacoma for two weeks, as the man in the sail-boat told them. On their first night in the Siwash camp she had gone to Port Townsend to turn over the captured smuggler *Fancy* to the collector at that place. Knowing how important the testimony of her crew would be during the proceedings against her, the commander of the cutter intended to return to the upper Sound and to institute a thorough search for them the very next day. Before he could carry out this plan news was received that an American ship was ashore near Cape Flattery, one hundred miles away in the opposite direction, and the cutter was despatched to her assistance.

Although the task of saving the ship was successfully accomplished, and she was finally pulled off the reef on which she had struck, it was nearly two weeks before the cutter was again at liberty to devote her attention to smugglers. With only a slight hope of finding those whom he so greatly wanted as witnesses, but thinking he might possibly gain some information concerning them from Skookum John, the commander of the cutter headed his vessel up the Sound, steamed through Colvos Passage, and sent his third lieutenant ashore in the yawl to make inquiries at the Siwash camp.

This officer found only women and children at home, but learned that the owner of the camp had gone to Tacoma. As he was about to depart without having discovered anything concerning those of whom he was in search, curiosity prompted him to glance into a hut that appeared newer and much neater than the others. Here, to his amazement and great satisfaction, the first object that caught his eye was the well-remembered canvas dunnage-bag that he had seen in Victoria, and which still bore the name "Philip Ryder" on its dingy surface.

"Ho, ho! Master Ryder! So we are on your trail at last, are we?" soliloquized the officer. "This is a clew of which we must not lose sight, and so I guess I'll just take it along and hold on to it until we can return it to you in person."

Thus it happened that Alaric's bag was carried aboard the cutter, where its contents excited a great deal of curiosity, and that vessel was headed towards Tacoma in the hope of finding the lads, who were supposed to be with Skookum John.

The big canoe was discovered when in the very act of going about and standing back towards the city, as though to escape from the approaching cutter, and a full head of steam was instantly crowded on in pursuit. Great was the disappointment when, on overtaking her, she was found to contain only Indians. These, however, eagerly directed attention to a smaller canoe ahead, in which could be distinguished two figures, apparently those of white men, and the cutter renewed her chase. Before she could overtake this second craft it was lost to sight behind a wharf, and a lieutenant was hastily sent ashore in a boat to trace its occupants.

He found the empty canoe in charge of a yacht sailor, who said that those who had come in her were somewhere up on the wharf, and without waiting for further particulars the officer followed after them.

When he reached the group of spectators assembled to witness the departure of the great steamer that was just moving out, he asked one of them if he had seen two persons running that way within a minute. One of them, whom he mentioned as being the younger, he described as being a tall, gentlemanly appearing and neatly dressed lad, while the other, he said, was a sailor. It must be remembered that while the lieutenant had noted Alaric's appearance very closely when in Victoria, he had never seen Bonny's face, and did not even discover whether he had belonged to the sloop or not. In fact, he afterwards had reason to believe that the youth whom he saw with Alaric at that time could not have been mate of the *Fancy*, for, to save their own credit, the sailors whom the lads eluded on the morning of the sloop's capture described him as a fellow of great size and unusual strength.

Now the gentleman of whom he made inquiries answered that he had seen a number of persons running just as the ship's moorings were cast off. "There were a couple of young chaps," he said, "very ragged and dirty-looking, who ran aboard the last thing, as if afraid of being left; but I didn't see them come off again, and I expect they belong to the ship. Then there was another couple who seemed in a great hurry, and ran shouting after a carriage that was just starting up-town. They stopped it, got in, and drove off. One of them was, as you say, a very gentlemanly appearing lad, and the other was so evidently a sailor that I expect they're the two you are looking for."

"I shouldn't wonder if they were," replied the officer, delighted at having thus quickly discovered the trail. "Did you happen to hear them give the driver any directions?"

"Yes. The young chap said, 'Hotel Tacoma.'"

Thanking the gentleman for his information, the lieutenant hurried away, boarded an up-town trolley-car, and a few minutes later stood in the office of the great hotel scanning its register. A single glance was sufficient, for the two last names on the page, so recently entered that the ink was hardly dry, assured him that his search was successful. They were both in the same handwriting, and read----

PHILIP RYDER, *Alaska*.
JALAP COOMBS, "

"Pretty smart dodge," chuckled the lieutenant, as he walked away, "to hail from such an indefinite place as Alaska. This Philip Ryder is certainly a sharp chap. It is plain enough now that he left that bag in the Siwash camp as a blind to throw us off the track. What a pile of money those smugglers must make, though. Here is one of them, apparently a simple deck-hand, who buys the choicest groceries to be had in Victoria, bathes in cologne-water, throws away a suit of clothes so handsome that I should be only too glad to wear them myself, and now puts up at the swellest hotel in the city. It certainly is a great business."

While thinking these things the lieutenant was hurrying back towards the cutter, to make report of what he had discovered to his superior officer. After listening to all he had to say, that gentleman decided to continue the investigation himself; and an hour later he, with his third lieutenant, both out of uniform, appeared at the hotel, followed by a sailor bearing a canvas dunnage-bag.

Going into one of the small writing-rooms, which happened to be unoccupied, the commander wrote a name on a plain card and sent it up to Mr. Philip Ryder, with a request that the gentleman would consent to see him on a matter of business. Then, with the canvas bag on the floor beside him, he waited alone, having desired the lieutenant to keep out of sight until sent for.

Inside of three minutes a bell-boy ushered into the room a well-dressed, squarely built youth, with a resolute face and honest blue eyes that looked straight into those of the commander.

"Mr. Ellery, I believe," he said, glancing at the card still held in his hand.

The commander bowed slightly, and then asked, "Is your name Philip Ryder?"

"It is."

"Is this your property?" Here the commander indicated the canvas bag that lay with its painted name uppermost.

The youth stepped forward to get a better view of the article in question, started as though surprised, and then answered, "Yes, sir, I believe it is; but I must confess a great curiosity as to how it came here."

"Why so?"

"Because when I last heard of it it was on board a vessel that had just been seized by a revenue-cutter."

"Exactly; and that vessel was seized for smuggling by a cutter under my command."

"Pardon me, sir, but I think you are mistaken," objected Phil, "for I am intimately acquainted with the commander of the cutter in question, while you are a stranger to me."

"I beg leave to say that I think I know what I am talking about," retorted the other, stiffly, "and I may as well inform you at once that I not only was, but am still, in command of the cutter that seized your smuggling craft some two weeks ago. I am here for the purpose of causing the arrest and detention of yourself and the mate of that vessel, both of whom will be wanted as witnesses for the government during the forthcoming proceedings to be instituted against Captain Duff."

"And I, sir," replied Phil, hotly, "beg leave to say that you don't know any more of what you are talking about than I do. Although I have sailed with Captain Duff and know him well, I am not a smuggler, and never have been. Moreover, I can summon witnesses this very minute who will identify me and testify as to my character."

With this Phil stepped to the bell, and rang it so violently that half a dozen bell-boys came tumbling into the room at once. "Go to No. 20," said the youth to one of these, "and ask the gentleman who is there to kindly step down here for a minute."

"And you, boy!" thundered the commander to another, his face flushed with anger, "find the gentleman who came here with me, and inform him that I desire his presence immediately."

The lieutenant was the first to arrive.

"Is this your Philip Ryder?" demanded the commander, at the same time pointing to the youth who stood opposite.

"No, sir, he is not," replied the lieutenant, promptly.

"Who is he, then?" asked the other, staggered by this answer.

"Begging the gentleman's pardon, this *is* Mr. Philip Ryder, as I can swear," interrupted a fourth individual, who had just entered.

"Hello, Carncross! You here? And you know this young man?"

"Certainly I do, sir. I met his father, Mr. John Ryder--the famous mining expert, you know--at my father's house in San Francisco last winter, and came to call on him here as soon as I heard of his arrival in Tacoma. He and his son arrived on to-day's steamer from Alaska, where Phil Ryder has just completed a most notable exploration on snow-shoes and sledges of the Yukon Valley. By-the-way, he is also a friend of your old friend Captain Matthews."

"What! Not Israel Matthews, of the *Phoca*? You don't say so! Mr. Ryder, allow me to shake hands with you, and offer my humble apologies for this absurd mistake."

With a general hand-shaking and exchange of introductions, they all sat down for an hour of mutual explanations. During these it was discovered that Phil and Jalap Coombs had remained at the wharf some time after the others of their party left, to look after their numerous pieces of baggage, and so did not come up to the hotel until just as the steamer that had brought them was departing for Seattle.

At the end of an hour the revenue-officers were as puzzled as ever over the disappearance of the present owner of the famous Philip Ryder bag and his companion. But suddenly Carncross exclaimed:

"I think I know what became of them! I remember now seeing the two chaps who came in that canoe run down the wharf and board the Alaska steamer just as she was starting for Seattle, and I'll warrant you that's where they are at this minute. Tough-looking young customers they were, too."

"In that case," said the commander, rising, "I must be getting under way for Seattle as quickly as possible. I only wish that I might have you both down to dine with me this evening; but business before pleasure. And so, hoping for a future opportunity of extending the hospitality of the ship, I will wish you both a very good night."



CHAPTER XXII

TWO SHORT BUT EXCITING VOYAGES

As the Alaska steamer on which Alaric and Bonny so unexpectedly took passage moved from the Tacoma wharf, and they lost sight of the officer who had so nearly overtaken them, they congratulated each other over their escape.

"I tell you, Rick Dale, that was a close shave," said Bonny.

"Wasn't it, though! But it seems to me, Bonny, that smuggling must be one of the worst crimes a person can commit, judging from the anxiety those fellows show to capture us. I knew it was bad, but I hadn't any idea it was so serious."

"It does look as if we were wanted," admitted Bonny; "but we've thrown 'em off the track this time, so they won't bother us any more. Didn't we do it neatly?"

"Yes, we certainly did. But where do you suppose we are going now?"

"Haven't the least idea, and don't care. Maybe to China, maybe to San Francisco, and maybe to Alaska. Yes, I think this must be an Alaska ship, for I remember now seeing a big Eskimo dog taken ashore just as we came aboard, and Alaska is where they come from. If she is bound for Alaska, though, she'll stop at Port Townsend and Victoria on the way, and we must lie low until after we pass the first. It would never do to be put off there, for that's headquarters for the whole revenue business, and they'd scoop us in quick enough. I wouldn't mind Victoria so very much, though."

"I should," objected Alaric, who feared that the Sonntags might have telegraphed from Japan to have him apprehended and forwarded to them. "I don't like Victoria, and neither do I want to go to any of the places you mentioned."

"Very well," laughed Bonny, who, with a sense of freedom, had regained all his light-heartedness. "Just send word to the captain where you want to go, and he'll probably be pleased to take you there."

For an hour or so longer the boys discussed their plans and prospects. Then, as it was growing dark and they were becoming very hungry, Bonny proposed to skirmish around and see what the chances were for obtaining something to eat. Bidding Alaric remain in hiding until his return, the young sailor sallied forth. In a moment he reappeared with the news that the ship was putting in at Seattle and was already close to the wharf.

"That's good," said Alaric. "Seattle is much better for us than Port Townsend, or Victoria, San Francisco, China, or even Alaska. So I move we go ashore and try our luck here."

This was what they were obliged to do, whether or no, for the ship was hardly moored before they were discovered by one of the mates. Berating them for a couple of rascally young stowaways, this man chased them down the gang-plank with terrific threats of what he would do if he ever caught them on the ship again.

"Whew-w!" gasped Alaric, after they had run to a safe distance. "It seems to me that working your way through the world consists mainly in being chased by people who are bigger and stronger than you are."

"Yes," remarked Bonny, philosophically. "I've noticed that. It's the same way with sparrows and dogs too; the strong ones are always picking or growling at those that are weaker. Being chased, though, is better than being caught, and we haven't been that yet. Now let's go up-town and see about a hotel."

This mention of a hotel reminded Alaric of his previous visit to Seattle and the great "Rainier," away up at the hill-side, in which he had spent the day. At that time he had not paid any more attention to it than to any other of the hundreds of hotels in which he had been a guest, but now a thought of the dinner being served in its brilliantly lighted dining-room caused him to realize how very hungry he was more than anything else could have done. But Rainier dinners were not for poor boys, and with a regretful sigh he followed his comrade in another direction.

It is hard to say how our lads expected to obtain the meal for which they longed; but whatever hopes they had were doomed to disappointment, for after wandering about the streets a couple of hours their hunger was as unsatisfied as ever. Finally Bonny asked a policeman if there was not some place in all that great city where a hungry boy without one cent in his pocket could get something to eat.

"There's a free soup-kitchen on Yessler Avenue," answered the man, "but it's closed for the night now, and you can't get anything there before seven o'clock to-morrow morning. But what do strong young fellows like you want of soup-kitchens? Why ain't ye at work, earning an honest living? Tramps is no good, anyway, and if you don't chase yourselves out of this I'll run ye in. See?"

Seven o'clock to-morrow morning! How could they wait? And yet there seemed nothing else to be done. Slowly and despondently the lads made their way back to the wharf on which they had landed, for even that seemed a better place in which to pass the long night hours than the unfriendly streets.

They eluded the vigilance of a night watchman, and gained the shelter of a pile of hay bales, on which they stretched themselves wearily.

"I'd almost rather be in China, or even a well-fed smuggler," announced Alaric.

"Wouldn't I?" responded Bonny; "and won't I if ever I get another chance? I don't believe anything would seem wrong to a fellow as hungry as I am, if it only brought him something to eat. Even chewing hay is some comfort."

At length they fell into an uneasy sleep, from which they were awakened a few hours later by the sound of voices close at hand. In one of these they instantly, and with sinking hearts, recognized that of their relentless pursuer, the revenue-cutter's third lieutenant. The other person was evidently answering a question, for he was saying:

"Yes, sir, I seen a couple of young rascals such as you describe chased off the Alaska boat by the mate. They started up-town, but I make no doubt they'll be back here sooner or later. Such as them is always hanging around the docks."

"If they do come around, and you can catch them, just hold on to them, for they are wanted by the government, and there is a reward offered for them," said the officer.

"Aye, aye, sir. I'll nab 'em for ye if they comes this way again," was the answer; and then both speakers moved out of hearing towards the upper end of the wharf.

The poor, hunted lads, trembling at the narrowness of their escape, peered after the retreating forms. Then Bonny's attention was attracted to the lights of a white side-wheel steamer lying at the outer end of the wharf that seemed on the point of departure.

"Look here, Rick," he whispered, "this place is growing too hot for us, and we've got to get out of it. There's the *City of Kingston*, and she is going to Victoria or Tacoma, I don't know which. Either of them would be better for us than Seattle just now, though, because in Victoria the revenue folks couldn't touch us, and in Tacoma they won't be looking for us. What do you say? Shall we try for a passage on her?"

"Yes," replied Alaric. "I suppose so, for it is certain that we must get away from here somehow. I hope she won't take us to Victoria, though."

So the young fugitives stole down the wharf in darkest shadows to where a force of men were busily at work by lantern-light, trucking freight up a broad gang-plank from the steamer's lower deck, and at the same time carrying aboard the small quantity that was to go somewhere else. Among this was a lot of household goods.

"Now," whispered Bonny, "we've got to be quick, for there isn't much more to be done. I'll run aboard with one of these trucks, while you grab a chair or something from that pile of stuff and follow after. Each of us must hide on his own hook in the first place he comes to, and if we don't find a chance to get together on the trip, we'll meet on the wharf at the first place she stops. Sabe?"

"Yes. Go ahead."

So Bonny boldly picked up one of several idle trucks that lay near by, and rattled it down the gang-plank with every appearance of bustling activity. As he trundled it aft along the dimly lighted deck he was greeted by a gruff voice from the darkness with:

"Get that truck out of here. Didn't you hear me say I didn't need any more of 'em?"

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the pretended stevedore, facing promptly about and wheeling his truck away. In a place where there seemed to be no one looking he set it gently down, and walked forward as boldly as though executing some order just received. Away up in the bows of the steamer he found a great coil of rope, in which he snuggled down like a bird in a nest.

Alaric was not quite so fortunate. He watched Bonny disappear with his truck in the dark interior of the boat, and then, taking a mattress from the pile of household goods, marched aboard with it in his arms. Walking aft with his awkward burden, he stumbled across the truck that Bonny had left in the passage and sprawled at full length. As luck would have it, the mattress, loosed from his grasp, struck the mate who was coming that way and nearly knocked him down.



"BONNY SEIZED A TRUCK, AND ALARIC A MATTRESS"

Springing furiously forward, the man aimed a kick at the prostrate lad, called him a clumsy lunkhead, ordered him to wheel the truck up on to the wharf, and threatened to discharge him on the spot without one cent of wages as a cure for his blooming awkwardness.

There was nothing for it but to return to the wharf with the truck. Then, to his dismay, Alaric found that there was no freight left to be taken on board. The pile of household goods had disappeared. As he stood for a moment irresolute, another gruff voice sang out to him to cast off the breast line and get aboard in a hurry if he didn't want to get left.

Alaric had no more idea than the man in the moon of what a breast line was; but he knew what to cast off a line meant, and, making a blind guess, fortunately did the right thing. By this time the gang-plank was hauled in, and obeying the order "Jump! you chuckle-head!" he took a flying leap that landed him on all fours on the deck, amid loud guffaws of laughter from those who happened to be near. As he regained his feet, the lad, still mistaken for one of several new hands who had been shipped the evening before, was ordered aft to help haul in the stern line by which the boat was now swinging. He went in the direction indicated, but managed to slip away before reaching the place of the stern line and hide among the very household goods he had helped bring aboard.

Here, after lying for a while pondering over the strange fortunes by which every step of his pathway into the world of active life seemed to be beset, he fell asleep. When he awoke it was broad daylight, the sun was shining, and a house seemed tumbling about his ears. It was only the goods among which he had hidden being pulled down by the crew, who were discharging cargo. As the lad scrambled from beneath the very mattress he had brought aboard, and which had now fallen on top of him, he was greeted by an angry roar from the gruff voice of the night before.

"Shirking, are ye, you lazy young hound? I'll teach ye!"

Picking up a bit of rope and whirling it about his head, the mate sprang towards the lad, who darted away in terror; nor

did he stop until he found himself clear of the boat and running up a long wharf, without an idea of where he was or whither he was going.



CHAPTER XXIII

ALARIC TODD'S DARKEST HOUR

"Hello, Rick Dale! Hold on!" was the hail that caused Alaric to halt in his flight from the most recent of the chasings that were becoming so common a feature of his life.

It was Bonny who called, and who now came running up to him. "Where have you been all this time?" he asked. "I've waited and watched for you ever since we got in, a good two hours ago, and was getting mighty uneasy for fear you'd fallen overboard or got left at Seattle, or something. You see, I feel in a way responsible for you, seeing that I got you into all this mess."

"That's queer," said Alaric, with a faint smile, and sitting down wearily on a huge anchor that lay beside one of the warehouses, "for I've been thinking that all your troubles were owing to me. I'm awfully sorry, though, I kept you waiting, but I suppose I must have been asleep."

"You had better luck than I did, then," growled Bonny, seating himself beside his friend, "for I haven't had a wink of sleep since we left Seattle. I was just getting into a doze when a miserable deck-hand swashed a bucket of water over me. Then they found me out, and set me to work cleaning decks and polishing brass. They kept me at it every minute until we got here, and then fired me ashore."

"Did they give you any breakfast?" inquired Alaric, with an interest that betrayed the tendency of his thoughts.

"Not much, they didn't. Have you had anything to eat?"

"Not a bite; and do you know, Bonny, I think I am beginning to realize what starving means."

"I know I am, and what being utterly worn out means as well. Do you suppose it's just hunger that makes a fellow feel sick and light-headed and weak as a cat, the way I do now, or is it that he is really in for something serious, like a fever or whooping-cough or one of the things with big names?"

"I expect it's hunger, and nothing else," replied Alaric, "for I feel just that way myself, and I've been really ill times enough to know the difference."

"Then it must be starvation, and something has got to be done about it," exclaimed Bonny, starting to his feet with a resolute air, "for I don't believe any two fellows are going to be allowed to starve to death in this city of Tacoma. So I'm going to get something for us to eat, even if I have to steal."

"Oh no, Bonny, don't steal. We haven't quite come to that," objected Alaric. "Did you say this was Tacoma, though?"

"Yes, of course. Didn't you recognize it?"

"No, I didn't, for I wasn't given much chance to get acquainted with it last evening, you know. But if this is Tacoma, I've an idea that I believe will bring us some money. So suppose we separate for a while? You can go one way looking for something to eat, and I'll go another in search of that which will mean the same thing. When the whistles blow for noon we'll both come back here and compare notes."

"All right," agreed Bonny. "I'll do it, and if I don't bring back something to eat, it will be because the whole city is starving, that's all."

So the two set forth in opposite directions, Bonny taking a course that would lead him among the shipping, and Alaric walking up the long easy grade of Pacific Avenue towards the city proper. His pride, which no personal suffering nor discomfort could overthrow, had given way at last before the wretchedness of his friend. "It is I who am the cause of it," he said to himself, "and so I am bound to help him out by the only way I can think of. I hate to do it, for it will be owning up that I am not fit to care for myself or able to fight my own way in the world. I know, too, just how John and the others will laugh at me, but I've got to do something at once, and there doesn't seem to be anything else."

The scheme that Alaric so dreaded to undertake, and was yet determined to execute, was the telegraphing to his brother John for funds. Of course John would report the matter to their father, who had probably been already notified of his younger son's disappearance, and our lad would be ordered to return home immediately. Or perhaps John would come to fetch him back, like a runaway child. It would all be dreadfully humiliating, and on his own account he would have undergone much greater trials than those of the present rather than place himself in such a position. But for the sake of the boy who had befriended him and suffered with him, it must be done.

The only telegraph-office in the city of which Alaric knew was in the Hotel Tacoma, where he had passed a day on his northward journey, and thither he bent his steps. As he entered its open portal and crossed the spacious hall in which was located the telegraph-station, the well-dressed guests who paced leisurely to and fro or lounged in easy-chairs stared at him curiously. And well they might, for a more tattered, begrimed, unkempt, and generally woe-begone youth had never been seen in that place of luxurious entertainment. Had Alaric encountered a mirror, he would have stared at himself and passed by without recognition; but for the moment his mind was too busy with other thoughts to allow him to consider his appearance.

The box-like telegraph-office was occupied by a fashionably attired young woman, who was just then absorbed in an exciting novel. After keeping Alaric waiting for several minutes, or until after she had finished a chapter, she took the despatch he had written, and read it aloud:

"To Mr. John Todd, Amos Todd Bank, San Francisco:

"DEAR JOHN,--Please send me by wire one hundred dollars. Will write and explain why I need it. ALARIC."

"Dollar and a half," said the young woman, tersely, and without looking up.

Although many telegrams had been forwarded at various times and from distant parts of the world in Alaric Todd's name, he had never before attempted to send one in person. Now, therefore, although somewhat startled by the request for a dollar and a half, he replied, calmly:

"Send it collect, please. It will be paid for at the other end."

"Can't do it; 'gainst the rules," retorted the young woman, sharply, now glancing at the lad before her, and contemptuously scanning him from head to foot.

"But," pleaded poor Alaric, "this is so very important. The money that I ask for is sure to come, and then I will pay for it a dozen times over, if you like. It will certainly be paid for, though, in San Francisco, at the Amos Todd Bank, for my name is Todd--Alaric Todd."

"It wouldn't make any difference," remarked the young woman, "if your name were George Washington or John Jacob Astor; you couldn't send a despatch through this office without paying for it. So if you haven't any money you might as well make up your mind not to waste any more of my time."

With this she resumed the reading of her novel, while Alaric moved slowly away, stunned and despairing. Now was he indeed cut off from his home, his people, and from all hope of assistance. He hadn't even money enough to pay for a postage-stamp with which to send a letter. As he realized these things, the reaction from his confidence of a few moments before, that his present trouble would be speedily ended, was so great that he grew faint, and mechanically sank into a leather-cushioned chair that stood close at hand.

He had hardly done so when an alert porter stepped up, touched him on the shoulder, and pointed significantly to the door.

The boy understood, and obeyed the gesture without remonstrance. Thus it came to pass that a son of Amos Todd, the richest man on the Pacific coast, was driven from a hotel of which his father was one of the principal owners, and in spite of the fact that he had just acknowledged his own identity.

Once outside, Alaric walked irresolutely, and as though unconscious of what he was doing, for a short distance, and then found himself seated on an iron bench at the edge of a broad asphalted driveway. Here he tried to think, and could not. He closed his eyes and wondered vaguely if he were going to die, or, if not, how much longer he could live without food. It wasn't worth worrying about, though, one way or the other. He had made such a complete failure of life that no one would care if he did die. Of course Bonny might feel badly about it for a little while, but even he would get along much better alone.

From such terrible thoughts as these the lad was aroused by the sound of cheery voices; and glancing listlessly in their direction, he saw a well-dressed young fellow, apparently not much older than himself, a little boy in his first suit of tiny knickerbockers, and a big dog. They had just come from the hotel and were playing with a ball. It was Phil Ryder with little Nel-te, an orphan whom he had rescued from the Yukon wilderness, and big Amook, one of his Eskimo sledge dogs that he was carrying back to New London as a curiosity.

While Alaric watched them, wondering how it must seem to be as free from both hunger and anxiety as that happy-looking chap evidently was, the ball tossed to Nel-te escaped him and rolled under the iron bench. As the child came running up, the lad recovered it and handed it to him.

"Fank you, man," said the little chap, and then ran away.

After a while the ball again came in the same direction, and, as the child did not follow it, Alaric picked it up and tossed it to Phil.

"Hello!" cried the latter. "It seems mighty good to be catching a baseball again. Give us another, will you?" With this he threw the ball to Alaric, who caught it deftly and flung it back.

The ball was one that had been found in a certain canvas dunnage-bag the evening before, and begged by Phil Ryder as a souvenir of his experience as a smuggler. After a few passes back and forth Alaric became so dizzy from weakness that, with a very pale face, he was again forced to sit down.

"What's the matter?" asked Phil, anxiously, coming up to the trembling lad. "Not ill, I hope?"

"No; I'm not ill. It's only a little faintness."

"Do you know," said Phil, as he noted closely the lad's mean dress and hollow cheeks, "that you look to me as though you were hungry. Tell me honestly if you have had any breakfast this morning."

"No," replied Alaric, in a low tone.

"Or any supper last night?"

"No."

"Did you have any dinner yesterday?"

"I can't exactly remember, but I don't think I did."

"Why, man," cried tender-hearted Phil, horror-stricken at this revelation, "you are starving! And I've been keeping you here playing ball! What a heedless brute I am! Never mind; just you wait until I can carry this little chap inside, and don't you stir from that seat until I come back."

With this Phil, picking up Nel-te and bidding Amook follow him, hurried away, leaving Alaric still holding the baseball, and filled with a very queer mixture of conflicting emotions.

CHAPTER XXIV

PHIL RYDER PAYS A DEBT

In a very few minutes Phil Ryder hastened back to where Alaric awaited him. "Now you come with me," he said, cheerily, "and we'll end this starvation business in a hurry. I won't take you to the hotel, for those swell waiters are too slow about serving things, and when a fellow is hungry he don't care so much about style as he does about prompt attention to his wants. I know, for I've been there myself. There's a little restaurant just around the corner on the avenue that looks as though it would exactly fill the bill. Here we are."

Almost before he realized what was happening Alaric found himself seated before the first regular breakfast-table that he had seen in weeks, while the young stranger facing him, who had so unexpectedly become his host, was ordering a meal that seemed to embrace pretty nearly the whole bill of fare.

"Bring the coffee and oatmeal first," he said to the waiter, "and see that there is plenty of cream. If they burn your fingers, so much the better, for you never saw any one in quite so much of a hurry as we are. After that you may rush along the other things as fast as you please."

Alaric attempted a feeble protest against the munificence of the order just given, but Phil silenced him with:

"Now, my friend, don't you fret; I know what you need and what you can get away with better than you do, for I've experimented considerably with starving during the past year. As for obligation, there isn't any. I am only paying a debt that I've owed for a long time."

"I don't remember ever meeting you before," said Alaric, looking up in surprise from a dish of oatmeal and cream that seemed the very best thing he had ever tasted.

"No, of course not, and I don't suppose we have ever been within a thousand miles of each other until now; but I have been in your debt, all the same. Just about a year ago I was in Victoria without a cent in my pocket, no friend or even acquaintance that I knew of in the whole city, and so hungry that it didn't seem as though I had ever eaten anything in my life. Just as I was most desperate and things were looking their very blackest, an angel travelling under the name of Serge Belcofsky came along, and spent his last dollar in feeding me. I vowed then that I'd get even with him by feeding some other hungry fellow, and this is the first chance I've run across since. You needn't be afraid, though, that I am spending my last dollar on you, glad as I would be to do so if it were necessary. That it isn't is owing to one of the best fathers in the world, who hasn't had a chance to keep me in funds for so long a time that he is now trying to make up for lost opportunities."

"You must be very fond of him," said Alaric, who was now at work on beefsteak and fried potatoes.

"Well, rather," replied Phil, earnestly, "though I never knew how much a good father was to a boy until I lost him, and had to fight my way alone through a whole year before I found him again. It's a wonder my hair didn't turn gray with anxiety while I was hunting him up in the interior of Alaska; but it's all over now, and I have him safe at last right here in Tacoma, along with my aunt Ruth and little Nel-te and Jalap----"

"Is he the dog?" asked Alaric, beginning an attack on the omelette.

"Who?"

"Jalap."

"Not much he isn't a dog," laughed Phil. "He is one of the dearest of sailormen. He's one of the wisest, too, only he lays all of his wisdom to his old friend Kite Roberson. Besides all that, he is one of the most comical chaps that ever lived, though he doesn't mean to be, and it's better than a circus to see him on snow-shoes driving a sledge team of dogs. I should have brought him over here to cheer you up, only he's off somewhere among the ships this morning. He says he's got the salt-water habit so badly that he can't keep away from them. Are you ready now for the buckwheats? Here are half a dozen hot ones to top off with, and maple-syrup too. Don't they look good, though! I say, waiter, you may as well bring me a plate of those buckwheats. I forgot to have any at breakfast-time."

So Phil rattled on, talking of all sorts of things to keep his guest amused, and allow him ample opportunity to attend strictly to the business of eating, without feeling obliged to answer questions or sustain any part of the conversation.

And how poor, heart-sick, hungry Alaric was cheered by the thoughtful kindness of this strange lad who had so befriended him in his hour of sorest need!

How grateful he was, and how, with each mouthful of food, strength and courage and hope came back to him, until, when the wonderful meal was finished, he was ready once more to face the world with a brave confidence that it should never again get the better of him! He tried to put some of his gratitude into words, but was promptly interrupted by his host, who said:

"Nonsense! You've nothing to thank me for. I told you I owed you this breakfast, and besides, though I haven't eaten very much myself, I have certainly enjoyed it as much as any meal of my life. Now we have a few minutes left before I must go, and I want you to tell me something of yourself. What is your name? Where is your home? And how did you happen to get into this fix?"

"My name is Rick Dale," began Alaric, who did not feel that he could disclose his real identity under the circumstances, "and my home is in San Francisco; but it is closed now. My mother is dead. I don't know just where my father is, and I was left with some people whom I disliked so much that I just--" Here he hesitated, and Phil, noting his embarrassment, hastened to say:

"Never mind the particulars. I had no business to ask such questions, anyway."

"Well," continued Alaric, "the result of it all is that I am here looking for work. I had a job, but it didn't pay anything, and I lost it about two weeks ago. Now I am trying to find another."

"What kind of a job do you want?"

"Anything, so long as it is honest work that will provide food, clothing, and a place to sleep."

"In that case," said Phil, thoughtfully, "I don't know but what I can put you in the way of one, though--"

"It must be a job for two of us," interposed Alaric, "for I have a friend who is in the same fix as myself."

"I only wish I had known that in time to have him breakfast with us," said Phil; "but the job I am thinking of, if it can be had at all, will serve for two of you as well as for one. You see, it is this way. There is a Frenchman over at the hotel whose name is Filbert, and who--"

Just here both lads started at the sound of a shrill whistle announcing the hour of noon.

"I had no idea it was so late," explained Phil, "and I must run; for we leave here on the one-o'clock train."

"I must hurry too, for I promised to meet Bonny at noon," said Alaric.

"Who is Bonny?"

"The friend I told you of."

"Then I want you to give this to him from me, for fear he may not have found any breakfast." So saying, Phil slipped something hard and round into Alaric's hand. "Now good-bye, Rick Dale," he said. "I hope we may meet again sometime. At any rate, be sure to call on Monsieur Filbert at the hotel this afternoon. I guess you can get a job from him; but even if you don't, always remember that, as my friend Jalap Coombs says, 'It's never so dark but what there's a light somewhere.'"

Then the lads parted, one filled with the happiness that results from an act of kindness, and the other cheered and encouraged to renewed effort.

With grateful and loving glances Alaric watched Phil Ryder until he disappeared in the direction of the hotel, and then hastened to keep his appointment with Bonny. On the road leading to the wharves he passed a tall, lank figure, whose whole appearance was that of a sailor. His shrewd face was weather-beaten and wrinkled, but so kindly and smiling that Alaric could not help but smile from sympathy as they met.

He found Bonny impatiently awaiting him, and in such cheerful spirits as to be hardly recognizable for the despondent, half-starved lad of two hours before.

"Hello, Rick!" he shouted, as his friend approached. "I know you've had good luck, for I see it in your face."

"Indeed I have!" replied Alaric; "and, what's more, I've had the best breakfast I ever ate in my life."

"That's what I meant by luck; and I've had the same."

"What's more," continued Alaric, "I have brought something that was sent especially to you, for fear you hadn't found anything to eat." Thus saying, he handed over a big bright silver dollar.

"Well, if that don't beat the owls!" exclaimed Bonny at sight of the shining coin, "for here is his twin-brother that was handed me to give to you, or rather to the first fellow I met who needed it more than I did."

"I must be the one, then," said Alaric, joyously, "for I haven't a cent to my name, and as you now have two dollars, I'm willing to divide with you. But who gave it to you, and how did he happen to?"

"The queerest and dearest old chap I ever saw. You know how badly I was feeling when we separated. Well, that was nothing to what came afterwards. I set out to board every ship in port until I should find a cook or steward who would fill me up and let me have something extra to bring to you. On the first half-dozen or so I was treated worse than a dog, and fired ashore almost before I opened my mouth. It made me feel meaner than dirt, and but for thinking of how disappointed you would be if I came back as miserable as I went, I should have given up in despair. I must say, though, that all the fellows who treated me that way were Dagoes, Dutch, or Chinamen.

"At length I boarded a Yankee bark that carried an Irish steward, and the minute I said I was hungry he cried out: 'Don't spake a wurrud, lad, for ye couldn't do yer looks justice. Jist be aisy, and come wid me.'

"With that he led me to a sort of a cuddy at the forward end of the after deck-house, and set me down to such a spread as I haven't seen since I left Cape Cod. There was cold roast beef, corned beef, potatoes, bread and butter, pie, pickles, coffee, and--well, it would be no use trying to tell all the things that steward gave me to eat, for you just wouldn't believe it. He laid 'em all out, told me to pitch in, and then went off, so, as he said, I'd be free to act according to nature.

"I sat there and ate until I hadn't room for as much as a huckleberry. As I was looking at the last piece of squash pie, and thinking what a pity it was that it must be left, I heard a chuckle behind me, and turned around in a hurry. There stood one of the mates and the dear old chap I was just telling you about.

"Why don't you eat it, son?' says the mate.

"Reason enough,' says I, 'because I can't; but if you don't mind, sir, I'd like awfully to take it to my partner in starvation,' meaning you.

"Who is he? And how does he happen to be starved?' says the dear old chap. Then I up and told them the whole story of our experience on the *Fancy*, being chased by the revenue-men, and all, and it tickled 'em most to death.

"When I got through, the stranger, who was just down visiting the vessel, slipped a dollar into my hand, and told me to give it to the first chap I met who needed it more than I did. He said he used to know Cap'n Duff, and told me a lot of yarns about him as we walked back here together."

"Was his name Jalap Coombs?" asked Alaric.

"I expect it must have been, for he had a lot to say about somebody named Kite Roberson, who allus useter call him 'Jal.' Why? Do you know him?"

"Yes. That is, I feel as if I did. But, Bonny, I mustn't stop to tell you of my experiences now, for I have made an important business engagement for both of us up-town, and we must attend to it at once."

CHAPTER XXV

ENGAGED TO INTERPRET FOR THE FRENCH

"Where did you get that baseball?" asked Bonny Brooks, referring to one that Alaric was unconsciously tossing from hand to hand as they walked up-town together.

At this the latter stopped short and looked at the ball in question, as though now seeing it for the first time.

"Do you know," he said, "I have been so excited and taken up with other things that I actually forgot I had this ball in my hands. It belongs to the fellow who gave me that breakfast and your dollar, besides telling me where to look for something to do. Not only that, but I really believe if it hadn't been for this ball he would never have paid any attention to me. You see, we got to passing it; and when I became so dizzy that I had to sit down, he asked me what was the matter. So he found out somehow that I was hungry, though I don't remember telling him, and then insisted on giving me a breakfast."

"Who is he? I mean, what is his name?"

"I don't know. I never thought to ask him. And he doesn't live here either, but has just come down from Alaska, and was going off in the one-o'clock train. I do know, though, that he is the very finest chap I ever met, and I only hope I'll have a chance some time to pay back his kindness to me by helping some other poor boy."

"It is funny," remarked Bonny, meditatively, "that your friend and my friend should both have just come from Alaska."

"Isn't it?" replied Alaric; "but then they are travelling together, you know."

"I didn't know it, though I ought to have suspected it, for they are the kind who naturally would travel together--the kind, I mean, that give a fellow an idea of how much real goodness there is in the world, after all--a sort of travelling sermon, only one that is acted instead of being preached."

"That's just the way I feel about them," agreed Alaric; "but I wish I hadn't been so careless about this ball. It may be one that he values for association's sake, just as I did the one we left in that Siwash camp."

"Let me have it a moment," said Bonny, who was looking curiously at the ball.

Alaric handed it to him, and he examined it closely.

"I do believe it is the very one!" he exclaimed. "Yes, I am sure it is. Don't you remember, Rick, the burned place on your ball that came when Bah-die dropped it into the fire the first time you threw it at him, and how you laughed and called it a sure-enough red-hot ball? Well, here's the place now, and this is certainly the very ball that introduced us to each other in Victoria."

"How can it be?" asked Alaric, incredulously.

"I don't know, but it surely is."

"Well," said Alaric, finally convinced that his comrade was right, "that is the very most unexplainable thing I ever came across, for I don't see how it could possibly have come into his possession."

While discussing this strange happening, the lads approached the hotel in which one of them had been made to suffer so keenly a few hours before. He dreaded the very thought of entering it again, but having made up his mind that he must, was about to do so, when his attention was attracted to a curious scene in front of the main entrance.

A small, wiry-looking man, evidently a foreigner, was gesticulating, stamping, and shouting to a group of grinning porters and bell-boys who were gathered about him. As our lads drew near they saw that he held a small open book in his hand, from which he was quoting some sentence, while at the same time he was rapidly working himself into a fury. It was a French-English phrase-book, in which, under the head of instructions to servants, the sentence "*Je desire un fiacre*" was rendered "Call me a hansom," and it was this that the excited Frenchman was demanding, greatly to the amusement and mystification of his hearers.

"Call me a hansom! Call me a hansom! Call me a hansom!" he repeated over and over, at the top of his voice. "*C'est un fiacre--fiacre--fiacre!*" he shouted. "*Oh, la, la! Mille tonnerres!* Call me a hansom!"

"He must be crazy," said Bonny; "for he certainly isn't handsome, and even if he were, he couldn't expect people to call him so. I wonder why they don't send for the police."

Instead of answering him, Alaric stepped up to the laughing group and said, politely, "*Pardon, monsieur. C'est Monsieur Filbert, n'est-ce pas?*"

"*Oui, oui. Je suis Filbert!* Call me a hansom."

"He wants a carriage," explained Alaric to the porters, who stared open-mouthed at hearing this young tramp talk to the foreigner in his own "lingo."

"*Vous voulez une voiture, n'est-ce pas?*" he added, turning to the stranger.

"Oh, my friend!" cried M. Filbert, in his own language, flinging away the perplexing phrase-book as he spoke, and embracing Alaric in his joy at finding himself once more comprehended. "It is as the voice of an angel from heaven to hear again my own language in this place of barbarians!"

"Have a care, monsieur," warned Alaric, "how you speak of barbarians. There are many here who can understand perfectly your language."

"I care not for them! I do not see them! They have not come to me! You are the first! Can it be that I may engage you to remain and interpret for me this language of distraction?" Here the speaker drew back, and scanned Alaric's forlorn appearance hopefully.

"That is what I came to see you about, monsieur," answered Alaric. "I am looking for employment, and shall be happy--"

"It is enough!" interrupted the other, vehemently. "You have found it. I engage you now, at once. Come, the carriage is here. Let us enter."

"But," objected the lad, "I have a friend whom I cannot leave."

"Let him come! Let all your friends come! Bring your whole family if you will, but only stay with me yourself!" cried the Frenchman, impetuously. "I am distracted by my troubles with this terrible language, and but for you I shall go crazy. You are my salvation. So enter the carriage, and your friend. *Après vous, monsieur.* Do you also speak the language of the beautiful France? No? It is a great pity."

"Does his royal highness take us for dukes?" questioned the bewildered Bonny, who, not understanding one word of the foregoing conversation, had, of course, no idea why he now found himself rolling along the streets of Tacoma in one of its most luxurious public carriages.

"Not exactly," laughed Alaric; "but he takes us for interpreters--that is, he wants to engage us as such."

"Oh! Is that it? Well, I'm agreeable. I suppose you told him that I was pretty well up on Chinook? But what language does he talk himself?"

"French, of course," replied Alaric, "seeing that he is a Frenchman."

"Are you a Frenchman too?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, I didn't know but what you were, seeing that you talk the same language he does, and just as well, for all that I can make out. Really, Rick Dale, it is growing interesting to find out the things you know and can do."

"And the things I still have to learn," laughed Alaric.

Having thus satisfied his curiosity, and learned that he was an interpreter, the last position in the world for which he would have applied, Bonny folded his arms, assumed what he considered a proper attitude for the occasion, and entered upon a calm enjoyment of the first regular carriage-ride of his life. Nor did he allow the animated conversation taking place between M. Filbert and Alaric to disturb him in the least, though by it the whole future course of his life was to be changed.

Under Alaric's direction the carriage first bore them to the railway-station, where a number of strange-looking boxes and packages, all belonging to M. Filbert, were gathered in one place, and given in charge of a porter, who was instructed to receive and care for any others that might come marked with the same name. Then the carriage was again headed up-town, and driven to shop after shop until it seemed as though the entire resources of the city were to be drawn upon to supply the multitudinous needs of the mysterious Frenchman.

Among the things thus purchased and ordered sent down to the station were provisions, cooking utensils, axes,

medicines, alcohol, tents, blankets, ammunition, and clothing.

"I don't know what's up," reflected Bonny, "and I don't care, so long as Rick says everything is all right; but I should think we were either going to make war on the Siwash or take a trip to the North Pole."

Of course Alaric accompanied M. Filbert into each store, where his knowledge of languages was invaluable in conducting the various negotiations; but the Chinook interpreter, as he called himself, finding that his services were not yet in demand, was content to remain luxuriously seated in the carriage. Here he discussed the whole remarkable performance with the driver, who was certain that the Frenchman was either going prospecting for gold, or for a new town-site on which to settle a colony of his countrymen.

During the whole afternoon M. Filbert talked incessantly with his new-found interpreter, and Alaric seemed almost as excited as he. At length the former, casting a dubious glance at the lads, asked, with an apologetic manner, if they were well provided with clothing.

"Only what you see, monsieur," answered Alaric. "Everything else we have lost."

"Ah! is it so? Then must you be provided with the habiliments necessary. If you will kindly give the instructions?"

So the carriage was ordered to a shoe-shop and an outfitting establishment, where both lads, to Bonny's further bewilderment, were provided with complete suits of rough but warm and serviceable clothing, including two pairs of walking-boots, one of which was very heavy and had hob-nailed soles.

These last purchases were not concluded until after sunset, and with them the business of the day was ended. With many parting injunctions to Alaric, and a polite *bon nuit* to both lads, M. Filbert was driven back to the hotel, leaving his newly engaged assistants to their own devices for the time being.

"Now," said Bonny, "if you haven't forgotten how to talk United States, perhaps you will explain what all this means-- what we are engaged to do, what our wages are to be, and where we are bound? Are we to turn gold-hunters or Indian-fighters, or is it something in the exploring line?"

"I expect," laughed Alaric, "it is to be more in the climbing line."

"Climbing?"

"Yes. Do you see that mountain over there?" Here Alaric pointed to the lofty snow-capped peak of Mount Rainier, still rose-tinted with sunlight, and rising in awful grandeur high above all other summits of the Cascade range, nearly fifty miles from where they stood.

"Certainly. I can't help seeing it."

"Do you think you could climb it?"

"Of course I could, if it came in my line of business."

"Would you undertake it for thirty dollars a month and all expenses?"

"Rick Dale, I'd undertake to climb to the moon on those terms. But you are surely joking. The Frenchman will never pay that just for the fun of seeing us climb."

"Yes he will, though, and I have agreed that we shall start with him for the top of that mountain to-morrow morning."



CHAPTER XXVI

PREPARING FOR AN ASCENT

Monsieur Jean Puvis Filbert was a Frenchman of wealth, a distinguished member of the Alpine Club, an enthusiastic mountain-climber, and had for an especial hobby the making of botanical collections from high altitudes. He was now on a leisurely tour around the world, and had recently arrived in Tacoma on one of the Northern Pacific steamships from Japan. This was his first visit to America, and he was filled with enthusiasm by the superb mountain scenery that greeted him on all sides as his ship steamed through the Strait of Juan de Fuca and up the glorious waterways of Puget Sound. He gazed longingly at the snow-crowned Olympics, and went into ecstasies over a distant view of Mount Baker, the most northerly peak of the Cascade range. When grand old Rainier, loftiest of all, appeared on the southeastern horizon, lifting its hoary head more than 14,000 feet above the level of the intervening plain, he became silent with adoration, and determined that his first achievement in America should be to gain that glorious summit.

As his knowledge of English was very limited, our mountain-climber began his preparations for this arduous undertaking by engaging an interpreter. The only one whom he could find was a Canadian, who spoke French nearly as badly as he did English, and whom his employer was quickly obliged to discharge for drunkenness and utter incompetence. Then it seemed as though the expedition on which M. Filbert had set his heart must be given up, and he was in despair. At this critical moment Alaric Todd appeared on the scene seeking employment, though never dreaming that it would come to him through his knowledge of French, and was received literally with open arms.

Of course he was engaged at once, and was able to secure a situation for Bonny Brooks as well, though the precise nature of the young sailor's duties were not defined. Thus Bonny was allowed to regard himself as also holding the rank of interpreter, whose services would be invaluable in the event of an encounter with Indians, who, for all he knew, might contest every foot of their way up the great mountain.

To this young man the climbing of a mountain seemed a very foolish and profitless undertaking, for, as he said, "The only thing we can do when we get up there is to turn around and come down again. But you mustn't think, Rick, that I'm trying to back out. No, siree. Just so long as I am paid to climb I'll climb, even if it comes to shinning up the North Pole and interpreting the Constitution to the polar bears."

M. Filbert wished the boys to spend the night with him at the hotel, but Alaric was still so sore over his morning's experience that he begged to be excused. So when they were left to themselves they carried their recently acquired belongings down to the railway-station, and persuaded the agent to allow them to sleep in that corner of the baggage-room devoted to their employer's collection of chattels. Here they put on their new suits, and then, feeling once more intensely respectable, and well content with their own appearance, each invited the other to dine with him. Had they not two whole dollars between them, and was not that enough to make them independent of the world?

They procured a bountiful dinner in the restaurant where Alaric had breakfasted, and with it ate up one of their dollars. The place was so associated in their minds with the fine young fellow to whom they owed all their present good fortune that they thought and talked much of him during the meal. Recalling what he had said concerning his father reminded Alaric of his own parent, and caused him to wonder if he were yet aware that his younger son was not travelling around the world with the Sonntags as he had planned.

"If the dear old dad has heard of my disappearance," reflected the boy, "he must be a good deal worried, for he has no idea of how well I can take care of myself. I believe I would write to him if I only knew his address. He said to send all letters to the bank; but I can't do that, because John, who must have heard from the Sonntags by this time, would be certain to recognize the handwriting and open it. I know what, though. I'll write to Cousin Esther, and ask her to tell dad all about me. She is sure to see him on his way home, for he always visits Uncle Dale's when he is in Boston."

So after supper, Alaric, who was beginning to have a lively appreciation of the value of money, as well as of fathers, cautiously invested four cents in a sheet of paper, an envelope, and a stamp, all of which he was able to procure from the proprietor of the restaurant. The boy smiled, as he carefully pocketed his one cent of change, to think on what a different scale he would have made a similar purchase less than a month before. Then he would have ordered a box of note-paper, another of envelopes, and a whole sheet of stamps. As for the change, why, there wouldn't have been any, for he would simply have said, "Charge it, please," and it would have been charged to his father's account.

When Bonny saw that Alaric was about to write a letter, he decided to write one to his aunt Nancy at the same time. "For," said he, "she probably imagines that I am in China by now, and would never think of sending word to me here in case she got any news of father." So Bonny also invested four cents in stationery; and the restaurant man good-naturedly allowing them to use a table, besides loaning them pens and a bottle of ink, they sat down to compose their

respective epistles. When Alaric's letter was finished it read as follows:

"DEAR COUSIN ESTHER,—I have taken your advice and run away—that is, I have done what amounts to the same thing, for I just sat still and let the other folks run away. By this time I expect they are in China, while I am here in the very place you said you would be if you were a boy. I wish you were one so you could be here with me now, for I think you would make a first-class boy. I am learning to be one as fast as I can, a real truly boy, I mean, and not a make-believe. I have already learned how to smuggle, and catch a baseball, besides a little batting, and to swim, sail a boat, paddle a canoe, talk some Siwash, and have had a good deal of experience besides.

"Now I am an interpreter and engaged in the mountain-climbing business. We start to-morrow.

"I have a partner who is a splendid chap, about my age, and named Bonny Brooks. I know you would like him, for he is such a regular boy, and knows just how to do things.

"When you see my dear dad, please give him my warmest love, and tell him I think more of him now than I ever did. Please make him understand that it was the Sonntags who ran away, and not I. Tell him that when I am through experimenting with my heart, and have become a genuine boy like Bonny, I am coming back to him, to learn how to be a man—that is, I will if I can afford to pay my way to San Francisco. But you have no idea how much money it takes to travel, especially when you have to earn it yourself, and so far I haven't earned any. Still I have not starved—that is, not very often—so far, and am in hopes of having plenty to eat from this time on. Now I must say good-bye because we are going to sleep in the station to-night, and it closes early.

"Ever your loving cousin,

"RICK."

"P.S.—The principal reason I let the Sonntags go was because they called me 'Allie.' Please tell this to dad."

Bonny's letter was not so long as Alaric's, but it described the situation with equal vagueness. He wrote:

"DEAR AUNT NANCY,—I am not in China, as you may suppose, having quit the sea after rising to be first mate. Have also been a smuggler, but am not any more. Am now engaged by the French as interpreter, and so far like the business very well. Have also gone into the climbing trade. We are to do our first mountain to-morrow. Have for a chum one of the cleverest chaps you ever saw. He can talk most any language except Chinook, and is a daisy ball-catcher. His name is Rick Dale, and I am trying hard to be just like him. If you have any news from father, please let me know. You can send a letter in care of Mr. P. Bear, Hotel Tacoma, which is our headquarters.

"Ever your loving nephew,

"B. BROOKS, Interpreter."

Both these letters were sent to Massachusetts, Alaric's being addressed to Boston, and Bonny's to Sandport. After they were posted, and our lads were on their way back to the railway station, they began for the first time to realize how very tired and sleepy they were. They were so utterly weary that as they snuggled down in their corner of the baggage-room, on a bed made of M. Filbert's tents and blankets, Alaric remarked:

"This is what I call solid comfort."

"Yes," replied Bonny, "we certainly have struck a big streak of luck. Do you remember how we were feeling about this time last night?"

"No," answered Alaric, "I can't remember. It's too long ago. Good-night." And in another minute both boys were fast asleep.

They had taken "through tickets," as Bonny would have said, and slept so soundly that they hardly stirred until the agent flung open the baggage-room door at six o'clock the following morning, and caused them to spring from their blankets in a hurry by shouting, "All aboard!" A dash of cold water from the hydrant outside drove all traces of sleep from their eyes, and so filled them with its fresh vigor that they raced all the way up-town to the restaurant. Here, although their appetites were keen as ever, they managed to satisfy them with a ninety-cent breakfast, "and left the place with money still in their pockets," as Alaric expressed it.

"That's so," responded Bonny. "We've just one cent apiece. Let's toss up to see who will have them both."

"No," said Alaric, "for that would be gambling; and I promised my mother long ago at Monte Carlo never to gamble. She said more fortunes were lost and fewer won in that way than by any other."

"But one cent isn't a fortune," objected Bonny.

"Why not? A man's fortune is all that he has, and if you have but one cent, then that is your fortune."

"I guess you are right, Rick Dale," laughed Bonny. "I hate gambling as much as you do; but it never seemed to me before that tossing pennies was gambling. I expect it is, though, so I'll just keep my fortune in my pocket, and not risk it on any such foolishness."

As the lads hastened back to the station, where they were to meet their employer, the glorious mountain that was now the goal of their ambition reared its mighty crest, radiant with sunlight, directly before them. So wonderfully clear was the atmosphere that it did not seem ten miles away, and Bonny, shaking a fist at it, cried, cheerfully: "Never you mind, old fellow, we'll soon have you under foot."



CHAPTER XXVII

BONNY COMMANDS THE SITUATION

Our lads had barely time to do up the tents and blankets they had used for bedding into compact bundles before M. Filbert arrived, with his servant Francois, and a carriage full of packages, including a bundle of iron-shod alpenstocks. He was clad in what appeared to Bonny and the idlers about the station a very curious costume, though to Alaric, who had often seen its like in Switzerland, it did not seem at all out of the way. It consisted of a coat and knee-breeches of dark green velveteen, a waistcoat of scarlet cloth, stout yarn stockings patterned in green and scarlet and folded over at the knees, the heaviest of laced walking-boots with hob-nailed soles, and a soft Tyrolese hat, in which was stuck a jaunty cock's feather.

He was full of excited bustle, and the moment he caught sight of Alaric began to shower questions and directions upon him with bewildering rapidity. At length, thanks to Alaric's clear head and Bonny's practical common-sense, confusion was reduced to order, and everything was got on board the train that was to carry the expedition to Yelm Prairie, a station about twenty miles south of Tacoma, from which the real start was to be made.

The arrival at Yelm Prairie produced an excitement equal to that of a circus, and our friends had hardly alighted from the train before they were surrounded by a clamorous throng of would-be guides, packers, teamsters, owners of saddle-animals or pack-ponies, and a score of others, who were loud in declaring that without their services the expedition would surely come to grief.

In vain did the bewildered Frenchman storm and rave, and stamp his feet and gesticulate. Not one word that he said could be understood by the crowd, who, in their efforts to attract his attention, only shouted the louder and pressed about him more closely. Finally the poor man, turning to Alaric and saying, "Do what you will. Everything I leave to you," clapped his hands to his ears, broke through the uproarious throng, and started on a run for the open prairie.

"He leaves everything to us," said Alaric, who was almost as bewildered by the clamor and novelty of the situation as was M. Filbert himself.

"Good enough!" cried Bonny. "Now we will be able to do something. I take it that on this cruise you are first mate and I am second. So if you'll just give the word to go ahead, I'll settle the business in a hurry."

"I only wish you would," returned Alaric, "for it looks as though we were going to be mobbed."

Armed with this authority, Bonny sprang on a packing-case that lifted him well above his surroundings, and shouted: "Fellow-citizens!"

Instantly there came a hush of curious expectancy.

"I reckon all you men are looking for a job?"

"That's about the size of it," answered several voices.

"Very well; I'll give you one that'll prove just about the biggest contract ever let out in Yelm Prairie. It is to shut your mouths and keep quiet."

Here the speaker was greeted by angry murmurs and cries of "None of yer chaff, young feller!" "What are you giving us?" and the like.

Nothing daunted, Bonny continued: "I'm not fooling. I'm in dead earnest. What we are after is quiet, and the prince out there, whom you have scared away with your racket, is so bound to have it that he's willing to pay handsomely for it. He's got the money, too, and don't you forget it. He wants to hire several guides and packers, also a lot of saddle-horses and ponies, but a noisy, loud-talking chap he can't abide, and won't have round. He has left the whole business to my partner here and me to settle, seeing that we are his interpreters, and we are going to do it the way he pays us to do it and wants it done. So, according to the rule we've laid down in all our travellings and mountain-climbings up to date, the man who speaks last will be hired first, and the fellow who makes the most noise won't be given any show at all. Sabe? As an example, we want a team to take our dunnage to the river, and I'm going to give the job to that fellow sitting in the wagon, who hasn't so far spoken a word."

"Good reason why! He's deaf and dumb!" shouted a voice.

"All the better," replied Bonny, in no wise abashed. "That's the kind we want. There are two more chaps who haven't said anything that I've heard, and I'm going to give them the job of pitching camp for us. I mean those two Siwash at

the end of the platform."

"They are quiet because they can't speak any English," remonstrated some of those who stood near by.

"We don't mind that, though we are French," replied Bonny, cheerfully. "You see, the prince looked out for such things when he engaged us interpreters, and now we are ready to talk to every man in his own language, including Chinook and United States. Now the only other thing I've got to say is that we won't be ready to consider any further business proposals until two o'clock this afternoon, and anybody coming to our camp before that time will lose his chance. After that we shall be glad to see you all, and the fellows that make the least talk will stand the best show of getting a job."

The effect of this bold proposition was surprising. Instead of exciting wrath and causing hostile demonstrations, as Alaric feared, its quieting influence was magical. Times were hard in Yelm Prairie, and a well-paid trip up the mountain, or the chance to obtain a dollar a day for the hire of a pony, was not to be despised.

So Bonny was allowed to engage the deaf-and-dumb teamster by signs, and the two Indians by a few words of Chinook, without hinderance. All these worked with such intelligence and expedition that within an hour one of the neatest camps ever seen in that section was ready for occupancy beside the white waters of the glacier-fed Nisqually.

When M. Filbert, who spied it from afar, came in soon afterwards, with hands and pockets full of floral specimens, he found a comfortably arranged tent and a bountiful camp dinner awaiting him. At sight of these things his peace of mind was fully restored, and he congratulated himself on having secured such skilful interpreters of both his words and wishes as the lads through whom they had been accomplished.

Promptly at the hour named by Bonny a motley but orderly throng of men, mules, and ponies presented themselves at the camp, and the whole afternoon was spent in making a selection of animals and testing the skill of packers. Both Alaric and Bonny were inexperienced riders, but neither of them hesitated when invited to mount and try the steeds offered for their use. A moment later Bonny was sprawling on the ground, with his pony gazing at him demurely, while Alaric was flying over the prairie at a speed that quickly carried him out of sight. It was nearly an hour before he returned, dishevelled and flushed with excitement, but triumphant, and with his pony cured of his desire for bolting--at least, for a time.

By nightfall the selections and engagements had been made, and the expedition was strengthened by the addition of two white men to act as packers, two Indians who were to serve as guides and hunters, five saddle-ponies, and as many pack-animals.

That night our lads slept under canvas for the first time, and as they lay on their blankets discussing the novelty of the situation, Bonny said:

"I tell you what, Rick, this mountain-climbing is a more serious business than some folks think. When you first told me what our job was to be I had a sort of an idea that we could get to the top of old Rainier easy enough in one day and come back the next. So I couldn't imagine why Mr. Bear should want to engage us by the month. Now, though, it begins to look as though we were in for something of a cruise."

"I should say so," laughed Alaric, who had learned a great deal about mountain-climbing in Switzerland. "It would probably take the best part of a week to go from here straight to the summit and back again. But we shall be gone much longer than that, for we are to make a camp somewhere near the snow-line, and spend a fortnight or so up there collecting flowers and things."

"Flowers?" said Bonny, inquiringly.

"Yes. M. Filbert is a botanist, you know, and makes a specialty of mountain flora. But I say, Bonny, what makes you call him 'Mr. Bear'?"

"Because I thought that was his name. I know you call him 'Phil Bear,' but I never was one to become familiar with a cap'n on short acquaintance."

"Ho! ho!" Alaric laughed; "that's a good one. Why, Bonny, Filbert is the surname. F-i-l-b-e-r-t--the same as the nut, you know, only the French pronounce things differently from what we do."

"I should say they did if that's a specimen, and I'm glad I'm not expected to talk in any such language. Plain Chinook and every-day North American are good enough for me. I suppose he would say 'Rainy' for Rainier?"

"Something very like it. I see you are catching the accent. We'll make a Frenchman of you yet before this trip is ended."

"Humph!" ejaculated Bonny. "Not if I know it, you won't."

Sunrise of the following morning found the horsemen of the expedition galloping over the brown sward of the park-like prairie towards the forest that for hundreds of miles covers the whole western slope of the Cascade range like a vast green blanket. The road soon entered the timber and began a gradual ascent, winding among the trunks of stately firs and gigantic cedars that often shot upward for more than one hundred feet before a branch broke their column-like regularity.

By noon they were at Indian Henry's, twenty miles on their way, and at the end of the wagon-road. That night camp was pitched in the dense timber, and our lads had their first taste of life in the forest. How snugly they were walled in by those close-crowding tree-trunks, and how they revelled in the roaring camp-fire, with its leaping flames, showers of dancing sparks, and perfume of burning cedar! What a delight it was to lie on their blankets just within its circle of light and warmth, listening to its crisp cracklings! Mingled with these was the cheery voice of a tumbling stream that came from the blackness beyond, and the soft murmurings of night winds among the branches far above them.

Another day's journey through the same grand forest, only broken by the verdant length of Succotash Valley, and by the rocky beds of many streams, brought them to Longmire's Springs and the log cabins of the hardy settler who had given them his name. At this point, though they had been steadily ascending ever since leaving Yelm Prairie, they were still less than three thousand feet above the sea, and the real work of climbing was not yet begun. After an evening spent in listening to Longmire's thrilling descriptions of the difficulties and dangers awaiting them, Bonny admitted to Alaric that he had never before entertained even a small idea of what a mountain really was.



CHAPTER XXVIII

ON THE EDGE OF PARADISE VALLEY

From the springs a four-mile scramble through the woods and up the rocky beds of ancient waterways brought the party to a place where the Nisqually River must be crossed. Here a single giant tree had been felled so as to span the torrent, and its upper surface roughly hewn to a level. A short distance above the rude bridge rose the frowning front of a glacier. Although its ice was mud-stained and honeycombed by countless rivulets that poured from its upper surface in tiny cascades, it still formed an inspiring spectacle, and one that filled Bonny with wondering admiration, for it was his first glacier.

From an arched ice cavern at its base poured the milk-white river, with a hollow roaring, and such force that fair-sized boulders were swept down its channel as though they were so many sticks of wood. The whole scene was of such fascinating interest that it very nearly brought poor Bonny to grief.

He had dismounted, and was preparing to follow M. Filbert and Alaric, who had already led their ponies in safety across the narrow bridge. These animals had crossed so readily that he supposed his would do the same, and, as he stepped out on the great log, was paying far more attention to the glacier than to it. Suddenly he was jerked violently backward, pitched headlong down the bank, and barely saved himself from the icy torrent by clutching at a friendly bush. At the same moment his pony, who had no confidence in mountain bridges, dashed into the roaring stream, was instantly swept from his footing, rolled over and over, and borne struggling away towards what seemed certain destruction. By the good fortune that attends all fools, animals as well as human, he managed to escape both drowning and broken bones, and finally regained his feet on a friendly reef that projected into the river a quarter of a mile below the bridge. There he stood trembling, bruised, and dripping when Bonny and one of the Indians, who had hastened down the bank to discover his fate, found him a few minutes later. From that time forth he was the meekest and most docile pony imaginable, suffering himself not only to be led over the log bridge without remonstrance, but wherever else his young master desired.



"BONNY WAS JERKED VIOLENTLY BACKWARD"

From the scene of this incident a hard scramble up a heavily timbered slope, so precipitous that it could only be overcome by a series of zigzags, lifted the expedition a thousand feet above the glacier, and carried them into a park-like meadow so carpeted and fringed with flowers as to throw M. Filbert into an ecstasy of delight. The remainder of that day's ride led through many more of these exquisite, flower-decked mountain meadows separated by belts of timber, and rising one above the other, after the manner of terraces.

Largest and most beautiful of them all was Paradise Valley, a broad sweep of flower-painted sward dotted with graceful clumps of alpine firs and hemlocks, and nestled at the base of a mighty frowning cliff. It was bisected by a rippling stream that entered its upper end by a shimmering fall of nearly one thousand feet in height.

High above this lovely valley, and close to the line where snow and timber met, M. Filbert called a halt, and ordered the permanent camp to be pitched. Although this point was less than half-way to the top of the mountain, or only 6500 feet above sea-level, the ponies could climb no higher, and, after being unladen, were sent back in charge of the packers into Paradise Valley, where they might fatten on its juicy grasses until needed for the return trip.

From here, then, the rugged slope of ice, snow, and rock that stretched indefinitely upward towards the far-away shining summit must be traversed on foot or not at all. But this was not to be done now, nor for days to come, during which the camp just pitched was to be the base of a wide-spread series of explorations.

A few straggling hemlocks, so bent by the ice-laden winds that swept down the mountain-side in winter that they looked like decrepit old men, furnished shelter, fuel, and bedding. An ice-cold stream supplied water, the Indian hunters provided fresh meat, bringing in now a mountain-goat or a few brace of ptarmigan, and occasionally fetching up a deer from one of the flowery meadows a few thousand feet below. The supplies of other kinds of food, of warm clothing and bedding, were ample, and so, in spite of its lofty and solitary situation, that mountain-camp seemed to our lads one of the pleasantest and most comfortable places they had ever known.

"It beats the sloop away out of sight," remarked Bonny.

"Or Skookum John's," said Alaric.

"Yes, or being chased and starved."

"The best of it all is that up here I seem to amount to something," added Alaric.

This was, after all, the true secret of our lads' content; for, in spite of its novelty, the present situation would quickly have grown wearisome had they not been constantly and happily occupied. Every day that the weather would permit they tramped from early morning until dark over snow-fields and glaciers, scaled cliffs, scrambled down into valley-like meadows set like green jewels in the grim mountain-side, threaded their way amid the fantastic forms of stunted forests, toiled slowly up lofty heights, or slid with the speed of toboggans down gleaming slopes. Each day they gained in agility and daring, and each night they returned to that cheery camp with its light, warmth, and abounding comforts, so healthfully tired and so ravenously hungry that it is no wonder they grew to look upon it as a home, and a very pleasant one.

Both lads developed specialties in which they became expert. Alaric's was photography, an art that he had acquired in France, and had practised at intervals for more than a year. As soon as M. Filbert discovered this knowledge on the part of his young interpreter, he intrusted him with the camera, and never had the lad devoted himself to anything with such enthusiasm as he now did to the capturing of views. His greatest triumph came through hours of tedious and noiseless creeping over a rough ice-field that finally placed him within twenty yards of a couple of mountain-goats.

Although the wind was blowing strongly from them to him, the timid creatures were already alarmed, and were sniffing the air suspiciously when a click of the camera's shutter sent them off like a flash. But the shot had been successful, as was shown by the development of a perfect plate that evening. M. Filbert was jubilant over this feat, which he said had never before been accomplished, and complimented the lad in flattering terms upon the skilful patience that had led to it.

Bonny's specialty lay in the collecting of flowers, to which he had devoted himself assiduously ever since learning that they were what the little Frenchman most desired. Keen-eyed, nimble-footed, and tireless, he discovered and secured many a rare specimen that but for him would have been passed unnoticed.

Thus the leader of the expedition found reason to value the good qualities of his young assistants more highly with each day, and was already planning to have them accompany him on his entire American tour, during which he proposed to ascend at least a dozen more mountains. Bonny was jubilant over the prospect of such a trip, and was now as eager to learn French, in order to qualify himself for it, as he had formerly been scornful of the language.

With all this open-air life and splendid physical exercise, the one-time pale-faced and slender Alaric was broadening and developing beyond belief. His cheeks were now a ruddy brown, his eyes were clear, his muscles hard, and his step as springy as that of a mountain-goat. Above everything else in his own estimation he was learning to swing an axe with precision, and could now chop a log in two almost as neatly as Bonny himself.

For all that they were so constantly and agreeably occupied, the boys were possessed of a great and ever-increasing longing to stand on the lofty but still distant summit, with the general aspect of which they had become so familiar during their stay in the timber-line camp. Thus, when one evening M. Filbert decided to make a start towards it on the morrow, they hailed the announcement with joy. One of the Indians was to accompany them as guide, while his fellow was to be left with Francois to keep camp.

The greater part of the following morning was devoted to making preparations for the climb and what was thought might prove a three days' absence from camp: the hobnails of their walking-boots, worn smooth by friction, were replaced by a fresh set; alpenstocks were tested until it was certain that each of those to be taken would bear the weight of the heaviest of the party; provisions were cooked and packs laid out. Each was to carry a canvas-covered blanket sleeping-bag, inside of which would be rolled provisions for three days, a tin plate, and a cup. Each was also provided with a sheath-knife and a supply of matches. Besides these things M. Filbert was to carry a barometer, a thermometer, a compass, and a collecting-case. Alaric was intrusted with the camera and two dozen plates. Bonny's extras were a hatchet and a fifty-foot coil of stout rope; while the Indian was to carry an ice-axe and pack a burden of fire-wood.

It was nearly noon when, fortified by a hearty lunch, they left their home-like camp, and, facing resolutely upward, began a tedious climb over the limitless expanse of snow that they struck within the first hundred yards. The sky was overcast, and they had hardly started ere a dense cloud-bank swept down and enveloped them in its chill vapors. An hour later they passed above it, though the clouds still rolled thick below them, and emerged into sunlight. Glad as they were to see this, it was so distressingly bright that they were obliged to protect their eyes from its blinding glare with snow-goggles.

Wherever a ledge of rock projected above the snow they found blooming flowers and busy insects. Even butterflies hovered about these spots of verdure, and seemed as much at home amid their arctic surroundings as in the warm valleys far below.

The climb of that afternoon was hot, in spite of the snow that crunched beneath their feet, tedious, and only mildly exciting, for all the perils of the ascent were to come on the morrow.

Shortly before the sun sank into the sea of cloud that spread in fleecy undulations beneath them, they reached the base of the Cleaver, a gigantic ridge that seemed to bar their further progress. Here, on a small plat of nearly level ground from which they dug away the snow, they made a fire over which to boil water for a pot of tea, ate supper, and prepared to pass the night. They were four thousand feet above timber-line, and two miles higher than the waters of Puget Sound.

As soon as supper was over the entire party crawled into their sleeping-bags for protection against the bitter cold of the night, and for a while the two boys, nestling together, talked in low tones. Then Bonny fell asleep; but for nearly an hour Alaric lay awake, listening to the awful silence of that lofty solitude, or startled by the occasional thunderous rush of some plunging boulder hurled from its bed by the resistless leverage of frost.

CHAPTER XXIX

MOUNT RAINIER PLACED UNDERFOOT

The summit of Mount Rainier has only been gained by way of its southern slope, the much steeper and more dangerous northern face having never been scaled. Even over the comparatively easy slope of the south side but one practicable trail has been discovered, and it leads by way of the Cleaver. This gigantic ridge of rock, like the backbone of some colossal monster, forms a divide between the upper Nisqually and Cowlitz glaciers. Its sides are overlaid with confused masses of bowlders and treacherous gravel, through which appear at intervals sheer cliffs and bare ledges of solid rock. The Cleaver leads to a mighty mass of granite, a mountain in itself, that is fittingly called the Gibraltar of Mount Rainier. It bars a further passage to all save the strongest climbers, and to these it affords the only means of access to the lofty realms beyond. Here is the most perilous part of the ascent, and, with Gibraltar once passed, the summit is almost certain of attainment.

It seemed to our weary lads that they had barely fallen asleep when they were wakened by a rude shaking and the voice of their Siwash guide, exclaiming:

"Come, come, lazy boy! Wake up! wake up! Mos' *sitkum sun* (noon). Breakfus! breakfus!"

"Most noon!" growled Bonny, crawling reluctantly from his sleeping-bag, rubbing his eyes, and shivering in the bitter cold. "Most midnight, more likely."

"Alle same, *sitkum sun* some place; don't he?" queried the Indian; laughing at his own joke.

By the time they had swallowed a cup of tepid tea, and lightened their packs by making a hearty meal of cold meat and hard bread, dawn was breaking, and there was light enough to pick their way up the treacherous slope of the Cleaver. As they cautiously advanced, many a bowlder slipped from beneath their feet and bounded with mighty leapings into the depths behind them. Dodging these, sliding in the loose gravels, lifting and pulling each other up rocky faces from one narrow ledge to another, and ever looking upward, they finally gained the summit of the mighty ridge.

From here they could gaze down the opposite slope nearly a thousand feet to the gleaming surface of the great Cowlitz glacier, with so much of its ruggedness smoothed away by distance that it looked a river of milk with a line of black drift in its centre, flowing swiftly through a rock-walled canon and pouring into a sea of cloud. On the far southward horizon could be seen the glistening cone of Mount Hood, kissed by earliest sunbeams, and in the middle distance the volcanic peaks of St. Helens and Adams. Near at hand, pinnacles of the Tatoosh range were breaking through the clouds like rocky islets in a billowy sea. Before them the rugged backbone of the Cleaver, stripped of every particle of its earthy flesh, stretched away in quick ascent to the frowning mass of Gibraltar.

The Cleaver carried them half-way up the sombre face of this mighty rock, and from that point a narrow ledge creeping diagonally up the precipice at a steep angle was the trail they must follow. Not only was this rocky pathway steep and narrow, but it shelved away from the wall, and in many places afforded only a treacherous foothold. At any point along its length a slip, a misstep, or an attack of dizziness would mean almost certain destruction.

Foot by foot and yard by yard M. Filbert's little party ascended this perilous way, here walking, and trusting to their alpenstocks for support; there crawling on hands and knees. Sometimes one would go cautiously ahead over a place of peculiar danger, with an end of the rope firmly knotted beneath his arms, while his companions, with firm bracings, retained the other part, ready to haul him up if by chance he should plunge over the verge and dangle above the abyss at the end of his slender tether.

At the terminus of the ledge they were confronted by a sloping wall of solid ice, in which they must cut steps and grip-holes for feet and hands. As they slowly and painfully worked their way up this precarious ladder, they were continually pelted by pebbles and good-sized stones loosened by the sun from an upper cliff of frozen gravel.

At length the toilsome ascent was safely accomplished, and, with a panting shout from Alaric and a hurrah from Bonny, the whole party stood on the summit of that mountain Gibraltar. Here they rested and lunched; then, full of eager impatience, pushed on over the narrow causeway connecting the mighty rock with the vastly mightier snow-cap beyond.

This snow, that had looked so faultlessly smooth from below, was found to be drifted and packed into high ridges, over which they slowly toiled, frequently pausing for breath and inhaling the rarefied air with quick gaspings. At length a bottomless crevasse yawned before them, spanned only by a narrow ledge of snow. With an end of the rope knotted beneath his arms, Bonny, being the lightest, essayed to cross it. Before he reached the farther side the treacherous

support broke beneath him, and, with a frightened cry, Alaric saw his comrade plunge out of sight in the yawning chasm. He brought up with a heavy jerk at the end of the rope, and they cautiously drew him back to where they stood.

As he reappeared above the edge of the opening his face was very pale, but he called out, cheerfully: "It's all right, Rick! Don't fret!"

After a long search they discovered another bridge, and it bore them across in safety, one at a time, but all securely roped together. Finally, late in the afternoon, the longed-for summit was attained, and, though nearly toppled over by a furious wind, they stood triumphant on the rocky rim of its ancient crater. This was half a mile in diameter, and filled with snow, but its opposite or northern side was the highest. So to it they made their weary way, following the rocky path afforded by the rim, and barely able to hold their footing against the wind.

When they at last attained the point of their ambition, a reading of the barometer showed them to be standing at a height of 14,444 feet above sea-level, and with exulting hearts they realized that, as Bonny expressed it, they had put the highest peak of the Cascade range beneath their feet.

The view that greeted them from that lofty outlook was so wonderful and far-reaching that for a while they gazed in awed silence. Mount Baker, two hundred miles away, close to the British line, was clearly visible, as were the notable peaks to the southward, even beyond the distant Columbia and over the Oregon border.

"C'est grand! c'est magnifique! c'est terrible!" exclaimed M. Filbert, at length breaking the silence.

As for Alaric! To have achieved that summit was the greatest triumph of his life; but his heart was too full for utterance, and he could only gaze in speechless delight.

The Indian too gazed in silence as, leaning on his ice-axe, he contemplated the outspread empire that but a few years before had belonged solely to the people of his race.

Bonny was as deeply impressed as either of his companions, but found it necessary to express his feelings in words. "This must be the top of the world!" he cried; "and I do believe we can see it all. I tell you what it is, Rick Dale, I've learned something about mountains this day, and now I know that they are the grandest things in all creation."

At their feet the rock wall dropped so sheer and smooth that no man might climb it, and then came the snow, sweeping steeply downward for miles apparently without a break. Far beyond lay the vast sea of forest, seeming to cover the whole earth with its green mantle. The gleaming glaciers, looking like foaming cascades frozen into rigidity, were swallowed by it and hidden. It rolled in billows over the mighty mountain flanks that radiated from where they stood like the spokes of a colossal wheel, and dipped into the intervening valleys. Nowhere was it broken, save by the few bald peaks that struggled above it and by the thread-like waters of Puget Sound. Even on the west there was no ocean, for the volcanic, snow-crowned Olympics, one of which was smoking, as though in eruption, hid it from view.

Our lads could have gazed entranced for hours on the crowding marvels outspread before them had they been warmed and fed and rested and sheltered from the fierce blasts of icy wind that threatened to hurl them from the parapet on which they stood. As it was, night was at hand, they were faint and trembling from weariness, and wellnigh perished with the stinging cold. It was high time to turn from gazing and seek shelter.

Inside the crater's rim numerous steam jets issued from fissures in the rocky wall, and these had carved out caverns from the adjacent ice. Here there were roomy chambers, steam-heated and storm-proof, awaiting occupancy, and to one of these M. Filbert led the way.

In this place of welcome shelter numbed fingers were thawed to further usefulness by the grateful steam, a small fire was lighted, packs were opened, and in less than an hour a bountiful supper of hot tea, venison frizzled over the coals, toasted hard-bread, and prunes was being enjoyed by as hungry and jubilant a party as ever bivouacked on the summit of Mount Rainier.

After supper the Frenchman lighted a cigarette, the Indian puffed, with an air of intense satisfaction, at an ancient pipe, our lads toasted their stockinged feet before the few remaining embers of the fire, and, in various languages, all four discussed the adventures of the day.

Although they had much to say, their conversation hour was soon ended by their weariness and by the ever-increasing cold, which even a jet of volcanic steam could not exclude from that chamber of ice. So they speedily slipped into their sleeping-bags, and, lying close together for greater warmth, prepared to spend a night under the very strangest conditions that Alaric and Bonny, at least, had ever encountered.

Some hours later the occupants of the ice-cave became conscious of the howlings of a storm that shrieked and roared above their heads with the fury of ten thousand demons; but, knowing that it could not penetrate their retreat, they

gave it but slight heed, and quickly dropped again into the sleep of weariness.



CHAPTER XXX

BLOWN FROM THE RIM OF A CRATER

When our lads next awoke they were oppressed with a sense of suffocation and uncomfortable warmth. It was still dark, and M. Filbert was striking a match in order to look at his watch.

"Seven o'clock!" he cried, incredulously. "How can it be?"

"*Cole snass!*" (snow) exclaimed the Indian, to whom the flare of light had instantly disclosed the cause of both darkness and suffocation. The cave was much smaller than when they entered it, and was also full of steam. Its walls were covered with moisture, and rivulets of water trickled over the floor.

"*Cultus snow!* Heap plenty! Too much! *Mamook ilahie*" (must dig), continued the Indian, springing to his feet, and making an attack on the drifted snow that had completely choked the cavern's mouth. When he had excavated a burrow the length of his body, Bonny took his place, while Alaric and M. Filbert removed the loosened snow to the back of the cave, where they packed it as closely as possible.

Although a faint light soon appeared in the tunnel, it was a full hour before it was dug to the surface of the tremendous drift and a rush of cold air was admitted.

A glance outside showed that, while no snow was falling at that moment, the day was dark and gloomy, and the mountain was enveloped in clouds that were driven in swirling eddies by fierce gusts of wind.

In spite of the threatening weather, M. Filbert declared that they must begin their retreat at once, as they had but one day's supply of food left, while the storm might burst upon them again at any minute and continue indefinitely. So, after a hasty meal of biscuits and cold meat, the little party sallied forth. The Indian, having no longer a burden of fire-wood, relieved Alaric of his camera, and led the way. M. Filbert followed, then came Alaric; while Bonny, with a coil of rope hung over his shoulder, brought up the rear.

Oh, how cold it was! and how awful! To be sure, the dangers surrounding them were hidden by impenetrable clouds, but they had already seen them, and knew of their presence. As they started to traverse the rocky crater rim that still rose slightly above the snow, the entire summit was visible; but a few minutes later a furious gust of wind again shrouded it in clouds so dense as to completely hide objects only a few feet away.

Just then Alaric tripped on one of his boot-lacings that had become unfastened, and very nearly fell. That was no place for tripping, and such a thing must not happen again. So he paused to secure the loosened lacing, and, as he stooped over it, Bonny cried impatiently from behind:

"Hurry up, Rick! the others are already out of sight, and it will never do to lose them in this fog."

The necessity for haste only caused the lad's numbed fingers to fumble the more awkwardly, and several precious minutes were thus wasted.

With the task completed, Alaric, full of nervous dread, started to run after his vanished companions, slipped on a bit of glare ice at a place where the narrow path slanted down and out, and pitched headlong. Bonny saw his danger, sprang to his assistance, slipped on the same treacherous ice, and in another moment both lads had plunged over the outer verge of the sheer wall. There was a stifled cry, drowned by the roaring blast, and then, without leaving a trace behind them, they were lost to sight in the crowding mists. So complete was their disappearance that when, one minute later, M. Filbert and the Indian passed back over that very place in anxious search of their young companions, they could neither see nor hear aught to tell them of what had happened.

Neither Alaric nor Bonny could ever afterwards tell whether they fell twenty feet or two hundred in that terrible, breathless plunge. Almost with the first knowledge of their situation they found themselves struggling in a drift of soft, fresh-fallen snow, and a moment afterwards rolling, bounding, and shooting with frightful velocity down an icy, roof-like slope of interminable length. Breathless, battered, bruised, expecting with each instant to be dashed over some awful brink, as ignorant of their surroundings as though stricken with blindness, the poor lads still tried, with outstretched arms and clutching fingers, to check their wild flight.

While they realized in a measure the desperate nature of the situation, its worst features were mercifully concealed from them by the clinging clouds. Had these lifted ever so little, they would have seen that their perilous coast was down a ridge so narrow that the alpenstocks flung from them as they plunged over the rim of the crater had fallen on either side into yawning chasms.

At length, after what seemed an eternity of this terrible experience, though in reality it lasted but a few minutes, they were flung into a narrow, snow-filled valley that cut their course at a sharp angle, and found themselves lying within a few feet of each other, dazed and sorely bruised, but apparently with unbroken bones, and certainly still alive.

As they slowly gained a sitting posture and gazed curiously at each other, Bonny said, impressively:

"Rick Dale, before we go any farther, I want to take back all I ever said about the life of a sailor being exciting, for it isn't a circumstance to that of an interpreter."

"Oh, Bonny, it is so good to hear your voice again! Wasn't it awful? And how do you suppose we can ever get back?"

"Get back!" cried the other. "Well, if we had wings we might fly back; but there's no other way that I know of. We must be a mile from our starting-point, and even to reach the foot of the place where we dove off we'd have to cut steps in the ice every inch of the way. That would probably take a couple of days, and when we got there we'd have to turn around and come down again, for nothing except a bird could ever scale that wall."

"Then what shall we do?"

"Keep on as we have begun, I suppose, only a little slower, I hope, until we reach the timber-line, and then try and follow it to camp."

"I wonder if we can?"

"Of course we can, for we've got to."

Painfully the lads gained their feet, and with cautious steps began to explore their surroundings. They walked side by side for a few yards, and then each clutched the other as though to draw him back. They were on the brink of a precipice, over which another step would have carried them.

While they hesitated, not knowing which way to turn nor what to do, the clouds below them rolled away, though above and back of them they remained as dense as ever, and a view of what lay before them was unfolded.

Rocks, ice, and snow; sheer walls rising on either side of them, and a precipitous slope forming an almost vertical descent of a thousand feet in front. There were but three things to do: Go back the way they had come, which was so wellnigh impossible that they did not give it a second thought; remain where they were, which meant a certain and speedy death; or make their way down that rocky wall. They crept to its brink and looked over, anxiously scanning its every feature and calculating their chances. The first thirty feet were sheer and smooth. Then came a narrow shelf, below which they could see others at irregular intervals.

"There is only one way to do it," said Bonny, "and that is by the rope. I will go first, and you must follow."

"I'll try," replied Alaric, with a very pale face but a brave voice.

So Bonny, with the knowledge of knots that he had learned on shipboard, made a noose that would not slip in one end of their rope, tied half a dozen knots along its length for hand-holds, and fastened its other end about his body. Then he looped the noose over a jutting point of rock, and, slipping cautiously over the brink, allowed himself to slide slowly down.

It made Alaric so giddy to watch him that he closed his eyes, nor did he open them until a cheery "All right, Rick!" assured him of his comrade's safety. Now came his turn, and as he hung by that slender cord he was devoutly thankful for the strength that the past few weeks had put into his arms. He too reached the ledge in safety, and then, with great difficulty, on account of the narrowness of their foothold, they managed to slip the noose off its resting-place. Now they *must* go forward, for there was no longer a chance of going back. In vain, though, did they search that smooth ledge for a point that would hold their noose. There was none, and the next shelf was twenty feet below.

"We must climb it, Rick, and this time you must go first. Put the loop under your arms, and I will do my best to hold you if you slip; but don't take any chances, or count too much on me being able to do it."

There were little cracks and slight projections. Bonny held the rope reassuringly taut, and at length the feat was accomplished. Then Alaric took in the slack of the rope as Bonny, tied to its other end, made the same perilous descent.

So, with strained arms, aching legs, and fingers worn to the quick from clutching the rough granite, they made their slow way from ledge to ledge, gaining courage and coolness as they successfully overcame each difficulty, until they estimated that they had descended fully five hundred feet. Now came another smooth face absolutely without a crevice that they could discover, and the next ledge below was farther away than the length of their dangling rope. There was, however, a projection where they stood, over which they could loop the noose.

"We've got to do it," said Bonny, stoutly, "and I only hope the drop at the end isn't so long as it looks." Thus saying, he slipped cautiously over the edge, let himself down to the end of the rope, dropped ten feet, staggered, and seemed about to fall, but saved himself by a violent effort. Alaric followed, and also made the drop, but whirled half round in so doing, and but for Bonny's quick clutch would have gone over the edge.

There was now no way of recovering their useful rope; and fortunately, though they sorely needed it at times, they found no other place absolutely impossible without it. By noon, when they paused for rest and a scanty lunch of chocolate and prunes, they were down one thousand feet, and believed the worst of the descent to be accomplished.

Now came a rude granite stairway with steps fit for a giant, and then a long slope of loose boulders, that rocked and rolled from beneath their feet as they sprang from one to another. They crossed the rugged ice of a glacier, whose innumerable crevasses intersected like the wrinkles on an old man's face, and had many hair-breadth escapes from slipping into their deadly depths of frozen blue. Then came a vast snow-field, over which they tramped for miles with weary limbs but light hearts, for the terrors of the mountain were behind them and the timber-line was in sight. Darkness had already overtaken them when they came to a steep, rock-strewn slope, down which they ran with reckless speed. They were near its bottom when a boulder on which Bonny had just leaped rolled from under him, and he fell heavily on a bed of jagged rocks.

As he did not regain his feet, Alaric sprang to his side. The poor lad who had so stoutly braved the countless perils of the day was moaning pitifully, and as his friend bent anxiously over him he said, in a feeble voice:

"I'm afraid, old man, that I'm done for at last, for it feels as though every bone in my body was broken."



CHAPTER XXXI

A DESPERATE SITUATION

Of the many trying experiences through which our lads had passed since their introduction to each other in Victoria, none had presented so many hopeless features as the present. They were high up on a mighty mountain, whose terrible wilderness of rock and glacier, precipice and chasm, limitless snow-field and trackless forest, stretched for weary leagues in every direction; beyond hope of human aid; only a mouthful of food between them and starvation; with night so close at hand that near-by objects were already indistinct in its gathering gloom; without shelter; inexperienced in woodcraft; and one of them so seriously injured that he lay moaning on the cruel rocks that had wounded him, apparently incapable of moving.

As all these details of the situation flashed into Alaric's mind he became for a moment heart-sick and despairing at its utter hopelessness. He was so exhausted with the exertions of the day, so unnerved by the strain and anxiety of the perilous hours just passed, and so faint for want of nourishment, that it is no wonder his strength was turned into weakness, or that he could discover no ray of hope through the all-pervading gloom.

Suddenly and as clearly as though spoken by his side came the words: "Always remember that, as my friend Jalap Coombs says, 'It is never so dark but what there is light somewhere.'" The memory of Phil Ryder's brave face as he uttered that sentence came to our poor lad like a tonic, and instantly he was resolved to find the light that was shining for him somewhere.

With such marvellous quickness does the mind act in an emergency that all these thoughts came to Alaric even as he bent anxiously over his injured friend and began examining tenderly into the nature of his hurts. As he lifted the left arm the sufferer uttered a cry of pain, and its hand hung limp. The other limbs were sound, but Bonny said that every breath was like a stab.

"One arm broken, and I'm afraid something gone wrong inside," announced Alaric at length; "but it might be ever so much worse," he continued, in as cheerful a tone as he could command. "One of your legs might have been broken, you know, and then we should be in a fix, for I couldn't carry you, and we should have to stay right here. Now, though, I am sure you can walk as far as the timber if you will only try. Of course it will hurt terribly, but you must do it, for there is no other way."

Very slowly, and with many a stifled cry of acute pain, Bonny gained his feet. Then, with his right arm about Alaric's neck, and with the latter stoutly supporting him, the injured lad managed to cross the few hundred feet intervening between that place and the longed-for shelter of the stunted hemlocks forming the timber-line.

Both Bonny's weakness and the darkness, which was now that of night, prevented their penetrating deep into the timber; but before the sufferer sank to the ground, declaring that he could not take another step, they had gone far enough to escape the icy blast that, sweeping down from the upper snow-fields, had chilled them to the marrow. This alone was a notable achievement, and already Alaric believed he could perceive a glimmer of the light he had set out to find.

Now for a fire, and how grateful they were for M. Filbert's forethought that had provided each one of his party with matches! Feeling about for twigs, and whittling a few shavings with his sheath-knife, Alaric quickly started a tiny flame, and with its first cheery glow their situation seemed robbed of half its terrors. An armful of sticks produced a brave crackling blaze that drove the black forest shadows to a respectful distance.

With Bonny's hatchet Alaric next lopped off the branches from the lower side of a thick-growing hemlock and wove them among those that were left, so as to form a wind-break. An armful of the same flat boughs, cut from other trees and strewn on the ground, formed a spring bed on which to unfold the sleeping-bags, that by rare good fortune had remained strapped to the lads' shoulders during all their terrible journey from the summit camp of the night before.

After making his comrade as comfortable as possible, Alaric hurried away into the darkness. He was gone so long that Bonny, who did not know the reason of his absence, began to grow very uneasy before he returned. When he did reappear, he brought with him a quantity of snow that he had gone back a quarter of a mile up the dark mountain-side to obtain. He wanted water, and not hearing or finding any stream, had bethought himself of snow as a substitute.

In each of the packs they had so fortunately brought with them was a handful of tea, for M. Filbert had insisted that all the provisions should be divided among all the packs, as a precaution against just such an emergency as had arisen. Therefore, Alaric now had the materials for a longed-for and much-needed cup of the stimulating beverage. To make it, an amount of the precious leaves equal to a teaspoonful was put into one of their tin cups while snow was melted in

the other. As soon as this came to a boil it was poured over the tea leaves in cup number one, which was allowed to stand for two minutes longer in a warm place to "draw."

While Bonny slowly sipped this, at the same time munching a handful of hard biscuit, which, broken into small bits, was all the food they had left, Alaric boiled another cup of water for himself.

From all this it will be seen that our one-time helpless and dependent "Allie" Todd was rapidly learning not only to care for himself under trying conditions, but for others as well.

As soon as Bonny had been thus strengthened and thoroughly warmed, Alaric made a more thorough examination of his injuries than had been possible out in the cold and darkness where the accident occurred. He found that the left arm had sustained a simple fracture, fortunately but little splintered, and also that two ribs on the left side were broken. For these he could do nothing; but he managed to set the broken arm after a fashion, bandage it with handkerchiefs torn into strips, and finally to place it in a case formed of a trough-like section of hemlock-bark, which he hung from Bonny's neck by straps. Then he helped his patient into one of the sleeping-bags, encouraging him all the while with hopeful suggestions of what they would do on the morrow.

After thus making his charge as comfortable as circumstances would permit, the lad busied himself for another hour in collecting such a quantity of wood as should insure a good fire until morning. Then, utterly fagged out, he crept into his own bed, and lay down beside his friend.

Despite the painful nature of his injuries, Bonny had already fallen asleep, but Alaric lay awake from sheer weariness, and struggled against gloomy thoughts of their future. He knew that the home-like camp in which they had passed two weeks so happily, and which they had hoped to regain by following the timber-line, was on the opposite side of the mountain, many weary miles away. He knew also that between them and it lay a region so rugged as to be wellnigh impassable to the sturdiest of mountaineers, and absolutely so to one in Bonny's condition. It would be a journey of two or more days under the most favorable circumstances; but alone and without food he realized that even he could not accomplish it. Besides, he could not leave Bonny in his present helpless condition. Therefore, all thoughts of obtaining assistance from that direction must be abandoned. Could they continue on down the mountain through the trackless forest that on the upward journey they had occupied two whole days in traversing on horseback, and with a clearly defined trail? Certainly they could not, and to make the attempt would be worse than folly. What, then, could they do? This question was so unanswerable that the perplexed lad gave over struggling with it and fell asleep.

He intended to replenish his fire several times during the night; but when he next awoke daylight was already some hours old, the place where the fire had burned was covered with dead ashes, and Bonny lay patiently regarding him with wistful eyes.

"I am thirsty, Rick," was all he said, though he had lain for hours wide-awake and parched with fever, but heroically determined that his wearied comrade should sleep until he woke of his own accord.

"You poor fellow!" cried Alaric, remorsefully. "Why didn't you wake me long ago?"

"I couldn't bear to," replied Bonny; "but now if you will please get me a drink."

Only pausing to light a fresh fire, Alaric hastened away to the distant snow-bank, returning as speedily as possible with as much of it as their two tin plates would hold. A handful was given Bonny to cool his parched tongue while the remainder was melting.

So small a quantity of water could be procured at a time by this slow process that in a very few minutes Alaric found he must go for more snow. As he went he realized how faint he was for want of food. "I wonder how much longer I shall be able to hold out?" he asked himself. "How many more times can I make this trip before my strength is exhausted?" A mental picture of Bonny begging for water, and he too weak to fetch it, caused his eyes to fill with tears, and a black despair again enfolded him.

At this moment the voice of the previous night came again to him: "It is never so dark but what there is light somewhere." "Of course there is," he cried, "and as I found it last night, why shouldn't I to-day?"

Even as the lad spoke he caught its first gleam in the form of a rivulet of clear water that rippled merrily down from the snow only a few yards from where he stood. Hastening to this, the lad drank long and deeply. On lifting his head from the delicious water, he could hardly believe his eyes as they rested on a solitary bird, that he knew to be a ptarmigan, crouching beside a boulder. Hoping against hope, and almost unnerved by anxiety, he flung a stone, and in another minute the bird was his. "Hurrah for breakfast!" he shouted, as he ran back to Bonny with his trophy proudly displayed at arm's-length.

Awkward as Alaric was at the business, he had that Heaven-sent bird stripped of its feathers, cleaned, and spitted over a bed of glowing coals within ten minutes of the time he had first spied it, and a little later only its cleanly picked bones remained to tell of its existence.

Bonny was disinclined to eat, but he drank two cups of hot tea, that threw him into a perspiration, greatly to Alaric's satisfaction. As he also seemed drowsy, Alaric encouraged him to sleep, while he should go in search of more food and assistance, with one or both of which he promised to return before noon.



CHAPTER XXXII

HOW A SONG SAVED ALARIC'S LIFE

When Alaric made that promise he had no more idea of how it was to be kept than he had of what was to become of Bonny and himself. He only knew that active exertion of some kind was necessary to keep him from utter despair. Besides, it was just possible that he might discover and secure another bird, though not at all probable, as the one on which he had breakfasted was the first that he had encountered since coming to the mountain.

By the time he emerged from the timber the morning clouds had rolled away, the sun was shining brightly, and the whole vast sweep of gleaming snow and tumultuous rock, from timber-line to distant summit, lay piled in steep ascent before him. It was a wonderful sight, but as terrible as it was grand, for in all its awful solitude there was no movement, no voice, and no sign of life. Oppressed by the loneliness of his surroundings, and having no reason for choosing one direction rather than another, the lad mechanically turned to the right and began to make his way along a boulder-strewn slope, where every now and then he came to the bleached skeletons of stunted trees, winter-killed, but still standing, and seeming to stretch imploring arms to their retreating brethren of the forest.

He had not gone more than a mile when there came something to him that caused him to halt and glance inquiringly on all sides. At the same time he lifted his head and sniffed the air eagerly, like a hound on the scent of game. He was certain that he had smelled smoke. Yes, there it came again; a whiff so faint as to be almost imperceptible, but the unmistakable odor of burning wood.

Facing squarely the breeze that brought it to him, the lad pushed forward, and a few minutes later stood on the verge of a little mountain meadow, sun-warmed and rock-walled on all sides, save the one by which he had approached. Here the slope was so gentle that he started down on a run. He had thus gone but a short distance when he suddenly paused with his eyes fixed on the ground where he was standing.

He had been unconsciously following a path, faintly marked and hardly to be distinguished, but nevertheless one that he felt certain had been trodden by human feet. The discovery filled him with excitement, and he bounded forward with redoubled speed. Halfway down the slope, at a point commanding a lovely view of the flower-strewn valley, the trail ended at a crystal spring that bubbled from among the roots of a tall young hemlock. Other trees were grouped near-by, and beneath them stood a rude hut built of poles and boughs, but having a rain-proof roof of thatch. Before it smoldered a log fire, from which rose the thin column of smoke that had directed Alaric's attention to the place.

Filled with exultation and wild with joy over his discovery, the lad gazed eagerly about for some sign of the proprietor or occupants of this lonely camp, and at length, seeing no one, he began to shout. Receiving no response, he entered the hut, and was surprised at the absence of even the rude comforts common to such a place. There was a heap of white goat-skins in one corner, and a quantity of meat, either smoked or dried, hung from a rafter overhead. A kettle and a fry-pan lay outside near the fire, an axe was driven into the trunk of one of the trees, and, so far as Alaric could see, there was nothing else. But even these things were enough to indicate that this was a place of at least temporary human abode, and wherever its proprietor might be, he would return to it sooner or later. Then, too, Alaric believed it to be the camp of a white man; for though his knowledge of Indians was limited, it in no way resembled that of Skookum John.

"At any rate," he said to himself, "I will try and get Bonny here as quickly as possible, for he will be a thousand times better off in this place than where I left him."

So, with a lighter heart than he had known since his comrade's accident, Alaric started back over the trail by which he had come. Bonny was awake and sitting up when he reappeared, and the sufferer's face brightened wonderfully at the great news of at least one other human being, a camp, and an abundance of food so near at hand.

"Do you really think I can get there, though?" he asked, anxiously.

"Yes," replied Alaric, "I know you can; for, as you said yesterday when we were looking at that precipice, it is something that must be done. We can't stay here without either food or shelter, and we don't dare wait for the owner of that camp to come back and help us move, because he may stay away several days. I know it is going to hurt you awfully to walk, but I know too that you'll do it if you only make up your mind to."

"All right, I'll try it; but, Rick, don't you forget that if I ever get down from this mountain alive, never again will I climb another. No, sir. Level ground will be good enough for me after this."

As Alaric was doing up the sleeping-bags a familiar-looking baseball rolled from his, and caught Bonny's eye.

"If you aren't a queer chap!" he exclaimed. "Whatever made you bring that ball along?"

"Because," answered the other, "it means so much to me that I hated to leave it behind, and then I thought perhaps it would be fun to have a game on the very top of the mountain. When we reached there, though, I forgot all about it."

"Yes," said Bonny, grimly, "we did have something else to think of. Ough, but that hurts!"

This exclamation was called forth by the poor lad's effort to gain his feet, which he found he was unable to do without assistance.

Although Alaric carried both packs, and lent Bonny all possible support besides, that one-mile walk proved the most difficult either of the lads had ever undertaken. Brave and stout-hearted as Bonny was, he could not help groaning with every step, and they were obliged to rest so often that the little journey occupied several hours. At its end both lads were utterly exhausted, and Bonny was suffering so intensely that he hardly noticed the place to which he had been brought. The moment he gained the hut he sank down on its pile of goat-skins with closed eyes, and so white a face that he seemed about to faint.

When Alaric was there before, he had mended the fire and set on a kettle of water, with a view to just such an emergency as the present. The water was still boiling, and so within three minutes he was able to give his patient a cup of strong tea that greatly revived him. Food was the next thing to be thought of, and Alaric did not hesitate to appropriate one of the strips of goat's flesh that hung overhead. Not being quite sure of the best way to cook this, he cut one portion into small bits, put them into the kettle with a little water, and set the whole on the fire to simmer. Another portion he sliced thin and laid in the fry-pan, which he also set on the fire. Still a third bit he spitted on a long stick and held close to a bed of coals, where it frizzled with such an appetizing odor that he could not wait for it to be cooked before cutting off small bits to sample. They were so good that he went to offer some to Bonny; but finding the latter still lying with closed eyes, thought best not to disturb him. So he sat alone and ate all the frizzled meat, and all that was in the fry-pan, and was still so hungry that he procured another strip of meat from the hut, and began all over again.

They had been nearly two hours in the camp before his ravenous appetite was fully satisfied, and by that time the contents of the pot had simmered into a sort of thick broth. At a faint call from Bonny, Alaric carried some of this to him, and had the satisfaction of seeing him swallow a whole cupful. Then, as night was again approaching, he helped his patient into one of the sleeping-bags, which he underlaid with several goat-skins, and sat by him until he fell into a doze. When this happened Alaric went softly outside, and, to dispel the gathering gloom, piled logs on the fire until it was in a bright blaze. Sitting a little to one side, half in light and half in shadow, and having no present occupation, the lad fell into a deep reverie. How was this strange adventure to end? Who owned that camp, and why did he not return to it? What would he think on finding strangers in possession? Had any boy ever stepped from one life into another so entirely different as suddenly and completely as he? One year ago at this time he was in France, surrounded by every luxury that money could procure, carefully guarded from every form of anxiety, and dependent upon others for everything. Now he was thankful for the shelter of a hut, and a meal of half-cooked meat prepared by his own hands. He not only had everything to do for himself, but had another still more helpless dependent upon him for everything. Was he any happier then than now? No. He could honestly say that he preferred his present position, with its health, strength, and glorious self-reliance, to the one he had resigned.

Still there had been happy times in that other life. Two years ago, for instance, when his mother and he had travelled leisurely through Germany, halting whenever they chose, and remaining as long as places interested them. Thoughts of his mother recalled the plaintive little German folk-song of which she had been so fond.

Muss i denn. Yes, that was it, and involuntarily Alaric began to hum the air. Then the words began to fit themselves to it, and before he realized what he was doing he was singing softly:

"Muss i denn, muss i denn
Zum Stadtele 'naus, Stadtele 'naus:
Und du, mein Schatz, bleibst hier."

So engrossed was the lad with his thoughts and with trying to recall the words of the song running in his head that he heard nothing of a soft footstep that for several minutes had been stealthily approaching the fire-lit place where he sat. He knew nothing of the wild eyes that, peering from a haggard face, were fixed upon him with the glare of madness. He had no suspicion of the brown rifle-barrel that was slowly raised until he was covered by its deadly aim. But now he had recalled all the words of his song, and they rang out strong and clear:

"Muss i denn, muss i denn

Zum Stadtele 'naus, Stadtele 'naus:
Und du--"

At that moment there came a great cry behind him: "*Ach, Himmel! Wer ist denn das?*" and the startled lad sprang to his feet in terror.



CHAPTER XXXIII

LAID UP FOR REPAIRS

About the time when Alaric was pleasantly travelling with his mother in Germany, Hans Altman, with Gretchen, his wife, and Eittel, his little daughter, dwelt in a valley of the Harz Mountains. Although Hans was a poor man, he found plenty of work with which to support his family in comfort, but he could never forget that his father had been a burgomeister, and much better off in this world's goods than he. Thinking of this made him discontented and unhappy, until finally he determined to sell what little they had and come to America, or, as he called it, "the land of gold," with the hope of bettering his fortunes. In vain did Gretchen protest that nowhere in the world could they be so happy or so well off as in their own land and among their own people. Even her tears failed to turn him from his purpose. So they came to this country, and at length drifted to the far-away shores of Puget Sound, where they stranded, wellnigh penniless, ignorant of the language and customs of those about them, helpless and forlorn. With the distress of mind caused by this state of affairs, Hans grew melancholy and irritable, and when Eittel died he declared that he himself had killed her. The faithful Gretchen soon followed her little daughter, and with this terrible blow the poor man's mind gave way entirely. He not only fancied himself a murderer, but believed officers of the law to be in pursuit of him, and that if captured he would be hanged.

Filled with this idea, he fled on the very night of his wife's death, and having been born among mountains, now instinctively sought in them a place of refuge. He carried an axe with him, and somewhere procured a rifle with a plentiful supply of ammunition. Through the vast forest he made his way far from the haunts of men, ever climbing higher and penetrating more deeply among the friendly mountains, until finally he reached a tiny valley, in which he believed himself safe from pursuit. Here he built a rude hut, and became a hunter of mountain-goats. Their flesh furnished him with food, their skins with bedding and clothing, while from their horns he carved many a rude utensil.

In this way he had lived for nearly two months, when our lost and sorely perplexed lads stumbled upon his camp, and found in it a haven of safety. In the peaceful quiet of those mountain solitudes the poor man had become calmly content with his primitive mode of life, and was even happy as he recalled how skilfully he had eluded a fancied pursuit, and how impossible it had now become for those who sought his life to discover his retreat.

It was in this frame of mind that, on returning from a long day's hunt with a body of a goat slung across his back, he saw, to his dismay, that his hiding-place had been found, and that his camp was occupied by strangers. Of course they were enemies who were now waiting to kill him. He would fly so fast and so far that they could never follow. No; better than that, he would kill them before they were even aware of his presence. This was a grand idea, and the madman chuckled softly to himself as it came to him. Laying his dead goat on the ground, and whispering to it not to be afraid, for he would soon return, the man crept stealthily forward towards the firelight. At length he spied the form of what he believed to be one of his pursuers, sitting half hid in the shadows and doubtless waiting for him. Ha! ha! How disappointed that enemy would be when he found himself dead! and with a silent chuckle the madman lifted his rifle.

At that terrible moment the notes of Alaric's song were borne to him on the still night air, and then came the words:

"Muss i denn, muss i denn

Und du, mein Schatz, bleibst hier."

It was his Gretchen's song, and those were the very words she had sung to him so often in their happy Harz Valley home. The uplifted arm dropped as though palsied, and, like one who hears a voice from the dead, the man uttered a mighty cry of mingled fear and longing; at the same moment he stepped into the full glare of firelight and confronted Alaric, at whom he poured a torrent of questions in German.

"Who are you? How came you here? What do you want? Have you seen my Gretchen? Where did you learn to sing *'Muss i denn'?*"

"In Germany, of course, where everybody sings it," replied Alaric, answering the last question first, and speaking in the man's own language. "And I didn't think you would mind if we took possession of your camp until your return; for, you see, we are in great trouble."

"*Ach*, no! All who are in trouble should come with me; for I, too, have many, many troubles," replied the man, his blue eyes losing their fierce look and filling with tears. "But I never meant to do it. *Gott in Himmel* knows I never meant to do it."

"Of course not," said Alaric, soothingly, anxious to quiet the man's agitation, and suspecting that his mind was not quite right. "Nobody thinks you did."

"Yes, they do, the cruel men who would kill me; but you will stay and drive them away if they come, will you not? You will be my friend--you, to whom I can talk with the tongue of the fatherland?"

"Certainly I will stay and be your friend, if you will help me care for another friend who lies yonder very ill."

"*Ja! ja!* I will help you if you will stay and talk to me of Gretchen, and sing to me '*Muss i denn*.'"

"Very good," agreed Alaric. "It is, then, a contract between us." At the same time he said to himself: "He is a mighty queer-looking chap to have for a friend; but I suppose there are worse, and I guess I can manage him. It's a lucky thing I know a little German, though, for he looked fierce enough to kill me until I began to talk with him."

The appearance of the man was certainly calculated to inspire uneasiness, especially when taken in connection with his incoherent words. He was an immense fellow, with shaggy hair and untrimmed beard. On his head was perched a ridiculous little cloth cap, while over his shoulders was flung a cloak of goat-skins, that added greatly to his appearance of size and general shagginess. His lower limbs were covered with leggings of the same hairy material. His ordinary expression was the fierce look of a hunted animal, but now it was softened by the rare pleasure of meeting one who could talk with him in his own language.

From that first moment of strange introduction his eagerness to be with Alaric and induce him to talk was pathetic. To him he poured out all his sorrows, together with daily protests that he had never meant to kill his Gretchen and little Eittel. For the sake of this companionship he was willing to do anything that might add to the comfort of his guests. He scoured forest and mountain-side in search of game, and rarely returned empty-handed. He fetched amazing loads of wood on his back, went on long expeditions after berries, set cunningly devised snares for ptarmigan, and found ample recompense for all his labor in lying at full length before the camp-fire at night and talking with Alaric. Bonny he mistrusted as being one who could speak no German, and only bore with him for the sake of his friend.

Nor was he greatly liked by the lad, whose injuries compelled a long acceptance of his hospitality. "I know he's good to us, and won't let you do any work that he can help, and all that," Bonny would say; "but somehow I can't trust him nor like him. He'll play us some mean trick yet, see if he don't."

"But he saved our lives; for if we hadn't found his camp we should certainly have starved to death."

"That's just it! We found his camp. He didn't find us, and never would have. Anyhow, he's as crazy as a loon, and will bear a heap of watching."

For all this, Bonny did not allow his anxiety to interfere with a speedy recovery from his injuries, and by the aid of youthful vigor, a splendid constitution, complete rest, plenty of food, and the glorious mountain air, his broken bones knit so rapidly that in one month's time he declared himself to be mended and as good as new.

Although Alaric insisted that he should carry his arm in a sling for a while longer, they now began to plan eagerly for a continuance of their journey down the mountain and a return to civilization. By this time they were as heartily sick of goat-meat as they had ever been of fish in Skookum John's camp, tired of the terrible loneliness of their situation, and, more than all, tired of their enforced idleness, with nothing to read and little to do. Alaric had beguiled many long hours with his baseball, which he could now throw with astonishing precision and catch with either hand in almost any position. As this ball, bought in San Francisco, was the sole connecting-link between his present and his former life, it always reminded him of his father, whom he now longed to see, that he might relieve the anxiety he felt certain Amos Todd must be suffering on his account.

The boys often talked of M. Filbert, and wondered what had become of him. At first Alaric made an earnest effort to induce Hans Altman to go in search of the Frenchman's camp and notify him of their safety; but the German became so excitedly angry at the mere mention of such a thing that he was forced to relinquish the idea. He would gladly have undertaken the trip himself, but could not leave Bonny.

Their strange host became equally angry at any mention of their leaving him, and refused to give any information concerning their present locality or the nearest point at which other human beings might be found. Nor did he ever evince the least curiosity as to where they had come from. It was enough for him that they were there.

When the time for them to depart drew so near that the boys could talk of nothing else, Alaric made another effort to gain some information from the German that would guide their movements, but in vain. He only succeeded in arousing the man's suspicions to such an extent that he grew morose, would not leave camp unless Alaric went with him, and watched furtively every movement that the boys made. Bonny realized this, and spoke of it to his comrade. "I believe

this Dutchman regards us as his prisoners, and has made up his mind not to allow us to escape him," he said. But Alaric only laughed, and answered that he guessed they would get away easy enough whenever they were ready to go.

The two lads slept at one end of the hut with their host at the other, and that very night something happened to confirm Bonny's worst fears and fill him with such horror that he determined never again to sleep within miles of that vicinity.



CHAPTER XXXIV

CHASED BY A MADMAN

Bonny's bed was nearest the side of the hut, while Alaric lay beyond him towards its centre. Morning was breaking when the former awoke from a troubled dream, so filled with a presentiment of impending evil that his forehead was bathed in a cold perspiration. For the space of a minute he lay motionless, striving to reassure himself that his terror was without foundation. All at once he became conscious that some one was talking in a low tone, and, glancing in that direction, saw the form of their host, magnified by the dim light into gigantic proportions, bending over Alaric. The man held an uplifted knife, and was muttering to himself in German; but at Bonny's cry of horror he leaped to his feet and disappeared through the doorway.

"What is the matter?" asked Alaric, sleepily, only half awakened by Bonny's cry. "Been having bad dreams?"

"Yes, and a worse reality," answered the other, huskily. "Oh, Rick! he was going to kill you, and if I hadn't waked when I did we should both have been dead by this time. He has made up his mind to murder us; I know he has."

A minute later Alaric had heard the whole story, and, as excited as Bonny himself, was hurriedly slipping on his coat and boots. They knew not which way to go, nor what to do, but both were eager to escape from the hut into the open, where they might at least have a chance to run in case of an attack.

As they emerged from the doorway, casting apprehensive glances in every direction, Alaric's baseball, that had been left in one of his coat-pockets the evening before, slipped through a hole in the lining and fell to the ground. Hardly conscious of what he was doing, the lad stooped to pick it up. At that same instant came the sharp crack of a rifle and the "ping" of a bullet that whistled just above his head.

"He is shooting at us!" gasped Bonny. "Come, quick, before he can reload."

Without another word the lads dashed into the clump of trees sheltering the camp, and down the slope on which it stood. They would have preferred going the other way, but the rifle-shot had come from that direction, and so they had no choice. Their movements being at first concealed by the timber, there was no sign of pursuit until they gained the open valley and started to cross it. Then came a wild yell from behind, and they knew that their flight was discovered.

Breathlessly they sped through the dewy meadow, sadly impeded by its rank growth of grass and flowers, towards a narrow exit through the wall bounding its lower end that Alaric had long ago discovered. Through this a brawling stream made its way, and by means of its foaming channel the boys hoped to effect an escape.

As they gained the rocky portal Bonny glanced back and uttered a cry of dismay, for their late host was in plain view, leaping down the slope towards the meadow they had just crossed. He was then bent on overtaking them, and the pursuit had begun in earnest.

As there was no pathway besides that offered by the bed of the stream, they were forced to plunge into its icy torrent and follow its tumultuous course over slippery rocks, through occasional still pools whose waters often reached to the waist, and down foaming cascades, with a reckless disregard for life or limb. In this manner they descended several hundred feet, and when from the bottom they looked up over the way they had come they felt that they must surely have been upborne by wings. But there was no time for contemplation, for at that moment a plunging boulder from above warned them that their pursuer was already in the channel.

Now they were in a forest, not of the giant trees they would find at a lower altitude, but one of tall hemlocks and alpine-firs, growing with such density that the panting fugitives could with difficulty force a way between them. They stumbled over prostrate trunks, slipped on beds of damp mosses, were clutched by woody fingers, from whose hold their clothing was torn with many a grievous rent; and, with all their efforts, made such slow progress that they momentarily expected to be overtaken. Nor were their fears groundless, for they had not gone half a mile ere a crashing behind them told that their pursuer was close at hand. As they exchanged a despairing glance, Bonny said: "The only thing we can do is hide, for I can't run any farther."

"Where?" asked Alaric.

"Here," replied Bonny, diving as he spoke into a bed of ferns. Alaric followed, and as they flattened themselves to the ground, barely concealed by the green tips nodding above their backs, the madman leaped into the space they had just vacated, and stood so close to them that they could have reached out and touched him. His cap had disappeared, his hair streamed over his shoulders like a tawny mane; his clothing was torn, a scratch had streaked his face with blood,

and his deep-set eyes shone with the wild light of insanity. He had flung away his rifle, but his right hand clutched a knife, keen and long-bladed. The crouching lads held their breath as he paused for an instant beside them. Then, uttering a snarling cry, he dashed on, and with cautiously lifted heads they watched him out of sight.

"Whew!" ejaculated Bonny, "that was a close call. But I say, Rick, this business of running away and being chased seems quite like old times, don't it?"

"Yes," answered Alaric, with a shuddering sigh of mingled relief and apprehension, "it certainly does, and this is the worst of all. But what shall we do now?"

"I don't know of anything else but to keep right on downhill after going far enough to one side to give his course a wide berth. I'd like awfully to have some breakfast, but I wouldn't go back to that camp for it if it were the only place in the world. I'd about as soon starve as eat another mouthful of goat, anyway. We are sure to come out somewhere, though, if we only stick to a downward course long enough."

So the boys bore to the right, and within a few minutes had the satisfaction of noting certain gleamings through the trees that betokened some kind of an opening. Guided by these, they soon came to a ridge of bowlders and gravel, forming one of the lateral moraines of a glacier that lay in glistening whiteness beyond.

"We might as well follow along its edge," suggested Bonny; "for all these glaciers seem to run downhill, and, bad as the walking is over mud and rocks, we can make better time here than through the woods."

They had not gone more than a mile in this fashion, and, believing that they had successfully eluded their pursuer, were rapidly recovering from their recent fright, when they were startled by a cry like that of a wild beast close at hand. Glancing up, they were nearly paralyzed with terror to see the madman grinning horribly with delight at having discovered them, and about to rush down the steep slope to where they stood.





"THEY WERE PARALYZED WITH TERROR TO SEE THE MADMAN GRINNING HORRIBLY"

There was but an instant of hesitation, and then both lads sprang out on the rugged surface of the glacier, and made a dash for its far-away opposite side. It was a dangerous path, slippery, rough beyond description, and beset with yawning crevasses; but they were willing to risk all its perils for a slender chance of escaping the certain death that was speeding towards the place they had just left. If they could only gain the opposite timber, they might possibly hide as before. It was a faint hope, but their only one.

So they ran, slipped, stumbled, took flying leaps over the parted white lips of narrow crevasses, and made detours to avoid such as were too wide to be thus spanned. They had no time to look behind, nor any need. The fierce cries of the madman warned them that he was in hot pursuit and ever drawing nearer. At one place the ice rang hollow beneath their feet, and they even fancied that it gave an ominous crack; but they could not pause to speculate as to its condition. That it was behind them was enough.

Ere half the distance was passed they were drawing their breath with panting sobs, and Bonny, not yet wholly recovered from his illness, began to lag behind. Noting this, Alaric also slackened his speed; but his comrade gasped:

"No, Rick. Don't stop. Save yourself. I'm done for. You can't help me. Good-bye."

Thus saying, and too exhausted to run farther, the lad faced about to meet their terrible pursuer, and struggle with him for a delay that might aid the escape of his friend. To his amazement, there was no pursuer, nor in all that white expanse

was there a human being to be seen save themselves.

At his comrade's despairing words Alaric too had turned, with the determination of sharing his fate; so they now stood side by side breathing heavily, and gazing about them in wondering silence.

"What has become of him?" asked Bonny at length, in an awed tone, but little above a whisper.

"I don't know," replied Alaric. "He can't have gone back, for there hasn't been time. He can't be in hiding, for there is no place in which he could conceal himself, nor have we passed any crevasse that he could not leap. But if he has slipped into one! Oh, Bonny! it is too awful to think of."

"I heard him only a few seconds ago," said Bonny, in the same awed tone, "and his voice sounded so close that with each instant I expected to be in his clutches."

"Bonny!" exclaimed Alaric, "do you remember a place that sounded hollow?"

"Yes."

"We must go back to it, for I believe he has broken through. If it is in our power to help him we must do it; if not, we must know what has happened."

They had to retrace their steps but a few yards before coming to a fathomless opening with jagged sides and splintered edges, where the thin ice that had afforded them a safe passage had given way beneath the heavier weight of their pursuer. No sound save that of rushing waters came from the cruel depths, nor was there any sign.

The boys lingered irresolutely about the place for a few minutes, and then fled from it as from an impending terror.

For the remainder of that day, though no longer in dread of pursuit, they made what speed they might down the mountain-side, following rough river-beds, threading belts of mighty forest, climbing steep slopes, and descending others into narrow valleys.

The sun was near his setting, and our lads were so nigh exhausted that they had seated themselves on a moss-covered log to rest, when they were startled by a heavy rending crash that echoed through the listening forest with a roar like distant thunder.

The boys looked at each other, and then at what bits of sky they could see through the far-away tree-tops. It was of unclouded blue, and the sun was still shining.

"Rick!" cried Bonny, starting to his feet, "I believe it was a falling tree."

"Well?"

"I mean one that was made to fall by axe and saw."

"Oh, Bonny!" was all that Alaric could reply; but in another instant he was leading the way through tall ferns and along the stately forest aisles in the direction from which had come the mighty crash.



CHAPTER XXXV

A GANG OF FRIENDLY LOGGERS

A perfect day of early September was drawing to its close, and the gang of loggers belonging to Camp No. 10 of the Northwest Lumber Company, which operated in the vast timber belt clothing the northern flanks of Mount Rainier, were about to knock off work. From earliest morning the stately forest, sweet-scented with the odors of resin, freshly cut cedar, and crushed ferns, had resounded with their shouts and laughter, the ring of their axes, the steady swish of saws, and the crash of falling trees. To one familiar only with Eastern logging, where summer is a time of idleness, and everything depends on the snows of winter, followed by the high waters of spring, the different methods of these Northwestern woodsmen would be matters of constant surprise. Their work goes on without a pause from year's end to year's end. There is no hauling on sleds, no vast accumulations of logs on the ice of rivers or lakes, no river driving, no mighty jams to be cleared at imminent risk of life and limb--nothing that is customary in the East. Even the mode of cutting down trees is different.

The choppers--or "fallers," as they are called in the Northwest--do not work, as do their brethren of Maine or Wisconsin, from the ground, wielding their axes first on one side and then on the other until the tree falls. The girth of the mighty firs and cedars of that country is so great at ordinary chopping height that two men working in that way would not bring down more than two trees in a day, instead of the ten or a dozen required of them. So, by means of what are known as "spring-boards," they gain a height of eight or ten feet, and then begin operations.

The ingenious contrivances that enable them to do this are narrow boards of tough vine maple, five or six feet long, and about one foot wide. Each is armed at its inner end with a sharp steel spur affixed to its upper side. This end being thrust into a notch opened in the tree some four feet below where the cut is to be made, the weight of a man on its outer end causes the spur to bite deep into the wood, and to hold the board firmly in place.

Having determined the direction in which the tree shall fall, and fixed their spring-boards accordingly, two "fallers" mount them, and chop out a deep under cut on the side that is to lie undermost. They work with double-bitted or two-edged axes, and can so truly guide the fall by means of the under cut that they are willing to set a stake one hundred feet away and guarantee that the descending trunk shall drive it into the ground. With the under cut chopped out to their satisfaction, they remove their spring-boards to the opposite side, and finish the task with a long, two-handled, coarse-toothed saw.

As the mighty tree yields up its life and comes to the ground with a grand, far-echoing crash, it is set upon by "buckers" (who saw its great trunk into thirty-foot lengths), barkers, rigging-slingers, hand-skidders, and teamsters, whose splendid horses, aided by tackle of iron blocks and length of wire-rope, drag it out to the "skid-road." This is a cleared and rudely graded track, set with heavy cross-ties, over which the logs may slide, and it is provided with wire cables, whose half-mile lengths are operated by stationary engines. By this means "turns" of five or six of the huge logs, chained one behind the other, are hauled down the winding skid-road through gulch and valley, to a distant railway landing. There they are loaded on a long train of heavy flat cars that departs every night for the mills on Puget Sound. Here the sawed lumber is run aboard waiting ships, and sent in them to all ports on both shores of the Pacific.

So wastefully extravagant are the lumbermen of Washington that only the finest trees are cut, and only that portion of the trunk which is free from limbs is made into logs. All the remainder, or nearly half of each tree, is left on the ground where it fell. Here it slowly decays, or, turned into tinder, catches fire from some chance spark and leaps into a sea of flame that sweeps resistlessly through the forest, destroying in one day more timber than has been cut in a year.

Thus, while thoughtless and ignorant persons declare the timber supply of the Northwest to be inexhaustible, others, who have carefully studied the subject, do not hesitate to say that within fifty years, at the present rate of reckless destruction, the magnificent forests of Washington will have disappeared forever.

Such questions were far from troubling the light-hearted gang of loggers whom we have just discovered in the act of quitting work for the day. If any one of them were to be asked how long he thought the noble forests from which he earned a livelihood would last, he would answer:

"Oh, I don't know and don't care. They will last as long as I do, and that's long enough for me."

They were laughing and joking, lighting their pipes, picking up tools, and beginning to straggle towards the road that led to camp, when suddenly big Buck Ranlet, the head "faller," who was keener of hearing than any of his mates, called out:

"Hush up, fellows, and listen! I thought I heard a yell off there in the timber."

In the silence that followed they all heard a cry, faint and distant, but so filled with distress that there was no mistaking its import.

"There's surely somebody in trouble!" cried Ranlet. "Lost like as not. Anyway, they are calling to us for help, and we can't go back on 'em. So come on, men. You teamsters stay here with your horses, and give us a yell every now and then, so we can come straight back; for even we don't want to fool round much in these woods after dark. Hello, you out there! Locate yourselves!"

"Hello! Help!" came back faintly but clearly.

"All right! We're coming! Cheer up!"

So the calling and answering was continued for nearly ten minutes, while the rescuing party, full of curiosity and goodwill, plunged through the gathering gloom, over logs and rocks, through beds of tall ferns and banks of moss, in which they sank above their ankles, until they came at length to those whom they were seeking--two lads, one standing and calling to them, the other lying silent and motionless, where he had fallen in a dead faint from utter exhaustion.

"You see," explained Alaric, apologetically, half sobbing with joy at finding himself once more surrounded by friendly faces, "he has been very ill, and we've had a hard day, with nothing to eat. So he gave out. I should have too, but just then I heard the sound of chopping, and knew the light was shining, and--and--" Here the poor tired lad broke down, sobbing hysterically, and trying to laugh at the same time.

"There! there, son!" exclaimed Buck Ranlet, soothingly, but with a suspicious huskiness in his voice. "Brace up, and forget your troubles as quick as you can; for they're all over now, and you sha'n't go hungry much longer. But where did you say you came from?"

"The top of the mountain."

"Not down the north side?"

"Yes."

"Great Scott! you are the first ever did it, then. How long have you been on the way?"

"I don't know exactly, but something over a month."

"The poor chap's mind is wandering," said the big man to one of his companions; "for no one ever came down the north side alive, and no one could spend a whole month doing it, anyway. I've often heard, though, that folks went crazy when they got lost in the woods."

The men took turns, two at a time, in carrying Bonny, and Buck Ranlet himself assisted Alaric, until, guided by the shouts of the teamsters, they reached the point from which they had started.

By this time Bonny had regained consciousness, and was wondering, in a dazed fashion, what had happened. "Is it all right, Rick?" he asked, as his comrade bent anxiously over him.

"Yes, old man, it's all right; and the light I told you of is shining bright and clear at last."

"Queer, isn't it, how the poor lad's mind wanders?" remarked Ranlet to one of the men. "He thinks he sees a bright light, while I'll swear no one has so much as struck a match. We must hustle, now, and get 'em to camp. Do you think you feel strong enough to set straddle of a horse, son?" he asked of Alaric.

"Yes, indeed," answered the boy, cheerfully. "I feel strong enough for anything now."

"Good for you! That's the talk! Give us a foot and let me h'ist you up. Why, lad, you're mighty nigh barefooted! No wonder you didn't find the walking good. Here, Dick, you lead the horse, while I ride Sal-lal and carry the little chap."

Thus saying, the big man vaulted to the back of the other horse, and, reaching down, lifted Bonny up in front of him as though he had been a child.

Camp was a mile or more away, and as the brawny loggers escorted their unexpected guests to it down the winding skid-road, they eagerly discussed the strange event that had so suddenly broken the monotony of their lives, though, with a kind consideration, they refrained from asking Alaric any more questions just then.

"Hurry on, some of you fellows," shouted Ranlet, "and light up my shack, for these chaps are going to bunk in with me to-night. I claim 'em on account of being the first to hear 'em, you know. Start a fire in the square, too, so's the place will look cheerful."

No one will ever know how cheerful and home-like and altogether delightful that logging camp did look to our poor lads after their long and terrible experience of the wilderness, for they could never afterwards find words to express what they felt on coming out of the darkness into its glowing firelight and hearty welcome.

"Stand back, men, and give us a show!" shouted Ranlet, as they drew up before his own little "shack," built of split cedar boards. "This isn't any funeral; same time it ain't no circus parade, and we want to get in out of the cold."

The entire population of the camp, including the cook and his assistants, the blacksmith with his helper, and the stable-boys, as well as the logging gang, were gathered, full of curiosity to witness the strange arrival. Besides these there were Linton, the boss, with his wife, who was the only woman in that section of country. Her pity was instantly aroused for Bonny, and when he had been tenderly placed in Buck Ranlet's own bunk, she insisted on being allowed to feed and care for him. She would gladly have done the same for Alaric, but he protested that he was perfectly well able to feed himself, and was only longing for the chance.

"Of course you are, lad!" cried the big "faller," heartily, "and you sha'n't go hungry a minute longer. So just you come on with me and the rest of the gang over to Delmonico's."

The place thus designated was a low but spacious building of logs, containing the camp kitchen and mess-room. Ranlet sat at the head of the long table, built of hewn cedar slabs, and laden with smoking dishes. Alaric was given the place of honor at his right hand, and the rest of the rough, hearty crowd ranged themselves on rude benches at either side.

The plates and bowls were of tin; the knives, forks, and spoons were iron; but how luxurious it all seemed to the guest of the occasion! How wonderfully good everything tasted, and how the big man beside him heaped his plate with pork and beans, potatoes swimming in gravy, boiled cabbage, fresh bread cut in slices two inches thick, and actually butter to spread on it! After these came a huge pan of crullers and dozens of dried-apple pies.

How anxiously the men watched him eat, how often they pushed the tin can of brown sugar towards him to make sure that his bowl of milkless tea should be sufficiently sweetened, and how pleased they were when he passed his plate for a second helping of pie!

"You'll do, lad; you'll do!" shouted Buck Ranlet, delighted at this evidence that the camp cookery was appreciated. "You've been brought up right, and taught to know a good thing when you see it. I can tell by the way you eat."

After supper Alaric was conducted to a blanket-covered bench near the big fire outside, and allowed to relate the outline of his story to an audience that listened with intense interest, and then he was put to bed beside Bonny, who was already fast asleep. When Buck Ranlet picked up his guest's coat, that had fallen to the floor, and a baseball rolled from one of its pockets, the big logger exclaimed, softly:

"Bless the lad! He's a genuine out-and-out boy, after all! To think of his travelling through the mountains with no outfit but a baseball! If that isn't boy all over, then I don't know!"



CHAPTER XXXVI

IN A NORTHWEST LOGGING CAMP

The next day being Sunday, the camp lay abed so late that when Alaric awoke from his long night of dreamless sleep the sun was more than an hour high, and streaming full into the open doorway of Buck Ranlet's shack. For nearly a minute the boy lay motionless, striving to recall what had happened and where he was. Then, as it all came to him, and he realized that he had escaped from the mountain, with its terrors, its cold, and its hunger, and had reached a place of safety, good-will, and plenty, he heaved a deep sigh of content. His sigh was echoed by another close beside him, and then Bonny's voice said:

"I'm so glad you are awake, Rick, for I want you to tell me all about it. I've been trying to puzzle it out for myself, but can't be really sure whether I know anything about last night or only dreamed it all. Didn't somebody get us something to eat?"

"I should say they did!" rejoined Alaric. "And not only something to eat, but one of the finest suppers I ever sat down to. Don't you remember the baked beans, and the apple-pie, and--Oh no, I forgot; you weren't there; and, by-the-way, how do you feel this morning?"

"Fine as a fiddle," replied Bonny, briskly; "and all ready for those baked beans and pie; for somehow I don't seem to remember having anything so good as those."

"I don't believe you did," laughed Alaric, springing from the bunk as he spoke; "for I'm afraid they only gave you gruel and soup, or tea and toast."

"Then no wonder I'm hungry," said Bonny, indignantly, as he too began to dress, "and no wonder I want beans and things. But, I say, Rick, what a tough-looking specimen you are, anyway!"

"I hope I'm not so tough-looking as you," retorted the other, "for you'd scare a scarecrow."

Then the two boys scanned each other's appearance with dismay. How could they ever venture outside and among people in the tattered, soiled, and fluttering garments which were their sole possessions in the way of clothing? Even their boots had worn away, until there was little left of them but the uppers. Their hats had been lost during their flight through the forest, their hair was long and unkempt, while their coats and trousers were so rent and torn that the wonder was how they ever held together. As they realized how utterly disreputable they did look, both boys began to laugh; for they were too light-hearted that morning to remain long cast down over trifles like personal appearance. At this sound of merriment Buck Ranlet's good-humored face, covered with lather, appeared in the doorway, and at sight of the ragged lads he too joined in their laughter.

"You are tramps, that's a fact!" he cried. "Toughest kind, too; such as I'd never dared take in if I'd seen you by a good light. Never mind, though," he added, consolingly; "looks are mighty easy altered, and after breakfast we'll fix you up in such style that you won't recognize yourselves."

Bonny had baked beans and pie that morning as well as Alaric, for the fare at that logger's mess-table, bountiful as it was, never varied. After breakfast the boys found their first chance to take a good look at the camp, which consisted of nearly twenty buildings, set in the form of a square beside the skid-road, in a clearing filled with tall stumps of giant firs and mammoth cedars. The two largest buildings were the combined mess-hall and kitchen and the sleeping-quarters, containing tiers of bunks, one for each man employed. Then came the store, which held a small stock of clothing, boots, tobacco, pipes, knives, and other miscellaneous articles. Close beside it stood Mr. Linton's house, built of squared logs. In its windows both curtains and a few potted plants showed that here dwelt the only woman of the camp. The blacksmith-shop, engine-house, close beside the skid-road, and the stables beyond completed the list of the company's buildings. All the others were little single-room shacks, built in leisure moments by such of the men as preferred having something in the shape of a house to sleeping in the public dormitory.

These tiny dwellings were constructed of sweet-smelling cedar boards, split from splendid great logs, absolutely straight-grained and free from knots. Walls, roof, floor, and rude furniture were all made of the same beautiful wood. Some of the shacks had stone chimneys roughly plastered with clay, others boasted small porches, and one or two had both. Buck Ranlet's had the largest porch of any, with the added adornment of climbing vines. This porch also contained seats, and was considered very elegant; but every one knew that the head "faller" was engaged to be married to a girl "back East," and said that was the reason he had built so fine a house. Having little else to amuse them, the men who put up these shacks labored over them with as much pleasure as so many boys with their cubby-houses.

Many of the men were anxious to hear a more detailed account of our lads' recent adventures, but Buck Ranlet said:

"Call round this afternoon. We've got something else on hand just now."

When they returned to his picturesque little dwelling the big man led the way inside, closed the door, and said:

"Now, lads, sit down, and let's talk business. What do you propose to do next?"

"I don't think we know," responded Alaric.

"Do you want to go to Tacoma or Seattle?"

"I don't know why we should. We haven't any friends in either place, nor any money to live on while we look for work."

"None at all?"

"Not one cent. There's a month's wages due us from the Frenchman who hired us to go up the mountain, but I suppose he has left this part of the country long ago."

"I suppose he has; and you certainly are playing to such hard luck that I don't see as you can do any better than stay right here. If you are willing to work at whatever offers, I shouldn't wonder if the boss could find something for you to do. At any rate, he might give you a chance to earn a suit of clothes, and feed you while you were doing it."

"I think we'd be only too glad to stay here and work," replied Alaric--"wouldn't we, Bonny?"

"Yes, I think we would, only I hope we can earn some money. I've worked without wages so long now that it is growing very monotonous."

"Well, I'll tell you what," said Ranlet: "You two stay right here while I go over and see the boss."

A few minutes later the big man returned with beaming face, and announced that Mr. Linton had consented to take them both on trial, and had promised to find something for them to do in the morning. Moreover, they were to go down to the store at once, pick out the things they needed, and have them charged to their account.

All this Buck Ranlet told them; but he did not add that he had been obliged to pledge his own wages for whatever bill they should run up at the store, in case they should fail to work it out. The big-hearted "faller" was willing to do this, for he had taken a great fancy to the lads, and especially to Alaric. "That chap may be poor," he said, "and I reckon he is; but he's honest--so are they both, for that matter; and when a boy is honest, he can't help showing it in his face." These preliminaries being happily settled, he said, "Now let's get right down to business; and the first thing to be done is to let me cut your hair before you buy any hats."

The boys agreeing that this was necessary, the operation was performed with neatness and despatch; for the big "faller" was equally expert at cutting hair or trees.

Then they went to the store, where Alaric and Bonny selected complete outfits of coarse but serviceable clothing, including hats and boots, to the amount of fifteen dollars each.

"Now for a scrub," suggested Ranlet; "and I reckon I need one as much as you do." With this he led his *proteges* to a quiet pool in the creek just back of camp.

When at noon the boys presented themselves at the mess-room door, so magical was the transformation effected by shears, soap and water, and their new clothing, that not a man in the place recognized them, and they had to be reintroduced to the whole jovial crowd, greatly to Buck Ranlet's delight. By a very natural mistake he introduced Alaric, whom he had only heard called "Rick," as Mr. Richard Dale, and the boy did not find an opportunity for correcting the error just then.

Later in the day, however, when most of the camp population were gathered in front of Ranlet's shack listening with great interest to the lads' account of their recent experiences, one of them addressed him as "Richard," whereupon he explained that his name was not Richard, but Alaric.

"Alaric?" quoth Buck Ranlet; "that's a queer name, and one I never heard before. It's a strong-sounding name too, and one that just fits such a hearty, active young fellow as you. I should pick out an Alaric every time for the kind of a chap to come tumbling down a mountain-side where no one had ever been before. But where did your folks find the name, son?"

"I'll tell you," replied Alaric, flushing with pleasure at hearing that said of him for which he had secretly longed ever since he could remember; "but first I want to say that it was Bonny Brooks who showed me how to come down the

mountain, and but for him I should certainly have perished up there in the snow."

"Hold on!" cried Bonny. "Gentlemen, I assure you that but for Rick Dale I should have had the perishing contract all in my own hands."

"I expect you are a well-mated team," laughed Ranlet, "and I am willing to admit that for whatever comes tumbling down a mountain there couldn't be a better name than Bonny Brooks. But now let's have the yarn."

So Alaric told them all he could remember of the mighty Visigoth who invaded Italy at the head of his barbarian host, became master of the world by conquering Rome when the Eternal City was at the height of its magnificence, and whose tomb was built in the bed of a river temporarily turned aside for the purpose.

The rough audience grouped about him listened to the tale of a long-ago hero with flattering interest, and when it was ended declared it to be a rattling good yarn, at the same time begging for more of the same kind. Alaric's head was crammed with such stories, for he had always delighted in them, and now he was only too glad of an opportunity to repay in some measure the kindly hospitality of the camp. So for an hour or more he related legends of Old World history, and still older mythology, all of which were as new to his hearers as though now told for the first time. Finally he paused, covered with confusion at finding Mr. and Mrs. Linton standing among his auditors, and waiting for a chance to invite him and Bonny to tea.

From that time forth Alaric's position as storyteller was established, and there was rarely an evening during his stay in the camp, where books were almost unknown, that he was not called upon to entertain an interested group gathered about its after-supper open-air fire.

Mr. Linton questioned the boys closely as to their capacity for work while they were at tea with him, and finally said: "I think I can find places for both of you, if you are willing to work for one dollar a day. You, Brooks, I shall let 'tend store and help me with my accounts until your arm gets stronger, while I think I shall place your friend in charge of one of the hump-durgins."

"What is that, sir?" asked Alaric.

"What's what?"

"A hump-durgin."

"Oh! Don't you know? Well, you'll find out to-morrow."



CHAPTER XXXVII

WHAT IS A HUMP-DURGIN?

When the boys returned to Buck Ranlet's shack, which he had insisted they should share with him until they could build one of their own, the first question Alaric asked was in regard to his new employment.

"What is a hump-durgin?"

"Ho, ho! With all your learning, don't you know what a hump-durgin is? Well, I am surprised, for it's one of the commonest things. Still, if you don't really know, I'll tell you. A genuine hump-durgin is a sort of a cross betwixt a boat and a mule."

"A boat and a mule?" repeated Alaric, more perplexed than ever.

"That's what I said. You see, it is something like a boat. I might say a steamboat, or perhaps a canal-boat would be more like it, and it is always sailing back and forth. It often rolls and pitches like it was in a heavy sea; but at the same time it lives on dry land and never goes near the water. It also rears and bucks, and jumps from side to side, and tries its best to throw its rider, same as a mule does, and it wouldn't look unlike one if it only had legs, and a tail, and ears, and hair, and a bray."

"Humph!" interposed Bonny, who had been an interested listener to this vague description of a hump-durgin. "A log of wood might look like a mule if it had all those things."

"Right you are, son! A log of wood might look like a mule, and then again it mightn't. Same time I've often thought that some hump-durgins wasn't much better than logs of wood, after all. Anyway, now that I've described the critter so that you know all about him, you can see why the boss has decided to put our young friend here in charge of one."

"I'm sure I can't," said Alaric, more puzzled than ever.

"Because of your experience with both mules and boats," laughed the big "faller" teasingly, and that was all the satisfaction the boys could get from him that night.

The next morning, bright and early, the occupants of the camp scattered to their respective duties: the loggers trudging up the skid-road and deep into the forest, there to resume their work of converting trees into logs; the loading-gang going in the opposite direction, to the distant railway landing, where they would spend the day loading logs on to flat cars; the engineers with their firemen to their respective engines; the road-gang up to the head of a side gulch where they were constructing a branch skid-road; the blacksmiths to their ringing anvils; Bonny to the store, where he was to take an account of stock; and Alaric, in company with the man whose place he was to fill, after receiving from him half a day's instruction in his new duties, to make the acquaintance of his hump-durgin. They went a short distance down the skid-road to where one of the relay engines was winding in a half-mile length of wire cable over a big steel drum. This cable stretched its shining length up the gulch and out of sight around a bend. Near the engine-house, and at one edge of the skid-road, was a little siding, or dock, protected by a heavy sheer-skid. In it lay what looked like a log canoe, sharp pointed at both ends, and having a flat bottom.

"There," said Alaric's guide, "is your hump-durgin."

"That thing!" exclaimed the lad, gazing at the canoe-like object curiously. "But I thought a hump-durgin went by steam?"

"So it does," laughed the man, "when it goes at all. Just wait a minute, and you'll see."

Almost as he spoke there came a sound of bumping and sliding from up the skid-road, and directly afterwards the end of an enormous log came into sight around the bend, drawn by the cable the engine was winding in. As this log rounded the bend and came directly towards them, another was seen to be chained to it, then another, and another, until the "turn" was seen to contain five of the woody monsters. Attached to the rear end of the last log came another hump-durgin, in which a man was seated, and to the after end of which was fastened a second wire cable that stretched away for half a mile to the next engine above.

Every log was made fast to the one ahead of it by two short chains, each of which was armed at either end with a heavy steel spur having a sharp point and a flat head. These are called "dogs," and, driven deep into the logs, bind them together. The hump-durgin was also attached to the rear log by a chain and "dog," and one of the principal duties of a hump-durgin man is to see that none of these dogs pulls out.

As the "turn" of logs stopped just above the station, the man who had come with them knocked out his hump-durgin dog, while the man with Alaric disconnected the cable that had drawn the logs down to that point, and hooked on the upper end of another that stretched away out of sight down the road. Then he waved to the engineer, who telephoned to the next station down the line, and at the same time to the one above. In another minute the hump-durgin that had just arrived was being pulled back by its cable over the way it had come, and the "turn" of logs was drawn forward by the new cable just attached to them. When the rear end of the last log was passing Alaric's hump-durgin, the man with him hammered its "dog" into the wood, the chain straightened with a jerk, and the novel craft was under way. As it started, both the man and Alaric jumped in, and away they went, bumping and sliding down the skid-road, slewing around corners that were protected by sheer-skids, and dragging behind them a half-mile length of cable attached to the after end of their craft.

In this way they were dragged half a mile down the gulch to a second engine station, where a new relay of cable with a third hump-durgin awaited the logs, and from which their own craft, laden with the chains and dogs just brought up from below, was dragged back uphill to the station from which they had started.

Every now and then on their downward trip the man jumped from the hump-durgin, and, maul in hand, ran along the whole length of the "turn," giving a tap here and there to the "dogs" to make sure that none of them was working loose. As the cables were only speeded to about four miles an hour, he could readily do this; but after he had thus examined one side he had to wait until the whole turn passed him, and then run ahead to examine the other. Alaric asked why he did not run on the logs themselves, and, by thus examining both sides at the same time, save half his work.

"Because I ain't that kind of a fool," replied the man. "There is them as does it; but a chap has to be surer-footed and spryer than I be to ride the logs, 'specially when they're slewing round corners. I reckon, though, from all I hear of you, that you'll be jest one of the kind to try it on; and all I can say is, I hope you'll be let off light when it comes your time to be flung. Some gets killed, and others only comes nigh it."

The hump-durgin man at the lower relay station followed the first "turn" of logs to the railway landing, and then went back to the extreme upper end of the skid-road. With the second "turn" Alaric and his instructor did the same thing. The next man above him followed the third "turn" to its destination, while the man farthest up of all travelled the whole length of the road with the fourth "turn," covering its two miles in four different hump-durgins; and at length Alaric had a chance to do the same thing. Thus each hump-durgin driver became familiar with every section of the road, and made six round trips a day.

At noon of that first day Alaric's instructor in the art of navigating a hump-durgin bade him "so long," and left him in sole command of the clumsy craft. The man had no sooner gone than his pupil began practising the science of log-riding, and before night he had triumphantly ridden the whole length of the road mounted on the backs of his unwieldy charges. To be sure, he sat down most of the way, and was thrown twice when attempting to walk the length of the "turn" while it was slewing around corners. Fortunately he escaped each time with nothing more serious than a few bruises, and that night he drove a number of hobnails into the soles of his boots. These afforded him so good a hold on the rough bark that he was never again flung, and within a week had become so expert a log-rider that he could keep his feet over the worst "slews" on the road.

The hump-durgins brought up many things from the railway landing besides chains and "dogs," for they were the sole conveyances by which supplies of any kind could reach the camp. It often happened that they carried passengers as well, and in this respect running a hump-durgin was, as Alaric said, very much like driving a stage-coach--a thing that he had always longed to do.

Bonny was so envious of his comrade's job that on that very first day he made application for the next hump-durgin vacancy, and two weeks later was filled with delight at receiving the coveted appointment.

By the time that both our lads became hump-durgin boys they were living in their own shack, which stood just beyond Buck Ranlet's, and which nearly every man in camp had helped them to build. So proud were they of this tiny dwelling that they nearly doubled their bill at the store in procuring bedding and other furnishings for it.

Although thus amply provided with rude comforts, or, as Bonny expressed it, "surrounded with all the luxuries of life," Alaric fully realized that it would soon be time to exchange this mode of living for another. He knew that he owed a duty to his father, as well as to the station of life into which he had been born; and, having proved to his own satisfaction that he was equally strong with other boys, and as well able to fight his way through the world, he was more than willing to return to his own home. Now that he felt competent to hold his own, physically as well as mentally, with others of his age, he was filled with a desire to go to college. On talking the matter over with Bonny he found that the latter cherished similar aspirations, the only difference being that the young sailor's longing was for a mechanical rather

than a classical education. "Though, of course," said Bonny, with a sigh, "I shall always have to take it out in wishing, for I shall never have money enough to carry me through a school of any kind, or at least not until I am too old to go."

At this Alaric only smiled, and bade his comrade keep on hoping, for there was no telling when something might turn up. As he said this he made up his mind that if ever he went to college Bonny should at the same time go to one of the best scientific schools of the country.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

ALARIC AND BONNY AGAIN TAKE TO FLIGHT

For a full month had our hump-durgin boys occupied the little cedar-built shack, which now seemed to them so much a home that it was difficult to realize they had ever known any other. By this time, too, they were exercising a very decided influence upon the character of the camp into whose life they had been so unexpectedly thrown. Light-hearted Bonny, with his cheery face and abounding good-nature, was as full of amusing pranks as a young colt, and from every group that he joined shouts of merriment were certain to arise within a few minutes. Thus Bonny was very popular and always in demand. Nor was Alaric less so, for he could tell so much concerning strange foreign countries and relate so many curious Old World tales, that there was rarely an evening that he was not called upon for something of the kind. He so often said that most of his stories could be found in certain books, related a thousand times better than he could tell them, that in the breasts of many of his hearers he aroused a real longing for books, and a wider knowledge than they could ever acquire without them.

At the same time Alaric was not only appreciated for what he knew, but for what he could do. No one in camp could ride a "turn" of logs, swaying, bumping, and sliding down the skid-road, with such perfect confidence and easy grace as he. Only one of them all could outrun him, and none could catch or throw a baseball with the certainty and precision that he exhibited, although ever since Buck Ranlet discovered the ball in his young guest's coat-pocket the camp had practised with it during all odd moments of daylight.

So our lads made friends with and knew the personal history of every occupant of the camp save one, and he was its boss. Since the night on which they had taken tea in his house Mr. Linton had hardly spoken to either of them; nor did he ever join with the men in their evening gatherings to listen to Bonny's jokes or Alaric's tales. At first they noticed this, and wondered what reason he had for avoiding them; but they soon learned that it was only his way, and that he never talked with any of the men except on matters of business. Buck Ranlet said it was because he was a deputy United States marshal, and didn't know when he might be called on to arrest any one of them for some offence against the government.

With all their present popularity the boys were growing weary of the monotonous life they were leading, of their good-natured but rough and narrow-minded associates, and of the deadly sameness of the food served three times a day in the dingy mess-room. They also dreaded the approaching winter, with its days and weeks of rain, during which the work of getting out logs for the insatiable mills down on the Sound must keep on without a moment of interruption. They listened with dismay to tales of loggers who had not known the feeling of dry clothing for weeks at a time; of "turns" of logs rushing down skid-roads slippery with wet, like roaring avalanches of timber, threatening destruction to everything in their course; and of long, dreary winter evenings when the steady downpour forbade camp-fires and prevented all social out-of-door gatherings.

In view of these things, Alaric was determined that the end of another month, or such time as his wages should be paid, should see him on his way to San Francisco and home. He did not anticipate any difficulty in persuading Bonny to go with him, for that young man had already remarked that while hump-durgin riding was fun up to a certain point, he should hate to do it for the remainder of his life. Oh yes, Bonny would go, of course; and Alaric's only fear was that his father might not take a fancy to the lad, or hold the same views regarding his future that he did. Still, that was a matter which would arrange itself somehow, if they could only reach San Francisco, and the "poor rich boy" now began to long as eagerly for the time to come when he might return to his home as he once had for an opportunity to leave it.

One day, when matters stood thus, a stranger, past middle age, shabbily dressed, and wearing a peculiarly dilapidated hat, appeared at the railway log-landing, and asked Bonny, whose hump-durgin happened to be there at the time, permission to ride with him to the end of the skid-road. With a sympathetic glance at the man's forlorn appearance, Bonny answered:

"Certainly, sir; you may ride with me all day if you like, and I shall be glad of your company."

Thanking the lad, the stranger seated himself in the hump-durgin; and after he had been warned to hold on tight and watch out for "slews," the upward journey was begun. At one of the upper relay stations they waited for a descending "turn" of logs to pass them. Here the stranger visited the engine-house, and while he was talking with the engineer they came in sight. Alaric, who happened to be in charge, was at that moment walking easily forward along the backs of the swaying logs, presenting as fine a specimen of youthful agility, strength, and perfect health as one could wish to encounter. He was clad in jean trousers tucked into boot-legs and belted about his waist; a blue flannel shirt, with a black silk kerchief knotted at the throat, and a black slouch hat.

"Isn't that extremely dangerous?" asked the stranger, regarding the approaching lad with a curious interest.

"Not for him it isn't, though it might be for some; but Dick Dale is so level-headed and sure-footed that there isn't his equal for riding logs in this outfit, nor, I don't believe, in any other," answered the engineer.

"What did you say his name was?" asked the stranger, with his gaze still fixed on Alaric.

"Dale--Richard Dale," replied the engineer, who had never happened to hear the boy's real name. "Why? Do you think you know him?"

"No. I don't know any one of that name; but the lad's resemblance to another whom I used to know is certainly very striking."

"Yes. It's funny how often people look alike who have never been within a thousand miles of each other," remarked the engineer, carelessly, as he stepped to the signal-box. In another minute Alaric had passed out of sight, while Bonny and the stranger had resumed their upward journey.

That evening Alaric remarked to his chum, "I noticed you had a passenger to-day."

"Yes," replied Bonny. "Seedy-looking chap, wasn't he; but one of the nicest old fellows I ever met. Never saw any one take such an interest in everything. I suspected what he was after, though, and finally we got so friendly that I asked him right out if he wasn't looking for work."

"Was he?"

"Yes. He hesitated at first, and looked at me to see if I was joking, and then owned up that he was hunting for something to do. I felt mighty sorry for him, 'cause I know how it is myself; but I had to tell him there wasn't a living show in this camp just now. He seemed mightily taken with our shack here, and said he once had a house just like it, in which he passed the happiest time of his life, but he was afraid he'd never have another. I invited him to stay with us a few days if he wanted to--just while he was looking for a job, you know--but he said he guessed he'd better go on to some other camp. You'd been willing, wouldn't you?"

"Certainly," replied Alaric. "I've already been in hard luck enough to be mighty glad of a chance to help any other fellow who's in the same fix, especially an old man; for they don't have half the show that young fellows do."

"I told him you'd feel that way," exclaimed Bonny, triumphantly; "and he said if there were more like us in the world it would be a happier place to live in, but that he guessed he'd manage to scrape along somehow a while longer without becoming a burden to others. I did insist on his taking a hat, though."

"A hat?"

"Yes. We were down at the store, and he was asking the price of things, and looking around so wistful that I couldn't help getting him a new hat and having it charged; for the one he wore wasn't any good at all. He hated to take it, but I insisted, and finally he said he would if I'd keep his old one and let him redeem it some time. Of course I said I would, just to satisfy him, and here it is."

Alaric looked carelessly at the dilapidated hat as he said: "It was a first-class thing to do, Bonny, and I only wish I had been here to give him something at the same time. But, hello! this is a Paris hat, and hasn't been worn very long, either. I wonder how he ever got hold of it? Never mind, though; hang it up for luck, and to remind me to do something for the next poor chap who comes along. By-the-way, I heard to-day that the president of the company was in Tacoma, on his way to make an inspection of all the camps."

"Yes," replied Bonny. "They say he is an awful swell, too, and I heard that he was coming in his private car. I only hope he is, and that I can get a chance to look at it, for I have never seen a private car. Have you?"

"One or two," answered Alaric, with a smile.

At noon of the following day, while a fifteen-minute game of baseball was in progress after dinner, the boss of Camp No. 10 received a note from the president of the company, requesting him to report immediately in person at Tacoma, and bring with him the two hump-durgin boys Dale and Brooks.

Mr. Linton, being a man who kept his own business to himself as much as possible, merely called our lads and bade them follow him. Of course this order broke up the game they were playing, and as they hastened after the boss, Bonny, in whose hands the baseball happened to be, thrust it into one of his pockets. Although curious to know why they were thus summoned, the boys learned nothing from Mr. Linton until they reached the railway log-landing, when he told them that they were wanted in Tacoma, and that he was instructed to bring them there at once.

From the landing they proceeded by hand-car to Cascade Junction, where they boarded a west-bound passenger train over the Northern Pacific. Even now Mr. Linton was not communicative, and after sitting awhile in silence he went forward into the smoking-car, leaving the boys in the passenger coach next behind it. Now they began to discuss their situation, and the more they considered it the more apprehensive they became that something unpleasant was in store for them.

"He's a United States marshal, remember," said Bonny.

"Yes," replied Alaric; "I've been thinking of that. Do you suppose it can have anything to do with that smuggling business?"

"I'm awfully afraid so," replied Bonny. "Great Scott! Look there!"

The train was just leaving Meeker, where a passenger had boarded their car, and was now walking leisurely through it towards the smoker. It was he who had attracted Bonny's attention, and at whom he now pointed a trembling finger.

Alaric instantly recognized the man as an officer of the revenue-cutter that had so persistently chased them in the early summer. Without a word, he left his seat and followed the new-comer to the smoking-car, where a single glance through the open door confirmed his worst suspicions.

The officer had seated himself beside Mr. Linton, and they were talking with great earnestness.

"They are surely after us again," Alaric said, in a whisper, as he regained his seat beside Bonny; "but I don't intend to be captured if I can help it."

"Same here," replied Bonny.

Thus it happened that when, a little later, the train reached Tacoma, and Mr. Linton returned to look for his lads, they were nowhere to be found.



CHAPTER XXXIX

BONNY DISCOVERS HIS FRIEND THE TRAMP

It was late in the afternoon when the train reached Tacoma, and the logging boss discovered that the lads whom he had been especially instructed to bring with him had disappeared. As he could not imagine any reason why they should do such a thing, he was thoroughly bewildered, and waited about the station for some minutes, expecting them to turn up. He inquired of the train hands and other employes if they had seen anything of such boys as he described, but could gain no information concerning them.

The revenue-officer was merely an acquaintance whom he had met by chance on the train, and who now waited a few minutes to see how this affair would turn out. Finally he said:

"Well, Linton, I'm sorry I can't help you, but I really must be getting along. I hope, though, you won't have any such trouble with your missing lads as we had in trying to catch two young rascals of smugglers, whom we lost right here in Tacoma last summer. We wanted them as witnesses, and thought we had our hands on them half a dozen times; but they finally gave us the slip, and the case in which they were expected to testify was dismissed for want of evidence. Good-bye."

Thus left to his own devices, the boss could think of nothing better than to call upon the police to aid him in recovering the missing boys, and so powerful was the name of the President of the Northwest Lumber Company, which he did not hesitate to use, that within an hour every policeman in Tacoma was provided with their description, and instructed to capture them if possible. In the hope that they would speedily succeed in so doing, Mr. Linton delayed meeting the president, and telegraphed that he could not reach the hotel to which he had been directed to bring the boys before eight o'clock that evening.

In the meantime Alaric and Bonny, without an idea of the stir their disappearance had created throughout the city, were snugly ensconced in an empty freight-car that stood within a hundred yards of the railway station. They had dropped from the rear end of their train when it began to slow down, and slipped into the freight-car as a place of temporary concealment while they discussed plans.

"We've got to get out of this town in a hurry, that's certain," said Alaric, "and I propose that we make a start for San Francisco. You know, I told you that was my home, and I still have some friends there, who, I believe, will help us. The only thing is that I don't see how we can travel so far without any money."

"That's easy enough," replied Bonny, "and I would guarantee to land you there in good shape inside of a week. What worries me, though, is the idea of going off and leaving all the money that is due us here. Just think! there's thirty dollars owing to me as a hump-durgin driver, thirty more as interpreter, and fully as much as that for being a smuggler--nearly one hundred dollars in all. That's a terrible lot of money, Rick Dale, and you know it as well as I do."

"Yes," replied Alaric; "if we had it now, we'd be all right. But I'll tell you, Bonny, what I'll do. If you will get me to San Francisco inside of a week, I promise that you shall have one hundred dollars the day we arrive."

"I'll do it!" cried Bonny. "I know you are joking, of course, but I'll do it just to see how you'll manage to crawl out of your bargain when we get there. You mustn't expect to travel in a private car, though, with a French cook, and three square meals a day thrown in."

"Yes, I do," laughed Alaric, "for I never travelled any other way."

"No, I know you haven't, any more'n I have; but, just for a change, I think we'd better try freight-cars, riding on trucks, and perhaps once in a while in a caboose, for this trip, with meals whenever we can catch 'em. We'll get there, though; I promise you that. Hello! I mustn't lose that ball. We may want to have a game on the road."

This last remark was called forth by Alaric's baseball which, becoming uncomfortably bulgy in Bonny's pocket as he sat on the car floor, he had taken out, and had been tossing from hand to hand as he talked. At length it slipped from him, rolled across the car, and out of the open door.

Bonny sprang after it, tossed it in to Alaric, and was about to clamber back into the car, when, through the gathering gloom, he spied a familiar figure standing in the glare of one of the station lights.

"Wait here a few minutes, Rick," he said, "while I go and find out when our train starts."

With this he darted up the track, and a moment later advanced, with a smile of recognition and extended hand, towards

the stranger whom he had so pitied in the logging camp the day before. The man still wore a shabby suit and the hat Bonny had given him. He started at sight of the lad, and exclaimed:

"How came you here so soon? I thought you weren't due until eight o'clock."

"How did you know we were coming at all?" asked Bonny, in amazement.

"Oh, that's a secret," laughed the other, instantly recovering his self-possession, and assuming his manner of the day before. "We tramps have a way of finding out things, you know."

"Yes, I've always heard so," replied Bonny, "and that's one reason why I'm so glad to meet you again. I thought maybe you could help us."

"Us?" repeated the stranger. "Who is with you?"

"Only my chum, the other hump-durgin driver, you know."

"You mean Richard Dale?"

"Yes--only his name isn't Richard, but Alaric. I say, though, would you mind stepping over in the shadow, where we won't be interrupted?"

"Certainly not," replied the other, with a quiet chuckle. "I expect it will be better, for I'm not anxious to be recognized myself just now."

When they had reached what Bonny considered a safe place, he continued:

"You see, it's this way. My chum and I did a little business in the smuggling line last summer, and got chased for it by the 'beaks.'"

"Just like 'em," growled the other.

"Yes," said Bonny, wrathfully. "We hadn't really done anything wrong, you know; but they made us skip 'round lively, and came mighty near catching us, too. We gave 'em the slip, though, and thought the whole thing had blown over, till to-day, when they got after us again."

"Who did?"

"The revenue fellows. You see, the boss up at camp is one of 'em, and we suspicioned something was wrong as soon as he told us we were wanted in Tacoma. We were certain of it when we saw another revenue man, one of the cutter's officers, join him on the train, and so we just gave them the slip again, and have been hiding ever since over in that freight-car."

"Indeed!" remarked the stranger, interestedly. "And what do you propose to do next?"

"That's what I'm coming to, and what we want you to help us about. You see, my chum's folks live in San Francisco, and I rather think he ran away from 'em, though he hasn't ever said so. Anyhow, he wants to get back there, and as we haven't any money, we've got to beat our way, so I thought maybe you could put us up to the racket, or, at any rate, tell us when the first south-bound freight would pull out. Of course, you understand, we've got to start as quick as we can, for it isn't safe for us to be seen around here."

"Of course not," agreed the stranger, with another chuckle; for the whole affair seemed to amuse him greatly. "But what are you going to do for food? You'll be apt to get hungry before long."

"I am already," acknowledged Bonny, "and that was another thing I was going to ask you about. I thought maybe you wouldn't mind giving us some pointers from your own experience in picking up your three little square meals a day when you are on the road."

At this point the stranger burst into what began like uncontrollable laughter, but which proved to be only a severe fit of coughing. When it was over, he said: "Your name is Bonny Brooks, isn't it?"

"Yes; but don't speak so loud."

"All right, I won't. But, Bonny Brooks, you were mighty kind to me yesterday--kinder than any one else has been for a long time. By-the-way, did you bring my old hat with you?"

"No, of course not."

"No matter. I said I would redeem it, and I am going to do so by putting you on to a mighty soft snap. I'm bound to the southward myself, and, as it happens, there is a sort of boarding-car going to pull out of here for somewhere down the line in about half an hour. It is in charge of the cook, and as he and I are on what you might call extra good terms, he is going to let me ride with him as far as he goes. There won't be a soul on board but him and me, unless I can persuade him to let you two boys come along with us. I am pretty sure I can, though, for he is under several obligations to me, and if you'll promise to stay quietly in this freight-car until I come for you, I'll go this minute and see him. What do you say?"

"I say you are a trump, and if you'll only work that racket for us, I'll share half the money with you that I'm to get from Rick as soon as we reach San Francisco."

"Oh ho! He is to give you money, is he?"

"Yes; that is, he has promised me one hundred dollars to make up for the wages I leave behind, if I'll only get him there. Of course that's all his joke, though, for he is just as poor as I am."

So Bonny clambered back into the car where he told Rick of the fine arrangement he had just made; while for the next half-hour that shabbily attired stranger was the busiest man in Tacoma, and kept a great many other people busy at the same time. Finally, just as the boys were beginning to think he had forgotten them, he appeared at the door of the freight-car, and said, in a loud whisper: "Come, quick. I think they are after you."

As they scrambled out, he started on a run towards a single car that, with an engine attached, stood on a siding in the darkest corner of the railroad yard. Here he hurriedly whispered to the boys to crouch low on its rear platform until it started, when the cook would open the door. Then he disappeared.

In another minute the car began to move, and directly afterwards its door was opened. There seemed to be no light in the interior, and, without seeing any one, the boys heard a strange voice, evidently that of a negro, bidding them come in out of the cold.

They entered the car, Alaric going first, and were led through a narrow passage into what was evidently a large compartment. They heard their guide retreating through the passage, and were beginning to feel rather uneasy, when suddenly they were surrounded and dazzled by a great flood of electric light.



CHAPTER XL

A FLOOD OF LIGHT

As the brilliant light flooded the place where the boys stood, they were for a minute blinded by its radiance. Bonny was bewildered and frightened, and even Alaric was greatly startled. Gradually, as their eyes grew accustomed to the brightness, they became aware of a single figure standing before them, and regarding them curiously. Alaric looked, rubbed his eyes, and looked again. Then he sprang forward with a great shout.

"Dad! you dear old dad! I never was so glad to see any one in my life!"

"Rick! you young rascal!" cried Amos Todd. "How could you play your old father such a trick? Never mind, though; you've won your game, and at the same time made me the very happiest and proudest man on the coast this night. Stand there, sir, and let me have a good look at you."

With this the proud father held his stalwart son off at arm's-length and gazed at him with loving admiration.

"The very neatest trick I ever heard of--the most impudent, and the most successful," he murmured. "But don't you ever be guilty of such a thing again, you young smuggler."

"Indeed I won't, dad, for I know I shall never have any reason or desire to repeat it," replied Alaric, promptly, his voice trembling with joyful excitement. "But, dad, you mustn't forget Bonny; for whatever I have gained or learned this past summer I owe to him."

"God bless the lad! Indeed I will never forget what he has done both for you and for me," cried Amos Todd, stepping forward and seizing Bonny's hand in a grasp that made him wince.

Poor bewildered Bonny, standing amid the glitter of silver and plate-glass, surrounded by furnishings of such luxurious character as he had never imagined could exist in real life, vaguely wondered whether he were under the spell of some beautiful enchantment or merely dreaming. There must be some reality to it all, though, for the stranger in the shabby garments, whom he had befriended only the day before, and still wearing the same hat he had given him, was surely holding his hand and saying very pleasant things. But who could he be? He certainly was not acting like a tramp, or one who was greatly in need of charity.

Alaric came to the puzzled lad's relief. "He is my father, Mr. Amos Todd," he cried. "And, Bonny, you will forgive me, won't you, for not telling you before? You see, I was afraid to let even you know that I was the son of a rich man, because I wanted you to like me for myself alone."

"You know I do, Rick Dale! You know I do!" exclaimed Bonny, impulsively, finding his voice at last. "But, Rick," he added, almost in a whisper, "are you sure there isn't any mistake about it all? Amos Todd, you know, is President of the Northwest Company, and the richest man on the coast. They do say he's a millionaire."

"It's all right, Bonny. I expect he is a millionaire," answered Alaric, joyously. "But we won't lay it up against him, will we? And we'll try not to think any the less of him for it. I didn't know he was President of the Northwest Company, though. Are you, dad?"

"I believe I am," laughed Amos Todd. "And I certainly have cause to be grateful that I hold the office, for it was while making my official inspection of the camps yesterday that I ran across you boys. I didn't know you, though, Rick--'pon my word, I didn't. You bore a faint resemblance to my little 'Allie' as you came riding those logs down the skid-road, but I knew you couldn't be he, for I was certain that he was on the other side of the world by this time. And so you shook the Sonntaggs, and let them run away from you. It was wrong, Rick, very wrong, but I don't blame you--not one bit, I don't. I'd have done the same thing myself."

"But, dad, how did you come to find me out? I don't understand it at all."

"By your own letter to Esther, lad. She forwarded it to me in France; but I had gone when it reached there, and so it was sent to San Francisco. I left Margaret on the other side for the winter, and came back by way of Montreal and the Canadian Pacific, intending to stop here and inspect the lumber camps on my way home. I telegraphed John to send this car and all my mail up here, and they came last night. As soon as I read your letter I felt pretty certain that it was you whom I had seen doing the circus act on those logs. I wasn't quite sure, though, and didn't want to make any mistake, so I just sent word to Linton to fetch you in, that I might take a good look at you."

"So it was you who sent for us?"

"Certainly. And you thought it was the revenue-officers, and so decided to give 'em the slip, and beat your way home to claim protection of your old dad--eh, you rascal? And Bonny here took me for a fellow-tramp who could put him on to the racket. Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! Oh my! I shall die of laughing yet at thinking of it. It was all the hat, though, wasn't it, Bonny? I hated to cut it up, for I only bought it in Paris the other day, and hadn't another with me; but I wanted to inspect the camp without being known, and it was the only disguise I could think of. But, boys, what do you say to supper? If you are as hungry as I am you must be more than ready for it."

Indeed, they were ready for supper, and when they sat down to that daintily served meal, in the exquisitely appointed dining-room of President Todd's own private car, Bonny at last understood why Alaric had ordered that strange lot of supplies for the sloop *Fancy*.

After supper they returned to the saloon, where Amos Todd lighted a cigar, and listened to the wonderful story of trial and triumph, privation and strange vicissitude, that had transformed his pale-faced weakling into the strong, handsome, self-reliant youth upon whom he now gazed so proudly. When the long story was ended, he asked, quietly:

"How much have you earned by your summer's work, son; and what have you to show for it?"

"If you mean in money, dad, not one cent; and all I have to show, besides what you've already noticed, is this." Here Alaric held out a dilapidated baseball, at which his father gazed curiously. "With that ball," continued Alaric, "I took my first lesson in being a boy, and it has led me on from one thing to another ever since until, finally, this very evening, it brought me back to you. So, dad, I should say that it stood for my whole summer's work."

"I am thankful, Rick, that you haven't earned any money, and that through bitter want of it you have learned its value," said Amos Todd. "I am thankful, too, that there is still one thing for which you have to come to your old dad. More than all am I thankful for what you have gained without his help, or, rather, in spite of him; and had I known last spring what that baseball was to do for you, I would gladly have paid a million of dollars for it."

"You may have it now, dad, for one hundred, which is just the amount I owe Bonny."

"Done!" cried Amos Todd; and thus he came into possession of the well-worn baseball that, set in a plate of silver and enclosed in a superb frame, soon afterwards hung above his private desk in San Francisco.

Here our story properly ends, but we cannot help telling of two or three things that happened soon after the disappearance of our hump-durgin boys from Camp No. 10, and as a direct result of their having lived there. To begin with, Mr. Linton felt himself so insulted by the manner in which President Todd made his inspection that he resigned his position, and, on the recommendation of Alaric, Buck Ranlet was given his place. On the strength of this promotion the big "faller" went East to marry the girl of his choice, and both Alaric and Bonny were present at the wedding.

Through the liberality of Amos Todd, the ex-hump-durgin boys were enabled to present the camp with their shack, converted into a neat little library building and filled with carefully selected books, in which the occupants of the camp are greatly pleased to discover many of the tales already told them by Rick Dale.

A certain famous and badly used-up hat, carefully removed from the camp, belongs to Bonny Brooks, and adorns a wall in one of a beautiful suite of rooms that he and Alaric occupy together at Harvard. Here Alaric is taking an academic course, while Bonny, whom Amos Todd regards almost as an own son, is sturdily working his way through the mathematical and mechanical labyrinths of a Manual Training School. They went to Cambridge just one year after completing their studies as hump-durgin boys; and while they were still Freshmen, the splendid baseball-player, who, though only just entering his Junior year, was captain of the 'varsity nine, happened to be badly in need of a catcher.

"I can tell you of one who can't be beat this side of the Rocky Mountains," suggested his classmate and pitcher, Dave Carncross.

"Who is he?"

"Rick Todd, a Freshman."

"Son of Amos Todd, your San Francisco millionaire?"

"Yes."

"Then I don't want him. Millionaires' sons are no good."

"This one is, though," insisted Carncross; "and I ought to know, for I taught him to catch his first ball. You just come over to Soldiers' Field this afternoon and size him up."

The captain needed a first-class man behind the bat so badly that, in spite of his prejudices, he consented to do as his

pitcher desired. He was amazed, delighted, and enthusiastic. Never had he seen such an exhibition of ball-catching as was given by that Freshman. Finally he could contain himself no longer, and rushing up to his classmate, he exclaimed:

"Carncross, he's a wonder! Introduce me at once."

"Rick Todd," said Dave Carncross, "permit me to present you to my friend Phil Ryder, captain of the 'varsity nine.'"

As the two lads grasped each other's hands there came a flash of recognition into each face, and both remembered where they had met each other last.

THE END

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