GOLDEN PARROT

Frederic A. Fenger


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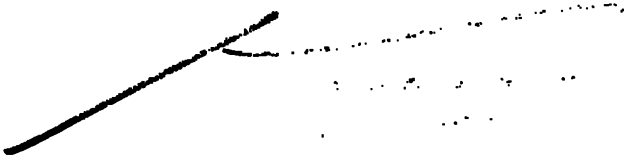

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THE GOLDEN PARROT

A YELL FROM THE NEGRO SUDDENLY BROUGHT THEM TO THE HOLE (*Page* 225)

THE GOLDEN PARROT

BY

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HAROLD CUE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

The Riverside Press Cambridge

1921

TO

THE FIRST MATE

FOREWORD

I RAN across the Tads, just the other day. They were rolling up Tremont Street — in their shirt-sleeves, if you will believe it, and brown as a couple of berries.

"Hello! young feller!" cried they in unison and pretty much in the vernacular; "and what'r'ye doin' now?"

"Nothing," says I; "just finished —"

"W'at? More fiction?"

"No, a real yarn this time," and I edged toward the curb; "a real story about treasure. A couple of old Tads —"

I got no further. That is, in my speech. But I did get farther away from them and as quickly as possible. Across the street in two jumps and through the Common. It was clear sailing till I ran afoul of a thousand or two of half-naked children playing about the pool, but shucks! you should have heard them shout when the Tads tried to worry through 'em. A young chap this side of forty could dodge through 'em easier than a couple of Tads, and the advantage I gained thereby enabled me to lose 'em by the time I reached the Public Garden, where

I boarded a swan-boat, knowing they would never think of looking for me on such a craft.

I only tell you this that you may know that it is at no little risk I'm spinning this yarn to you at all.

ILLUSTRATIONS

THE GOLDEN PARROT

CHAPTER I

It strikes me as rummy that the yarn should come to me stern first, as you might say; then that I should get the fore end of it and, five years later, should meet up with the Tads at Thunderbolt where they spun the middle of it in the cozy little cabin of the *Golden Parrot*. I say rummy, for why should the yarn come to *me* without any seeking on *my* part? The more I think of it, the more I believe that the doubloons the Tads dug up on Norman were not those left there by the old buccaneer himself, but a picayune cache left by some fool upstart of a later day.

Now until I went to sea I was not what one would call superstitious. Of course, as a small boy I used to go up a dark stairway two steps at a time with my spine all akrinkle, and I'd jump by black doorways with my weather arm guard-

ing and the other ready to strike, and then when I had gained my room I would light the gas and suddenly turn around to face — what? But all that passed away naturally as it should. I'm too old now to be afraid in the dark. But hoist the blue peter on Friday or carry a priest or a minister? Not for me! Others may do it and I have, but now I know better. Why? That's not for me to say. You may shelve it as coincidence or admit as I do that there's something back of it. That's why I call it strange, for I have a feeling that the shade of old Norman took a friendly interest in me the first time I sailed down along Ginger and Cooper and Peter in the *Yakaboo*, and now, in my little schooner, I seem to hear him at night when the wind, coming in on the back of the insetting tide, thrums the rigging.

"You fool, you fool!" he says; "go back some moonlight night and let *me* help you to it!" and I start up in my berth with the wind echoing, "You fool — you fool!" to the tap-tap of a neglected halyard on the mast. Perhaps I shall, says I, if that's your idea, but you must wait till I have spun this yarn; it won't seem long to you who have been dead a couple of hundred years or more. And, oh, by the way, if you want a little nip, I've left the cork out of a bottle of Old Rosalie rum so that you can flow right down the neck and take what you want if you'll promise

not to bother me any more till I finish this twister.

To go back to the *Yakaboo* and the tail end of the yarn. I was sailing down Sir Francis Drake's Channel, a bit of the Caribbean held like an inland sea between Tortola and the smaller cays of the Virgins where the Greater Antilles peter out into small fragments, and across the Anegada Channel the Leeward and Windward Islands take up the march of the West Indies from Yucatan to Trinidad. The *Yakaboo* was a pretty little deep-sea sailing canoe, and it may be that old Norman's ghost took such a fancy to her when he saw her on the beaches at night, that he worked things my way, so to speak. Call it coincidence if you like, but the yarn's a fact. And unlike most other spinners of treasure yarns I'll show you the islands where it all happened exactly as they are on the Government chart. Of course, I can't have a lot of you pestering me when I have to be looking after a hundred and one jobs on the ship; and this, by the way, is the only reason why I'm setting it all down on paper.

I had loafed down from Virgin Gorda that morning and as the trade began to die with the day I sailed into a little cove on the north of Peter — the one with the cross just outside to show that here lies a rock — and dragged the *Yakaboo* high and dry on the beach. I was alone,

I thought, and had started my customary search for a bit of firewood when a negro stepped out of the brush. He was a typical beach native, with an erect body carried on legs that never straightened out from a habit of much beach walking, which gave the peculiar effect of a marionette traversing a stage and somewhat affected by Dandy's disease. His bleached shirt showed a liberal area of deep mahogany chest and his faded dungarees, tied around his middle with a piece of grass fish-pot line, hung down like a pair of inverted wind-sails. His feet, almost a paragraph in themselves, spread fanlike from horny cracked heels to a straight line at the forward end where the small toes sprouted like baby potatoes slightly elongated. The great toes, instead of following the line of the instep, were sprung athwart like thumbs and seemed almost prehensile. They were beach feet and would never know any shoe but one of extraordinary dimensions. He took me in curiously through brown doggish eyes set wide apart; I should have said he might have been anywhere from thirty to fifty years of age.

"Good ev'nin', marster," he began. "I see you cumin' 'roun' Duchess (Dead Chest) an' I cum to enquiah ef you like spen' de night in de willige?" pointing across the cove to a small peninsula which ran out to the northwest. "Jes' ovah de lan'."

"No, Friday — think I'll stay here to-night."

"My name John, sur — John Smith, sur."

"All right, John. Perhaps I'll sail around and see the village in the morning," and I turned to look for my firewood.

"Doan you bodder, me carry de wood an' ketch de fire."

When the business of supper was over, the sun had gone down over the back of Peter and I settled into the hollow of an outcropping rock to wait for the new moon crescent to rise up from behind Virgin Gorda and take her place in the starry night. Tiny surf, hand high, broke with Lilliputian crash and left fleeting tracings of its measured reach in phosphorescent lace. A brigand barracuda lazily cruised with lucent wake where the tide current swirled close to the steep-to beach. The scraping of a spoon foretold the end of a mess of peas and rice. The last drops of a pail of chocolate made their exit in a liquid sigh — indrawn.

"Now, wash the pails, John, and be damn careful to scour the black off the bottoms."

There had been no conversation while I ate, but that *damn* had somehow broken the spell.

"You goin' to Norman?" ventured the native; "nobody lib dere — you look for sumpin'?"

"Yes, but if you mean Spanish gold, you're on the wrong lay. If I knew where treasure was

buried on Norman, I would n't advertise it by coming in this way."

"Da's roit, sur. You go in de night an' sleep in de bush in de da'. But dey wuz sumpin' on Norman an' — " and he was off.

"You hear 'bout de li'l' 'merikin schooner wid de two ole men, wat cum down an' sail 'roun' jes' like you, an' den sail 'way?

"Li'l' ting, t'irty ton, an' she anchor one ev'nin' off de landin' at Roa'town.

"'Las' port Sain' Thomas,' sez dey, w'en de ha'bber-master cum 'longside an' dey give him de bil-a-helt. 'T'aat we'd cum here fo' a li'l' fishnin'.'"

There were five of them, I gathered, two old men with a crew of two sailors and a cook. The old men had asked for a guide who knew the channels and the "fishnin'" grounds, and the Government doctor had recommended one William Penn from Salt Island. For a week they had sailed and fished, returning each night to Road-town. Then one day the old men said good-bye to the Commissioner and cleared for the high seas. They would put Penn ashore on Salt as they passed out, they said. But instead of landing the native that evening, they kept out to sea till the sun had set and then ran down to Norman with all speed. John Smith had watched them with his own eyes as they hauled up for Salt and

lay to in the cove without making any pretense of communicating with the shore, and then fell off and ran out to sea. As to what happened at Norman, William Penn was strangely silent, and by the time Government ears had become attuned to the murmur of rumors, Penn, it seemed, had flown. The meager fact remained, however, that in the wee light of the next morning the schooner had sneaked up under the lee of Salt and, to quote John Smith, who had been night fishing along the rocks, "Dey lan' *he* an' square away *she* an' dat wuz de las' *me* see ob *she*."

There it began. The next day I sailed for Norman, for I *did* have a little business of my own on the island, but as ill-luck would have it, an attack of sun drove me back to Tortola. Heeding the warning of the Government doctor, I was taken to Saint Thomas, whence I sailed for home on the next north-bound steamer. John Smith and his story became mere privates in the army of my Caribbean memories and for the time were forgotten.

Then I got the fore end of it. I had been spending the day in an alcove in Barton. Barton, if you must know, is one of those special retreats in the Public Library of Boston where the supposedly elect may cloister himself for terrific literary effort with nearly a million books at his

command. I might almost have said, at her command, for at the time there seemed to be a preponderance of women; some, young students from a near-by college, I was told; some, club women, ballooning their minds in a short afternoon with the wisdom of a lifetime to be condensed into florid sentences in a paper that would take half an hour in the reading; and some, Grub-Streeters — poor literary scavengers hovering like hungry gulls continually scanning the sea of literature for any small tidbit which might be snatched up for a paragraph or a column in the daily papers or even a story in a popular magazine. While there is life and hope there will always be the people of Grub Street even when the name has long been erased by the flavous civilization to come.

Outside, the day was utterly cheerless. Through a rectangle of gray sky over the courtyard a cold autumnal drizzle fell in myriad streaks which the eye could only detect by focusing on the wall opposite. Each drop as it passed downward contributed its infinitesimal bit of reflected light which came dead and spiritless through the high windows of the alcoves. It seemed amorphous and incapable of casting shadows. At the table in the adjoining alcove a ponderous woman sat stiff-backed in her chair reading a ponderous volume, the "Epic of Saul," over a high-terraced

bosom that seemed not to move with breath. Perhaps those lungs had given up muscular action for the time and, by some strange process of osmosis, fresh air was reviving the old. I found myself wondering what travail was going on in the mind behind her large, expressionless face. She had sat there for hours, making no movement but occasionally to turn a page. She was a slow reader. There had been no shifting of position from the small agony of concentration. Her brow remained smooth. She fascinated me. At length her senses recorded the failing of the light outside and she automatically reached up to turn the switch of the desk lamp. It was then that I made out the "Epic of Saul," for she held the book nearly perpendicular to the table. I began to speculate as to how long the woman would sit there. Did she have a home and children and a hungry husband to look after? She was too well fed for Grub Street; her digestion, I judged, must be vulgarly efficient. What would ever come of this reading the "Epic of Saul"? That potential form must have brought forth children; why, then, in the name of Heaven was n't she at home looking after her business? You see, I had long since left off careful reading and now returned to my book lazily scanning page by page in advance. Of a sudden my eye fixed its gaze on a certain paragraph, and I read the words *Peter's*

Island. I braced up to the table and switched on my own light.

"In May (1806)," I read, "the author,[1] with a party, visited Peter's Island, one of those which form the bay of Tortola, a kind of Robinson Crusoe spot, where a man ought to be farmer, carpenter, doctor, fisherman, planter; everything himself. The owner's house has only the ground floor; a roof of shingles projects some six or eight feet beyond the sides, like a Quaker's hat; not a pane of glass in the house; merely shutters for the apertures. In the centre of the drawing-room or hall, or best room, were triced up ears of Indian corn; on a chair lay a fishing net; in one corner hung another; a spy glass, fowling piece, chairs, looking-glass, and pictures of the four seasons, composed the furniture; the library consisted of a prayer-book, almanack, and one volume of the Naval Chronicle. On the left hand was a room, with a range of machines for extracting the seeds from the cotton. Round the house were abundance of goats, turkeys, fowls, a bull, cow, pigs, dogs, and cats. The house was situated to make a man feel its comforts whenever the weather was bad; on an inferior emminence, commanding a view of the bay, a musket-shot from the precipice.

"The old gentleman was dressed in a large broad-brimmed white hat which appeared to have been in use for half a century; a white night-cap covered his bald head; his blue jacket had lappels buttoned back; his duck waistcoat had flaps down to his knees;

[1] Capt. Thomas Southey, R.N., brother of the poet. *Southey's Chronicles*, vol. III, p. 361.

the trousers were of the same material as his waistcoat. Negro girls, five or six years old, were running about without any fear of spoiling their frocks — they were quite naked. 'We should think this an odd sight in England, Sir.' 'Oh we cover the Whites always, and the Mulattoes; but we should have enough to do to cover these,' was his answer. But though naked, they appeared healthy and cheerful.

"The man leading this isolated life, with only his old wife, who looked more like an Egyptian mummy than any thing human, was worth £60,000 sterling. . . . he had lived twenty years on that small island, and twenty upon Tortola . . ."

Ye gods! A flood of recollections swept off the woman and her bosom and her volume, and the spell of the tropics came back to me from the warm glow of the light over my head. The breath of romance was mingled with the book odor from the musty volume under my nose. I fancied I was once more inhaling the deceptive apple-scent of the poison manchioneel on hot sands. I was on the beach again at Peter's and John Smith was talking to me as I sat and smoked. The native had also recounted the legend of the old man of Peter, and now I was reading about him, the old man, from a printed page before my very eyes. When I had finished reading, I remembered how John Smith had told me that the old man of Peter had gone into even greater seclusion on Norman presumably after his wife's death, and

he had lived on the pirate's island the rest of his days, a hermit.

And then I bethought me of the story of how Norman had been named. This the Commissioner himself had told me the evening I had returned from Norman. This also I found in print, the day following, for, you see, I was going through things West Indian with a fine-tooth comb — but not for treasure. The spirit of old Norman himself popped them at me, of that I'm certain. On that rainy day when I was pawing over Southey he must have fretted and fumed in this manner: "By the Holy Virgin! Will you never get over gazing at that fat wench and come to page 361? What the devil do you care for the 'Epic of Saul'? Get back to your reading, confound you! Now we've come to the page! For the love of Drake and Hawkins, don't go by!"

But he did not have to fume the next day, for I was more careful in my reading, and when I took up a thin little volume,[1] I was sensible of his presence at my elbow. "Ah, now you are coming close aboard and you'll see it in print. You see, I really did leave treasure on Norman and if you only had sense enough to go down there again and try by moonlight . . ." And then, to be sure, I found it.

[1] *Letters from the Virgin Islands* (1843), p. 243, in which this is stated as common knowledge.

"Norman, a bucanier, separating himself from his associates then in force at Anegada, had settled, with his portion of the general booty, on this key. The exclusive claims of Spain to the whole of America, insular and continental, had led, as is well known, to a war of atrocious reprisals between that nation and the other European adventurers. The relative position of the parent states in no way affected this: there was never peace beyond the line! The Spanish guard acostas continued actively engaged; their orders being to sink, burn, and destroy all they met with. . . . In a conflict of this kind Norman and his followers perished, — not, however, until they had deposited their hoard in that common strong box, the earth. These premises our friend holds as incontrovertible, the *where* alone remaining."

So now you have the two ends of it, as I had it long before I came across the Tads and got the belly of the yarn.

CHAPTER II

RICHARD HEWES sat up in his bed, sniffing the air with funny little twitchings of his old tobacco-steeped nostrils, like a bunny pausing on the trail of a cabbage somewhere up wind. Then he got up and went to the window.

Spring had come overnight. For months a succession of gales and half-gales, brewing in the northwest and then quickly shifting to easterlies, had swept Boston with a raw atmosphere of salt air. Now — late in May — the guilty baggage had sneaked in upon the sleeping town which awoke to find her still puffing from her exertions — only they called it the southwest wind. And to show that she was in earnest and had come to stay, there was her fluffy white lingerie all strung out over the blue sky for the sun to bleach. Through open doors and windows she impishly whisked her breath of warming earth and new vegetation, advertising her presence with her perfume like any patchouli-scented wanton.

"By Gorry!" admonished the old man, "you're

late, to be sure — now see if you can't stay around awhile," and he drew in a deep breath as though he had caught some scented line she had thrown him and were coiling down the slack of it in his lungs.

Two or three times, while he was dressing, he started to pucker his lips, but managed to stop in time, remembering that it was bad luck to whistle before breakfast. This day he wanted all the luck that was possible. But he conversed about her to himself and to the colored elevator boy as that dignitary piloted him down through a succession of breakfast odors to the first floor, and he even paused for a moment at the top of the short flight of steps outside to reprove a brace of unsexed brownstone lions guarding the entrance.

"Tut, tut!" he scolded, following their gaze to an upper window across the way — and he left them to their shameless contemplation of a certain young lady in charming négligée.

"This is great!" he kept muttering to himself, sniffing his way, as you might say, around the corner to Berkeley, where like the Englishman and the dog he stuck to the sunny side of the street.

The tide of habit carried him to Boylston and into the Oaken Grove Restaurant, or the Open Grave as he had come to call it, where he paused near the table of a honeymoon couple from

Brockton who were reveling in "Combination No. 6" — "Fruit," a measly orange or a limp banana; "Cereal," a dab of gummy oatmeal or a lone shredded wheat biscuit with a couple of china thumb-caps of bluish milk; "Ham or Bacon and Eggs"; "Tea or Coffee and Rolls." What the devil did you expect even in those days for forty cents?

"No! by Gorry" — he addressed the air about him to the astonishment of the couple from Brockton — "I'll have a *real* breakfast," and he walked out again. "Grapefruit with sherry in it at the Thorndike and two shredded wheat biscuits, even if I have to pay thirty cents for 'em. I'll make 'em give me plenty of real cream!"

"Old Hewes" breezed into his office half an hour late. The first breach of discipline in all his working days.

"Just called you up, sir," said his bookkeeper. "Thought you might be sick. Mr. Bennett is coming at ten for that deed."

Richard removed his hat and took a step toward the coat closet. Then he stopped in the middle of the floor, turned to his bookkeeper, and put on his hat again. The click of a typewriter came through the open door of an adjoining room.

"How long have you been with me now, Clausen?" he asked the palish young man whom

you would have difficulty in picking out in a crowd and who might be anywhere from twenty-eight to thirty-five years of age.

"Sir? — Oh, eight years, Mr. Hewes."

"Thought I saw you and Miss Burke at Keith's last night," questioned his employer regarding him shrewdly. The click of the typewriter stopped for a moment and then continued more deliberately, like the pecking of a hen after only the choicest bits.

"Why — yes, sir." What the deuce had gotten into the Old Man, who had come in half an hour late and was now asking personal questions.

"You've a pretty good idea as to how I run things." Richard was still scrutinizing that face intently. Miss Burke must have come upon a snarl in her notes, for the clicks now came very slowly. "Well, then, tend to Mr. Bennett yourself," and he faced about and walked out of his office.

"Hope the young fool catches on," he grumbled as he stepped out on the sidewalk again. "What a day!"

I have an idea, somehow, that the "young fool" did catch on, for when Mr. Bennett entered the office some twenty minutes later, the bookkeeper came from the inner room a bit more hurriedly than was his wont, and, as he motioned his client to a seat, the machine resumed its clatter

at a furious rate. But this sort of thing has little place in our yarn and we'll leave it to take care of itself, like any active culture of bacilli.

The morning throng had now given place to the casuals of early forenoon. And strange to say, these began to have a depressing effect upon the old man. He was not used to walking in their company. His conscience seemed to be telling him of something he had forsaken; that he ought to be back in his office, bending over his desk in that attitude which suggested the grinding of his little mill; and for a block or two he seemed to be stemming the reaction from his cheerful uprising and the holiday breakfast at the Thorndike. As he looked about him — for he always held his head erect however his spirits might be — office windows bearing the names of those who were somewhere behind them, grinding righteously, frowned down at him; their letters seemed to form into accusing questions. It was only Habit, of course, tugging somewhere inside him, it seemed to be at his heart — perhaps he had been foolish in taking that extra cup of delicious coffee which had wound up his prandial spree. As suddenly his mood changed when he swung into the busier whirl of Newspaper Row; here bulletin boards gave him fresh thought — there was something going on in the world outside those mills where men bent over desks and

ground. Spring and Adventure were having a battle royal with Habit and Doubt — Conscience was now leaning through the ropes — and Spring and Adventure were having the best of it. Richard tacked through the gaping crowd and dove into one of those capillaries through which the Bostonian is so fond of leading bewildered strangers.

It bore a name, this byway, but few troubled to look for the sign to learn what it might be. Richard merely remembered it by a sense of location, and then sought a certain doorway just beyond a basement where the wide window of a locksmith's shop displayed innumerable keys in the blank, festooned on a sagging wire like poolroom markers. Some three feet below the footway a figure bent over a vise, filing keys with patient forward strokes — he, too, was grinding at his mill. The building next to the locksmith's had no elevator, and we shall have to follow Old Hewes up the narrow stairway from floor to floor, or rather from gas-jet to gas-jet, past the door of a dealer in old silver; a hatter's, where the young nobleman in the fashionable shop sends your old fedora to be cleaned and have a new band put on it — the rents are getting cheaper; to the topmost landing where one read the legend: "Wm. Baxter, Commercial Artist." Somewhere on the doorpost is a porcelain push-button, but

the light is so dim that unless you look for it you will knock on the panel as did Richard. With a "Hey, William!" he pushed open the door and stepped inside.

From the bare landing, which would remind you of a North End tenement but for its want of the odor of boiled cabbage and fried fish, you step directly upon a thick carpet whose color escapes you, for your eyes immediately fasten themselves on an old black-walnut double bedstead against the far wall and laid over with a wine-colored counterpane. Then the room seems to expand around you, for it extends the full width of the building and has two large dormer windows through which you see the roof edges across the way, with squares of blue sky above. Your eyes feast on the claret counterpane again and wander to a mahogany highboy from which a small Clytië, exquisitely done in snowy marble, smiles down at you. Continuing their survey they take in a funny little cabinet with glass doors that jealously guard some of William's most cherished possessions, a small tin cup, battered but not rusty, a plug of tobacco, like some ancient black tile, some brass buttons, and a fatigue cap. There is another cabinet, of some dark wood with many shallow drawers, which upon further acquaintance you would find to contain a not indifferent collection of coins and

medals. In the near wall — across from the foot of the bed — is a small black iron fireplace with its grate filled with cannel-coal, wood and paper under it ready for the match. On either side of the grate are a couple of deep, leather-upholstered chairs — worn shiny from the sitting in them of many years. One William had always used. The other — has been Richard's for the last thirty. There are other pictures, but you only take note of the portrait of a young woman, hung over the fireplace, and you wonder if while reading in bed, the artist does not often lay aside his book and talk to her with his eyes. But the room impresses you as neither a sleeping-chamber nor parlor, but the place where the artist lives in his freer hours with his most intimate belongings about him.

"Hello, Richard! That you?" came from an adjoining room.

It was Richard who always came and found William puttering in the far end of his abode, and their greeting was always the same. But this morning there was a difference in the intonation of those last two words. Never before had Richard come at this hour, for it had always been after the day's work was finished that these two had met, or on a Sunday morning in summer at the boat-house at the foot of Mount Vernon Street, with a small package of sandwiches in one

pocket and an orange bulging in the other, for an all-day pull in a double wherry. But this morning was different from the rest. "That you?" implied, "Can it really be you?"

"Thought you'd be around to-day," the voice continued; "put off a man who wanted some *sand* dunes for a blotter — wondered how I guessed he was in the grocery business." Then followed the sound of brisk steps, and the artist came into the room and taking Richard's hand jerked it up and down in affectionate greeting.

And now that we have our two old Tads together, let's have a good look at them. Richard, in his sixtieth year and clean-shaven, was the boy of the two; in his face there were none of those sagging lines one so often sees in men who have worn beards, to betray that he might be a year over forty. Of average height, there was that in his bearing — an eternal spirit of youth — which made you feel that should you handle him roughly you might get your share in return. Not that he was the aggressive sort, but in the depths of his kindly blue eyes there shone the source of physical courage. His hair, which he parted in the middle, had long since changed from the light tow of his youth to a darker color, but now a plentiful mixture of silver-gray had crept in and blended so evenly that the whole seemed to be regaining its youthful shade. His

cheeks were ruddy from walking to and from his office in all weathers, the fine tracery of the lines which gave them color showed like the red copper *cloisonnée* of a seafarer. His slightly aquiline nose seemed to draw his profile forward and gave him an expression of eager haste when he walked. His chin might almost be said to be weak, or at least it lacked that heedless aggressiveness which would have destroyed the idealist in him, and we shall come to like him all the more for it.

The artist was of a different mould. One referred to him as "little," but this impression did not come so much from a lack of stature as by reason of his smallish head which seemed even more diminished in size by a pair of bushy eyebrows and a rather full mustache which hovered like outstretched wings over his goatee. By virtue of a strong Yankee accent he had escaped being called "Colonel." That is, the nickname had never clung to him for any great length of time, as you may understand perhaps before the end of the chapter. A short, barrel-like body, with rounded shoulders, seemed to carry out further this impression of lack in size, despite his erect carriage. His passion, like that of Richard, was rowing, and in their day both had been famous oarsmen. Even now their fame lived with them through their long pulls in the double

wherry, as attested by frequent write-ups which appeared from year to year in the newspapers. He was four years older than Richard, but even the other day, some ten years later, there was nothing of the senile about him and he greeted me with the breeziness of a boy of twenty and pumped my hand as he did Richard's with the mahogany-stained paw of a stevedore.

"So the day has come at last! Somehow I have come to feel that it is n't going to end where we think it will — but then you know I always *was* a romancer."

For this first warm day of spring had been set apart, as you shall hear, and all because on a certain Sunday, the summer before, a little girl had suddenly made up her mind to sit down — through the deck of their wherry.

A wherry, I should explain, is a very light skiff — grandfather to a racing shell, but with greater beam and sturdier withal so that it may venture from the protected haunts of its more thoroughbred offspring to the rougher waters of small lakes and harbors. But like the shell it has sliding seats and outriggers and its decks are of linen only sufficiently framed to keep out the saucy tops of naughty little seas.

I've suspected all along that the old hermit of Norman had something to do with it from the very start, and some day, when I'm sitting on

the aft end of some fluffy little cloud while the old boy spins his end of the yarn, I'll find out. The Tads were ripe for adventure — they had been ripening these fifty years or more — and it could not have been mere coincidence that brought it about. The hermit must have been looking for just such a pair, and when he found the Tads I know he took a dislike to their wherry.

"Nothin' seagoin' to *that* craft," I can hear him say. "Cast y'r beamin' eye on them slidin' seats! Ho! Ho! Rum way to pull an oar — unfoldin' and foldin' like a grasshopper tryin' to jump backwards; and them linen decks! But I'll fix *them!*" And he did, or rather he got the little girl to do it for him.

On this particular Sunday morning — the last one of August — they had donned their scanty rowing attire (I rather hesitate to go into intimate detail as to their abbreviated pants and moth-eaten shirts), and having cocked their weather eyes at sun and sky, decided like wise mariners that they would pull against the southerly breeze which would freshen in the afternoon to help them on their return. So, having tucked their luncheons under the after deck, they set out; gave up their Sunday contribution, a plug of tobacco which they handed to the lock keeper, and rowed out from the basin and under the low

railroad bridges to the open harbor where they laid their course, dodging tugs and ferryboats like a crazy, four-legged water-spider, and through the fleet of small craft sailing out of Dorchester Bay, to the freer waters of the south channel. Noon found them seated by the edge of a shady grove on Peddock's with the wherry drawn up on the beach below them.

All was peace and quiet and they had stowed their sandwiches in their respective mid-sections when the strains of "Ev'ry Day'll be Sunday By and By" filtered through the trees from the other side of the island. This comforting selection, they learned in due time was rendered by the beer- and pickle-gorged band of the Eureka Social and Benefit Club; and not inappropriately, for did it not give promise of continued sociability to those members who had already gone before and been benefited by a glorious send-off with solid silver trimmings and wreaths of immortelles? But we are digressing and perhaps philosophizing.

Not long after the band had removed their tunics and collars and laid down to well-earned rest, a vagrant little miss popped out of the woods, not far from where the Tads had composed themselves to the delights of tobacco, and sighting the stretch of smooth, sandy beach, raced down to the water's edge. Her straight

little legs spoking from her diminutive dress and the inquisitive tilts of her head as she investigated the beach gave her the appearance of a sandpiper hunting for bugs. Then she spied the wherry and ran to inspect it. But the feminine mind is only passing curious when it comes to boats and she suddenly made up her mind to take off her shoes and stockings. Whereupon she turned and sat — through the deck of the wherry!

When the members of the Eureka Social and Benefit Club debouched that night from the *Harriet S.* on the landing at City Point, they were followed by two dejected old men in rowing-shirts and very commodious trousers — for the captain and the engineer were both ponderous as well as obliging men — who, after placing their wrecked wherry in the care of the boatman till a wagon should call for it, slunk off across the arc-lighted roadway and disappeared through the bushes of the parkway.

In this manner had the hermit sown the seed. For over a quarter of a century the Tads had cruised about in their wherry without accident. Now had come a disaster which might easily happen again. To their troubled minds it seemed that wherever they might land in the future, the devil, in the form of a little girl of sudden movements, would always be lurking to wreak ven-

geance on their decks. So ran their fiendish thoughts as they silently padded homewards along darkened and less frequented streets.

When the wherry was at last returned from the builder who had repaired her decks a raw September had set in, and soon after the boat-house was closed for the winter.

"We ought to have wooden decks on her," suggested Richard one evening when they were sitting by the cozy fire in the artist's room.

"*I'd* like to have a deck we can walk on," answered William.

"Yes. Plenty strong —"

"Oh, I don't mean the wherry; we ought to have a boat; a good-sized one that we could spend our Saturday afternoons and Sundays on," and he got up and took the spear from the hand of a small figure of Jason and used it in his pipe as a cleaner — which it was — watching for the effect of his bombshell on the artist.

Through the winter the idea had grown, fed by many fireside talks. From a small boat with a cuddy in which they could sleep of a night, it expanded to something of comfortable size in which they might spend their entire summer — towed to some quiet harbor where they could row and fish and go ashore to forage for fresh milk and eggs as an excuse to stretch their legs over country roads and through shady wood-

lands. Knowing the hermit, or I might better say his rascally old ghost as I do, I'll bet he chuckled a bit at this piece of idealism. "Shady woodlands, my wes'kit! It's coco-palms and sea-grapes I'll be fetchin' you through."

Strangely enough it was the younger, Richard, who first broached this ultimate plan, possibly because his life had been the more confining of the two. Each, in his small way, had prospered and was now comfortably independent. The thought had set them to dreaming and they came to hope that perhaps they might spend the rest of their lives together — but being wise in their years neither gave voice to this thought. They would wait till spring — the first warm day — and then go a-hunting along the boat-yards for some old craft, and then, if they got through the summer together without quarreling — there might be other summers.

How interesting it would be could one trace the lives of two such old Tads who had been friends almost from their boyhood and see what had brought them together or tended to keep them apart. If, for instance, to our detached eyes they left a spider's thread behind them as they went through life so that we could plot their paths.

The blue line, that of the artist, would begin in a little town in New Hampshire and then

wander down to Boston and to Cambridge where it would hover for two years and suddenly dive down into the Confederate States where at one point — it was Antietam, I believe — it would become very faint for a time, and then regaining its vigor would return to Cambridge at the end of the war. Here it would cross the red line of Richard, which had been more steady in its course from South Boston where it had started some sixteen years before. They met as Senior and Freshman. It was hero worship on one side and the fact that Richard's uncle owned a small sloop on Dorchester Bay — it was called Old Harbor in those days — on the other, and from that time the two lines lay very close to each other till the artist married and then Richard. For a time they saw little of each other, and even after Richard's sorrow the lines remained more or less apart till at last he fell into the habit of spending many peaceful evenings at the home of his friend. Fate, somehow, seemed to have chosen these two to live the greater parts of their lives in singleness, however, for it was not long after that the artist's wife died and the two men found themselves linked by a common bond — the loss of that larger life which had been denied them both. They had not married again. That had come into their lives and gone out again like a sweet dream, and for the past thirty years the

two lines had traveled unwaveringly, very close together. Now, perhaps, they would continue, into the back waters of life till they should grow paler and paler and at last become indistinguishable to the human eye.

And now that we've overhauled our gear, let's give the Tads a fair wind and follow in their wake.

"Where to?" asked the artist, as they clattered down the stairs.

"Let's try Lawley's first." And busy with their own conjectures they made their way to the South Station.

CHAPTER III

ONE would, of course, call it love at first sight, but you can saw off me wooden leg if that meddling old hermit did n't have his hand in it, like the wraith of a bit of obeah. There was an influence, hardly uncanny, calculating, perhaps, which seemed to draw the Tads to the old schooner from the very first. They even remarked upon it one evening while they sat before the grate in the artist's room. Little need for the fire, but by some mutual premonition that it might be a long time before they would again enjoy its cozy glow, the artist had lighted the paper under the grate and the two sat in shirt-sleeves with doors and windows open to the balmy night. They had visited other yards and seen many boats, but of these there remained only fleeting impressions. None appealed to them as did the *Golden Parrot*, and they fell to making all comparisons with respect to the old schooner to which they referred as *she* or *her*.

"Queer," began the artist, "when we turned

to look back at her from the dock, that bow of hers seemed to beckon to us — can't you imagine a clipper-bow beckoning, Richard?"

"She did," nodded the other; "and there was something about her that tried to say, 'Take me off the hands of the *Guinea* — I'm good for many years to come.'"

"*Golden Parrot*," murmured the artist; "what a name for an old yacht! Somehow I've come to think of 'em as beautiful *coryphées* made for wealthy men to take the first bloom out of and then let go to the next man who takes his toll till they end up in the scrap-heap."

"My Lord! William, you're getting sentimental," put in the other who would not admit that he too, perhaps, might have the same failing.

"Guess it must be the spring air."

"Or something," concluded Richard.

The Tads were not the only ones in quest of boats on that first spring morning. There was the yacht-broker they had consulted of drab afternoons, with a client in tow carefully nursed for just such a day as this. "Takes a warm day to bring on the fever, like prickly-heat," he had said in greeting. And there were others to whom the broker had nodded who still showed traces of sun and wind that winter had been unable to

bleach entirely from their faces. Here was a new fraternity, adventurers all, who carried an atmosphere apart from the people about them and yet seemed to include the Tads in mysterious ways of its own devising. When the train at last came to a stop as a forest of masts and the yellow buildings of Lawley's came into view, a small army had debouched and formed into a procession of twos and threes along the cinder-walk of the quiet street bordered with working-men's modest homes. All serious of face — for were they not on serious business bent? — except the Tads who were turning back the pages of life to the day dreams of their youth. There might have been something pathetic in it were they less hale and hearty, and could you have seen them walking briskly with heads erect, sniffing the baby spring air, you would have said, "Those oldsters will keep on till the south wind whisks off their shades in its arms."

The street came to an end at a small brick building from which a high board fence ran across the tongue of land the tip of which the yard occupied. Following the others through a gateway the Tads at once stepped from the sleepy New England street to the busy activity of the yard. Through the open doors of a huge wooden shed came the chirp of caulking mallets. From a large brick building which they came to know as

the steel-shed sounded the feverish rat-tat-tat of pneumatic riveters. Crossing an open space they passed a brick oven where men were busy melting lead for the keel of a dainty "sonder" being rushed through in the small-boat shop. Two, with fur coats on their arms, stopped at the steel-shed where a shapely counter projected high overhead, a work of art in black enamel and gold-leaf striping. The broker and his client disappeared in a storage-shed where smaller craft were huddled like sheep in a fold. As though they felt that these would be safe from escape, for a time at least, the Tads turned seaward to the broad-decked wharves that formed a harbor where the larger craft, which had been afloat all winter, were kept as in a corral. The tide was in and they paused to watch a steam yacht being warped into position over a sunken cradle on the railway.

For weeks crews had been busy in the sheds scraping and varnishing spars and small boats. Now the sun had drawn them out like weevils from a pan of meal and with the promise of land breezes they were removing covers and tarpaulins. Captains and mates, who had cursed the lateness of spring in the warm loafing-room of the Master Mariner's headquarters, were in shirt-sleeves, working with their crews. From aloft came the rasp of scrapers, where men in bos'n's chairs

hung like spiders, bringing out the bright yellow of hard pine from under the drab coat with which they had been slushed in the fall. A new yawl, just hatched from the wood-shed, swarmed with riggers and crew and fitters working over and under each other at seemingly interminable tasks which required infinite care and could not be hurried. There was nothing new in this to the Tads, for they had often visited the yards in fitting-out time, but they now beheld it with an awakened interest akin to proprietorship. Continuing to the outer dock which parallels the shore they stopped for a moment to look out over the marshes beyond which the City Point Life-Saving Station greeted them, a patch of white in cheerful contrast to the dingy coasters and rusty barges at anchor in the outer harbor. Why hasten in their search — all time seemed before them. Perhaps they were playing that delightful game of the small boy who awakens in the long dark hours of a Christmas morning and lies for delicious minutes, knowing that he has but to crawl out of bed and sneak like a thief in the night to the room where the presents are laid out. From the way in which they were breathing the air and swelling their lungs one might think they would presently face about and claim any one of the largest of the fleet behind them instead of being in quest of some old hull to use for a house-boat.

"Gangway, please!" and they jumped aside to allow a troop of Scandinavians — they'll soon come to calling them "squareheads" — to pass, swaying under the burden of an immense boom, newly varnished, its row of lacing eyes, like processes, giving it the appearance of the backbone of some strange marine skeleton. The importance of the boom lowered their chests a bit.

"Too grand company for us, Richard," said the artist. "Let's walk around and have a look at those little fellows over there." They turned toward the southern bulkhead where outside the basin two small schooners and a yawl were moored stern-to. Crews were working on the decks of the yawl and one of the schooners, and they were evidently living aboard, for thin lines of smoke caught the breeze from their galley stacks and their cooks were talking across from open forehatches. The other schooner showed no sign of having gone far into commission, although her decks were cleared. Smoke was also coming from her stack. She was a beamy little craft and there was less of the yacht in her appearance than in that of her neighbors. Her decks were still grimy from a season or two of laying-up and her weathered rail cried out for the scraper. But there was something of sturdiness in her appearance which at once appealed to the Tads.

"Something familiar about this old boat," said Richard, stooping down to read the name on her counter.

"Darned if it ain't the old *Golden Parrot!*" he grunted as he straightened up. "Thought I knew her, but it's so many years since I've seen her that I could n't remember her name."

Richard's exclamation must have gone down through the open hatchway, where a swarthy face presently appeared and looked up inquiringly at the Tads.

"Hullo," hailed Richard, "may we come aboard?"

"Sure teeng!" The man came on deck and took up a board which he laid across the rail to the other schooner which had a gangway to the bulkhead.

"You don't mind our using your gangway?" asked the artist of the captain who looked up from his work in the cockpit.

"Not at all, sir, we always help each other out," and then, "Thank you, I'll smoke it after dinner," by way of delicate compliment to such a gentleman whose cigar must deserve a better fate than to be smoked during the mere routine of the day's work.

"She don't seem so much the worse for her years," said Richard as they made their way to the cockpit; "why, it seems only yesterday that

I was a boy at City Point and watched her building. Let's see — it must have been about 'seventy-nine or 'eighty. Lawley had a little place on the beach and I believe I would have sold my soul to old Nick to own a boat like this. Boats were cheaper in those days, but millionaires were rarer birds, and I looked upon the *Golden Parrot* as a small ship — what more could any mortal ask than such a schooner? I remember how the people alongshore began to whisper strange rumors about her — she was building for an old sea-captain and as soon as she was launched she was to be fitted out for a long voyage — a cruise for treasure, they said. But the old captain died even before he had a chance to try her out and she was sold at auction. And from that day to this I have n't laid eyes on her."

The swarthy one, suddenly mindful of something burning on the galley stove, started down the companionway. "You come b'low?" he invited. The Tads followed. Did she seem weather-worn and neglected on deck, this impression ceased as they entered the cabin. Here the years had done little to dull the finish of her woodwork. To the Tads she was fairly palatial. The cabin seemed immense with its gaping berths and broad transoms and ample floor space. A mahogany buffet — the whole interior

was trimmed in mahogany — with its racks for glasses and its mirrored doors lent an air of sumptuousness. The stateroom for'ard of the cabin held them for some time while they admired the wide double berth, the clothes-press, and the desk. One would, of course, need a desk on a ship such as this where one could write checks at the end of the month and then call in the crew to receive their pay. Then, too, one must have the yacht's stationery, and of what use would the stationery be without the desk? The Tads, I should add, aside from the demands of business, never wrote letters — there was no one to write them to — still they had visions of the stationery. A passageway led for'ard to the galley where the swarthy person was busy with cooking, which proclaimed its fishy nature by the odors that drifted aft into the cabin. Delicacy kept the Tads from further exploration and they seated themselves on the bare transoms.

"Might be just the boat for us," said the artist in a low tone, as he drew forth a long leather pouch and proceeded to scoop his pipe into it.

"You lak some feesh?" from the galley.

"No, thanks—we've just had a bite," lied the artist. He might have added with more truthfulness, "But we *have* been bitten."

"Who owns her now?" ventured Richard, taking advantage of the opening.

It was the owner who was speaking to them. A "Portugee" shore-fisherman from Provincetown — "Peetown" he called it — he had come to Boston the week before and by chance had run across the *Golden Parrot*. He had now finished his meal and was seated with the Tads contentedly smoking one of their cigars. It was a habit of theirs to carry a few five-centers — blue smokes — for presentation purposes. This may account for the sly smile of the artist when the captain of the schooner alongside had deferred smoking his till after dinner. So you may know that the Portugee, Manuel by name — they are all Manuel Something-or-other, from Peetown — did not rate the Tads as millionaires, which might be to their subsequent gain. Through the blue haze of his cigar, Manuel told them how he would rip out the buffet and put the galley stove in its place; here he would live with his boy. For'ard of the cabin would be the fish-hold. Out would come the double berth in the stateroom, clothes-lockers, desk —"de whole shooterie" — all would be torn out, leaving nothing but the flooring and sheathing. The skylight on deck would be replaced by a heavy hatch.

"What a pity! to tear out all this bully mahogany," said Richard; "there seems to be some life in the old ship yet."

"Sure teeng, she soun', she mak' fine feesh-boat," took up Manuel, to whom mahogany meant nothing when it stood in the way of a cargo of fish.

"Too darn bad we did n't come down sooner, she might have suited us," added the artist speculatively.

"She good boat alri'; mabee I sell," challenged the Portugee, who began to have visions of a profitable turn-over on his investment.

And so, through the offices of the broker, the Tads became the proud owners of an old schooner yacht.

That is, they owned her by virtue of having paid for her, but little by little she began to exert her wiles upon them, as you shall learn, by that feminine method of constant, imperceptible pressure often misnamed grace, or charm, or presence—depending upon whether a woman is beautiful, or intellectual, or merely strong-minded. Not being a woman, the *Golden Parrot* was neither intellectual nor strong-minded, and as for beauty, one might call her good-looking in a buxom, old-fashioned way. But she *was* feminine. She began on the very day the Tads took official possession. Manuel had cleaned his pots and pans for the last time, rolled up his blankets, taken his nickel watch from the nar-

row shelf over the pipe-berth and called down a last "Goo' luck" from the bulkhead. The Tads stood in the cabin, for all the world like a newly married couple surveying their first bare apartment. In their hearts they were saying, "Now we've done it — she's ours," when a passing tug trailed a platoon of waves which caught the old schooner bow on.

"She's pitching, by Gorry!" and as they swayed their bodies to her easy motion they sensed for the first time that she was a thing of life. Little they knew that this was but the small, entering wedge which would eventually wean them from long years of land-living and at last call them to the open sea. Then, as the motion died away, their elation of the moment gave way to an anti-climax of bewilderment. Here they were, a couple of old landlubbers on a sixty-foot schooner demanding a hundred things known and the Lord knew how many unknown jobs, and for the first time they realized how ignorant they were as to what to do or where to begin.

"Guess we'll need some help," and they went to talk it over with the foreman of the yard, who promised to set his machinery into motion the next morning. Then they returned to the schooner. They could at least wash down her decks and scrub her out below. The only implement they could find was a dirty, worn-out

broom which Manuel had left in the galley, and after throwing it overboard they repaired to the locker where the schooner's fittings were stored. Here was less encouragement, for deck-buckets and coir brooms, it seemed, had a habit of only lasting a season. This was explained later when they began to hear scandalous tales of certain grafting captains. And so they were introduced to the mysteries of the stock-room where everything could be obtained from a windlass to needles and palms. Here they discovered that all charges were made in the name of the yacht — it tickled the old Tads, everything in this new life seemed to be done differently — real ship business, this. No sooner had they begun to wash down decks than the captain came aboard, and with never a by-your-leave showed them how to flip the bucket so that it would strike the water head down, and then jerk it full and spread its contents on deck without splashing it knee high. Then he grabbed the broom before the water had escaped through the scuppers and showed them how to scrub it sideways so as not to break the bristles.

"Now let's see you do it," he said, jumping up on the forward grating as a measure of safety. The artist vowed he would give the captain a better cigar the next time. They had barely finished their task when the noon whistle blew.

"My gracious! William, half a day gone and we've only washed down her decks."

"Better dry your feet and put on your shoes and stockings," called the captain as they started to go below to fetch their luncheon; and then to himself, "Guess I'll have to be a reg'lar wet nurse to those old boys."

For their work below decks they bought a wooden bucket, into which the captain spliced a neat rope handle — no ordinary housewife's pail would do the Tads. It was dark when they finished and at last made their way through the deserted yard on their way to the station.

The next morning they came down to find the schooner taken over by a gang of workmen. Two in an old ship's jolly-boat were freeing her anchor chains from the dolphins at the edge of the channel. This was accomplished chiefly by the aid of powerful words, most of them hitherto unknown to the Tads. Another stood patiently waiting at the windlass to heave in, while a fourth was passing a bow line around the yawl in the direction of the shears at the end of the breakwater. A tall, simian-limbed pirate by the name of "Nick," with a rigger's belt around his middle, was unreeving the ropes which held down the shrouds, fondly calling them "gol-bloody-stiff-lanyards," while a short, stocky man, somewhat bow-legged, surveyed the scene from the bulk-

head and inquired as to whether this gang of spare pump-handles were playing a dang-blasted game of checkers or were going to get the old wreck under the shears before night. It was now seven-thirty.

Things did move, but whether it was on account of the strong language of these strange sea-fowl, or by the grace of the Lord who understood their harmlessness, I cannot say, for I know very little of such matters. Below decks they found a plumber in greasy dungarees sitting on the cabin floor cutting out washers from pieces of leather like a child playing with paper cut-outs. By noon the masts had been lifted out. The bowsprit was allowed to remain, for to remove it would spoil her graceful sheer. Before returning to their old berth their tanks were filled. What a luxury to wash their hands on board ship in their own little basin before they went home. "Put towels on your list, Richard," said the artist, as he shook the drops off his hands and stropped them dry on his trousers.

Have you ever passed an old abandoned farmhouse set back from the road in a yard overgrown with weeds and lush grass, and said, "Oh, to go back and mow down those weeds, and paint those weathered sides, and rip off those tattered shingles, and make it a home once more!" Old craft, even the most battered hulks that lie

rotting on the beach, have always made that appeal to me — there is some spark of life in them which calls out for the labor of love, even as the century-old *Spray*, which Captain Slocum so patiently rebuilded till there scarce remained a piece of her ancient timbers, and reborn, she cruised four of the Seven Seas. And so it was with the Tads who entered into the task of rejuvenating the old schooner with a feeling almost Christian in its unselfishness.

There had been no thought of really going in for this new life on the water till the *Parrot* should be ready to leave the yard, and for a while the Tads had been content to come down for only a part of the day. But their days aboard the old schooner grew longer, and at last they arrived one morning with bulging suit-cases and a roll of blankets.

"Swelled out like a couple of poisoned pups," commented the captain, eyeing the suit-cases and then the blankets.

"Better get your mattresses right out and air 'em all day or you'll be fetching up with a couple of fine cases of lumbago."

As they started to go below Richard all but stepped on the back of a mechanic in the act of extricating himself from the tiny lazaret where the engine skulked behind the companion-steps. Having replaced the steps he proceeded to roll

up the kit of tools he had spread out on the floor.

"How's the engine?" inquired the artist, by way of breaking a somewhat foreboding silence.

"Engine? W'at engine?"

William peered through the steps to see whether in some mysterious manner that piece of machinery had taken wings.

"Oh, it's there all right," said the mechanic, prospectively eyeing the plug he had taken from his pocket, "but you did n't get no engine when you bought this hooker — nuthin' but a stick of dynamite'll make that old mill go."

There was something in his prickly independence which at first irritated the Tads; he was a blatant Socialist they learned later — they were always learning the why and wherefore of things after first acquaintance. Then, by way of softening his outburst, he added, "You would n't want me to waste my time and your money on it — 't would n't be honest."

Manuel's "Goo' luck" came back to them and they wondered if he had not meant it to apply to the engine in particular.

It was late in the afternoon when the friendly captain found time to help them get their mattresses and cushions aboard, and after they had hung the curtains and laid the carpets in the

cabin and the stateroom, he looked about him with an air of approval.

"Makes a heap of difference getting a little stuff aboard, don't it? Why, you would n't want anything better 'n this cabin," and they sat down to rest from their labors.

The Tads seemed a bit silent.

"Good to sit on somethin' soft, ain't it?" pursued the captain. "Well — ye ain't got somethin' to tell me, have you?"

"You heard about our engine?" asked the artist.

Till that morning when they first sensed motion in the old schooner, they had not seriously thought of the engine as being a part of their scheme of life. To the Tads the gasoline engine was some latter-day profanation which would forever be beyond their understanding. And besides when they had once been towed to some quiet nook, there they should remain till it should be time to lay up their water home for the winter. But with the pitching, they heard for the first time the thump-thump of the rudder play, and looking up through the companionway they saw the wheel jerk back and forth in its sagging beckets. A hankering crept down their forearms and into their fingers to grasp its spokes. What fun, to sit astride that wheel-box and steer their little home from anchorage to anchorage — but

they had given no voice to this thought, nor had they even spoken of the engine to the yard foreman. Then came fate — in the form of the Socialist. And now through the captain each could best sound the other, and as for the captain — he was only a part of the entering wedge.

"Heave it overboard," advised he, "and use it for a moorin'. Get the kind the fishermen use — nothin' fancy about 'em and they don't cost much, and all you have to do is to give 'er plenty of oil and gas and she'll fetch you wherever you want to go — if you keep a bit of water under your keel.

"Takes a bit of money playin' around with boats, though. Some gets off easy and some — reminds me of a man I was captain with once. Nervous as a cat. We did n't dare set foot on deck till he got up and we could n't wash down till he was eatin' breakfast. At that we had to walk around like we all had stone bruises. Could n't lie near any of the yacht clubs on account of the mornin' gun, so we picked out one of the quiet coves down East and they was darn scarce acause of the lobster-men runnin' 'round without mufflers. Somethin' scragged in his top hamper and the doctor advised him to try yachtin' to get him away from his business *and* — his friends. Guess it was his friends, mostly, for he had a funny way of wettin' his lips and lookin' far off

and hitchin' up his foot like a spavined old horse at a cabstand, for he hated water which was the only thing he could get. That 'n' milk. Seemed to be gettin' better, though, and then toward the end of summer we ran down to Marblehead. His wife went ashore one afternoon and the steward saw him go into her stateroom as if he was lookin' for somethin'. Remember that fool story about the girl with the sugar lumps and the cologne bottle? Well, he'd 'a' found the bottle eventual, only in rummagin' in her desk for the key, he pulled out a drawer with all the bills that had been pilin' up all summer and right on top of 'em was a whopper from the doctor — big enough to buy the schooner all over again, almost. Well, it fetched him aback with no hands to man the yards, as you might say, and the steward caught him as he was keelin' over. Pore fellow, he never said a word. The doctor said it was hydro-somethin' or other."

"Hydro-financitis, probably," put in the artist.

"Anyway, you've got to have lots of money to have a disease and go yachtin' at the same time."

So had the captain been their go-between and with buoyant hearts they turned in for their first night aboard. They were making a prolonged picnic of it — the old siren was drawing them deeper and deeper into her sturdy bosom. How

the devil can one paint dunes or play with business when one's thoughts are continually harking on problems of much greater moment?

Then in the smooth waters of the inner basin she was hauled out and they raised her boot-top and burned the blistered black paint off her topsides. She became a thing of pride in her new dress of white, like any woman who is improved, as they all are, by the acquisition of new clothes. She became more jaunty, and like any skittish old lady who has her dress shortened, just a wee bit, she tried to deceive people into thinking she had lost some of her embonpoint.

"Seems glad to be out of her mourning," was the way they put it to the men about the yard, who were taking a keen interest in these funny old men who insisted upon living aboard while going into commission.

There was one, Gustafsen, an old Swede, who more and more became a sort of fixture aboard the *Golden Parrot.* Always aboard a few minutes before the gang in the morning, he would eat his meager luncheon contentedly hunched on the for'ard grating where he sat out his noon smoke, shaved from the tarry plug which served in a dual capacity, and at night he was the last to leave. Ship-work was his religion and he was a ship-husband to delight the heart of Marryat. He seemed to exist on tobacco, for when he did

not chew or smoke it, he snuffed it from a little horn box on a piece of white line around his neck. A deep-water sailor, he had gone in at the hawse-pipe and but for one occasion he had remained a forecastle man. As steam, the hated, silent death, gradually took the place of the stately caravans of the sea, he had clung to canvas, always remaining before the mast, till at last the rigors of hard winters on coasting vessels had forced him ashore. His ultimate berth would be the seamen's home. Now by a stroke of good fortune he had a temporary job at Lawley's and his furry nostrils scented, perhaps, a berth for the summer with the Tads.

I have called him a Swede — and so he was by parentage — but from his speech you would swear he had only recently come to this country. All that which was typical of the Scandinavian in him came by strong inheritance — he was born in prosaic Altoona. True to his type, he had gone to sea early in his uncle's ship which had berthed at Philadelphia and so he came to know the land of his forbears. His head and hands were those of a man of sixty who has known the grief and the toil of the sea, and the deep lines in his face were so smoothly cut in a skin so clear in its yellow-brown complexion, that they seemed the work of a sculptor on a waxen image. His erect body, narrow-hipped

and almost slim, was that of a troll's, and had he worn a pointed cap one would have taken him for one of Peer Gynt's companions of the Erlking's palace. It was the clear blue of his keen, brow-thatched eyes that most bespoke animation — and when you came to know him they would betray the impishness of his youth. He retained the old sea habit of growing a beard in winter to protect his throat from the sharp northwesters. So the Tads had seen him when they first came to the yard, but as the warm breezes thawed out his bones he had shaven himself clean and the sun melted off his age. He had an almost uncanny way of always being where he was most needed and he moved about with unlabored gait on legs that fitted the curve of the deck like the wheels of a peasant cart sprung to the crown of old-country roads.

The ability of true seafarers was his and he might have risen to be mate or even captain but for the twin calamities of gentleness of soul and the doing of his work too well. Captains and mates saw in him a good forecastle man and had kept him where, after all, he felt most at home. He had taught himself navigation, and once when a mate had been washed overboard in the Florida Straits, he had taken the berth aft. But his spirit had rankled in the too intimate proximity of an overbearing skipper, and when

the coaster had made her home port, he had walked ashore with his bag to ship before the mast again on another vessel. He is most content who knows himself. And somehow the work with the Tads was bringing on the old longing for the forecastle. In his eyes the *Golden Parrot* was a little ship. That foot-high rail, with its heavy oak cap which he took so much delight in restoring to its old glory of golden amber, was a bulwark to the ankle-high rails of the more modern craft. The staunch crew's hatch — booby-hatch he called it — and the large skylight amidships were his especial delight, as he brought out the velvety red of the Honduras.

One day he had ventured to remark that they would soon be leaving the yard. So far the Tads had given no thought to the hiring of a permanent hand and that night they talked it over. The next day, Richard asked in a casual way if he had ever baked bread or biscuits.

"Oh, yas, I ban cook."

In the evening, as he was leaving the ship Richard called after him, "Oh, Gus!"

The old Swede had turned his stolid face toward them and then clambered down the gangway, his heart beating fast under his faded blue jumper.

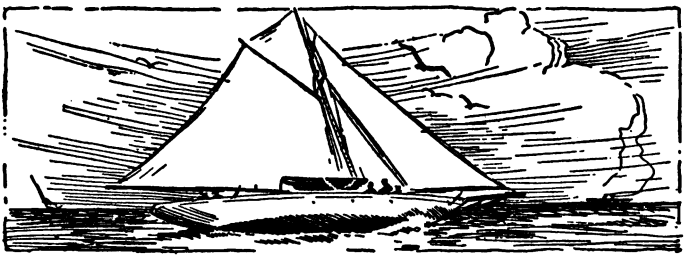
"How would you like to come with us?" was put to him.

His face betrayed no emotion, but there was the least tremor in his voice, "Ay tank ve get along." And that settled the matter.

It was well into June when they were at last warped out of the now almost empty basin. Neither the Tads nor Gus had any knowledge of the workings of a gasoline engine, so for a few days they would have with them the blatant Socialist — the "B. S." they called him — who had installed a new engine which would feed out of their hands, he told them, if they but gave her oil'n'gas.

"You c'n cast off when you're ready," yelled the B. S.

Richard took the wheel, the men on the dock lifted the lines from off the dolphins, and the engine belched acrid blue fumes from under the stern. "Must be feedin' that enjine with them cigars o' theirs," grinned one of the yardmen, but not unkindly. The *Golden Parrot* slowly gathered headway while Gus hurried aft to caution the skipper in embryo against throwing the wheel over too hard lest he scrape her counter along the piling. It was the Tads' first lesson in seamanship.



CHAPTER IV

WHEN the moon is full she displays her rotundity over a considerable number of degrees of latitude — any school-teacher will tell you that even if he has n't studied navigation — and she was approaching this state when the Tads dropped anchor near the marsupial Life-Saving Station at City Point. But what had the Tads to do with the full moon? Nothing, perhaps, except to loaf in the cockpit in their long easy-chairs and smoke and watch her come up over the smooth back of Long Island, and doze till the cool night air should at last drive them below. But the moon had something to do with the spirit of the hermit, and old Norman for that matter, and when she was full she had a habit of keeping these old fellows very busy down at the island as you shall learn in time. This may explain, perhaps, why the Tads were allowed to remain at anchor for a space. At times Richard went to his office to advise Clausen in his new capacity — they were reluctant visits. And the artist brought out his

easel and drawing-board; but, pshaw! The easel was always getting in the way and the drawing-board was one fine day appropriated by Gus who made excellent use of it in rolling out cookies and pie crusts — and William's fine brushes were just the thing for administering shark-oil to the works of the galley clock.

Then the moon began to wane till at last she shone no more, and the hermit whisked northward one night and blew restless dreams down through the open companionway. The next day, with her two boats hoisted in their davits like a couple of chicks under her wings, the *Golden Parrot* meandered out of the harbor and headed for Gloucester. Here she composed herself very much as a hen that walks forth of a hot day to settle down complacently in the middle of a barnyard for a dust bath. That is, if you can picture her as a sort of hybrid fowl having a khaki back and a white body, her inquisitive bowsprit the amber-colored beak of a pelican with her figurehead under it for a pouch. But the old hermit would not let them slump into lazy, harbor-loafing habits, and they soon found themselves along the Maine coast where they cruised eastward with increasing delight. Then the fly crept into their ointment — a sort of phantom which each saw separately, but dared not mention to the other. It hovered for the first time over the old

schooner on one of those brilliant days of off-shore winds when the bite in the cool breeze seems to belie the summer which the grassy slopes on the fore-shores of the islands proclaim.

They were headed westward. Ages ago, it seemed, although it had been only a few hours back, the gurgle of seawater pouring through the scuppers and the swish of the coir broom had announced the beginning of their day. Oh, there is no better alarm clock than the washing down of decks in the morning. Then the Tads had stuck their heads above the open companionway to breathe the crisp morning air, mingled with the odor of coffee and bacon which drifted aft to them under the awning. Such a morning calls for action, and they had got the *Parrot* underway while Gus finished his work in the galley. But that had been ages ago. Now they were chugging along comfortably, Gus at the wheel, and the Tads stretched out in their long wicker chairs in the cockpit.

For some time a white patch had been clinging persistently on the horizon astern. Then it began slowly to detach itself from the line of sky and water, and Gus, who had been looking aft from time to time, broke a long silence.

"Ay tank she owerhaal us now."

The Tads sat up to get a better view of her. She must be doing ten knots to their modest five.

"What is she, Gus?"

"She ban sloop — look like *Awenyer*."

They could now make out her immense balloon-jib, with the peak of her mainsail showing above — surmounted by a huge club topsail. On she came at an angle that must put her rail aboil, her lee bow throwing a white smother. She seemed to be moving in a fixed groove and the eye could detect no change in that angle of heel nor variation in the mass of foam under her bow except that it grew larger as she drew up on them. Another moment and she would run them down! Then like a woman of wondrous grace she suddenly veered and swept by under their lee, a magnificent swishing figure of curving duck, diaphanous as it passed between them and the sun, rigging taut as draftsmen's lines, topsides of eggshell like turned marble, and green crescent of underbody. Such a sight the Tads had never witnessed close at hand and it brought them to their feet like gaping school-boys. They drank in every detail, the crew in white jumpers hunched along the weather rail, the figures in the cockpit in blue coats and creamy flannels, and the captain, lone standing and with feet braced apart, at the wheel, his eyes in the sails as though the little ex-schooner were but a mere lobster-buoy. As she ranged ahead they read *Avenger* in gold letters on her shallow transom.

The Tads turned their chairs and sat down without a word. They dared not speak, for the phantom fly had settled down upon them — the chug-chug of their faithful little engine began to gnaw on them inwardly. It was not speed they wished nor shining brass, but — oh! to move along silently under press of canvas. Perhaps Gus felt it, too, for he instinctively looked aloft as if to gauge some imaginary luff, but his gaze only met the rebuff of the khaki awning stretched overhead. Then he closed one eye as though he would concentrate all visual effort through the other which he brought to bear first on the back of Richard's head and then on William's. At last he focused it at the long range of day dreams, while the *Golden Parrot* breasted her way through the tiny seas, and had you gone forward and put your head over the rail you might have heard that old bow talking Dago, gurgling and chuckling, like some old gaffer communing with himself over some secret bit of fun. Perhaps she had some prescience of what was going on in the minds of her old skippers, sitting in the cockpit and scheming along parallel lines while their eyes gave stern chase to the receding sloop.

A week later the old schooner snooped into Boothbay Harbor and came to anchor like any barroom loafer, drawn in from the street on the tide of his inclination.

"*Had* an idea we'd fetch in here one of these days," said Richard as he lowered one of the dinghies.

"Me too," chimed in the artist, who, had he been less occupied with some thought of his own, might have noticed an unusual eagerness on the part of his friend. With somewhat guilty shift they found their way to the post-office and need I say that each found a letter awaiting him? And addressed in the old scamp's own handwriting? That's why I called it parallel scheming.

The artist's — he was careful not to bring it into too close range of Richard's vision — was from an aged aunt who was about to visit Boston and desired to see her nephew on some rather urgent business. Richard had an uncertain recollection that William had once told him he was alone in the world but for a half-brother who had settled in the West — Utica or some such place — and who he thought must be dead long ago. But he did not inquire into the matter, for he, too, had received an important communication which after a studied reading he made haste to stuff into his breast-pocket.

"But how the devil —" and the artist stopped just in time, for how the devil could he explain in what manner his aunt had known that he might call in at Boothbay? "How the devil shall we go down?"

"Might as well stick to the old boat and cut right across the bay, we'll get there most as soon," said Richard; "that is — soon enough for me."

A few days later, after an unusually early and hasty breakfast, Gus rowed the Tads ashore to the landing at City Point, the same where nearly a year before they had left their wrecked wherry and slunk off in search of darkened streets. On their run down they had repeatedly taken occasion to voice their disgust at having to return to Boston at this time of the year, but now, curiously enough, when they were actually in the sweltering heat of a windless August day, there was no mention of the heat nor their dislike for the town. The impending business which had brought them here seemed to leave no place for such trivial discussion as the weather. As the car stopped abreast the South Station at Dewey Square, the artist suddenly jumped to his feet.

"Well, here's where I must leave you; aunt's stopping at the Essex, handy to the trains, you know; can't say when I'll be back — I'll hire a boat to bring me out," and with a wave of his hand he hopped off the car.

Richard watched him disappear into the crowd, and then, as the car slowed down at the farther side of the square, he, too, got off, and

walked back toward the station. Here he found that he had just missed a train for Neponset by a scant minute. An hour later he was on the cinder-walk, bound for Lawley's, and once inside the gate he headed for the spar-shed. Then he suddenly remembered that the work of putting boats into commission was long since over and that the shed must be closed for the summer. He was about to turn back to the office when he saw that a small door in the side of the shed was open. As he stepped over the high sill he heard voices within, and as his eyes adjusted themselves from the brilliant glare of the hot August sun to the subdued light in the shed he made out two figures in the far corner where the *Golden Parrot's* spars had been stored in the spring.

One of these seemed strangely familiar, and presently a voice that had said good-bye only an hour before, inquired,

"Why, Richard! What are *you* doing down here?"

"Thought I'd like to meet your aunt — forgot to ask you to bring her out to tea."

The dénouement, one might say, was complete. From that day of the *Avenger* they had longed in secret to get the old schooner under canvas, but each had feared to put his longing into words lest for some childish reason the other might object to so violent a change. Then, the

addition of the rig would mean more work aboard ship and perhaps an extra hand. At any rate, they would devise the aged aunt and the important business so that they might look the ground over and then — well, in one happy moment all doubt was swept aside.

"This gentleman," said the artist by way of introducing a young man who seemed to be wondering what it was all about, "is Lawley's designer and he tells me that it would not be much trouble to rig her again."

Then followed a consultation in which it was decided to put a gang on her masts that very afternoon. Work was slack in the yard and the sail-loft was languishing for something to do — in two weeks they could be sailing! The Tads were getting deeper and deeper into the toils.

"Let's fool the old Swede," suggested the artist on the way to town; "make him think we're sick of the old schooner and are going to lay her up."

Richard chuckled and suggested that they might as well make a day of it. So the old rascals gave themselves up to the delights of Revere Beach, and when they were at last rowed out to their home, the anchor light was burning and the soft drone of Gus's snores came up through the crew's hatch like the cozy purr of a tea-kettle.

Breakfast was a silent meal of which the Swede took gloomy note. When they had finished eating, Richard spoke. "Oh, by the way, Gus, when you're ready for'ard, we'll up anchor and take the schooner back to Lawley's."

As they hove up the anchor the windlass clanked dismally as though it were measuring off their last minutes on the old schooner. Gus straddled the wheel-box and, with a face as long as the spar-buoys he was picking up in the channel, headed the schooner for Neponset. The Tads busied themselves below decks. Their empty chairs in the cockpit gave hollow comfort to the old Swede. Had the old men quarreled, then? They had been strangely silent ever since they had left Boothbay. Perhaps they had sickened of the old boat and would now lay her up and let him go. They were close aboard the basin now, and finding voice he called down, "Skal ve anchor in de strøm or come ob to de w'arf?"

The Tads, in their working clothes, bounded up through the companionway, and as the artist raced forward to look after the bow line, Richard announced, "Slow her down alongside and we'll warp her under the shears — we're going to step her masts and rig the old hooker!"

The Swede gulped, but whether it was his tobacco he swallowed or mere emotion as expressed by his Adam's apple, Richard was un-

certain. The next moment he showed his tobacco-stained teeth in a wide grin — the first since he had come to the Tads.

One memorable afternoon they let the south wind drift them out into the channel, where they hoisted sail. Slowly the schooner filled away, and as the Tads eased the sheets under the orders of Gus, who took the wheel, she heeled to the pressure of the breeze and began to move.

"How you like it, Gus?"

"By yolly! she ban aalright; vould you tak' de weel, Mister Hewes, til I slack de lee lift?"

When they swung around the Station the man on the bridge stared for a moment and then bent to the speaking-tube. The captain was seen to rush up from below and as they let go their anchor he grabbed up a megaphone.

"Thought you'd come to it — you fellows must have worked like hell." As soon as the sails were made up — it was a stiff job, with this new canvas — all three tumbled into the dinghy which had been towing astern and rowed a little way off for their first good look at the old schooner in her new rig. She was hybrid no longer, but a full-fledged sea-fowl, and but for her smooth, unscarred topsides she might have been a trim little fisherman. Her shortened masts, set well apart,

gave her an air of deliberate intent — for the pursuit of adventure?

"Why, she looks like a little ship!" exclaimed the Tads; "think we'll have any wind to-morrow, Gus?"

CHAPTER V

A HALF-GALE out of the northwest, strumming seaward to hustle soggy coasters on their roaring way, clipped the smoke short off from chimney-tops and galley-stacks. Up harbor, screaming gulls pirouetted and dove squabbling for the gurry thrown overboard by fishermen just come in from sea. With sails ballooning like the dress of an old lady trundling down some wind-blown street, the *Golden Parrot* had bustled in, and her crew was making up at their old berth by the Station when a voice boomed up at them from alongside.

"Th' Gr'raand Banks f'rivre! Bless me bloody ould soul if it ain't th' ould *Parrit!*"

"You bet it's the *Parrot,*" answered Richard, busy with the mainsail cover, "and wha-de-ye-want?"

"Hove ye aany ould rope aboard — joonk?"

The owner of the voice drifted alongside while the schooner was put all ship-shape and Bristol fashion. Then all hands dove into their respec-

tive pockets for pipes and tobacco and proceeded to light up. It was a mandate of Gus that there should be no smoking while making up sail lest a spark be rolled into the canvas to smoulder till the whole sail might be ablaze. Now the Tads were at leisure to survey their visitor.

He sat in a battered fishing-dory whose last coat of paint must have been of a salmon color. In small black letters on the bow read the legend "Lic. 269." For a fender she wore the heel of a rubber boot, cupped over her stem. Her bottom was heaped with pieces of old rope from the size of a ship's hawser down to a hand line, a fathom or two of rusty chain, a clam-rake, and some odds and ends of brass pipe. Here was a junk-man of the sea. And it was the man who claimed the Tads' attention. If you have played around Dorchester Bay you must know him, for you would look twice at him if you but heard the boom of that voice. Under a black Cape Ann was a sandy-bearded, weathered face of the kind we often see in etchings, but seldom, now, in reality — for they are fast disappearing. It was a strong face, with heavy nose and clear blue eyes. Were those eyes set closer he might have belonged to a certain type of Cape-Codder, but that voice proclaimed in him the Irish which his face bore out. His powerful body, slightly hunched as he slowly paddled his dory to over-

come her drift, bulged in an old blue flannel shirt, and a pair of trousers, that can only be described as dark, betrayed the outlines of his sturdy legs. His rusty, salt-rimed shoes had so long since lost all trace of handiwork that they might be an epidermis of nature's own growing did you not see that they were laced together with pieces of marlin. His teeth were black and brown-stained from decay and tobacco. He reeked of the sea.

"Wull, wull," he rumbled when he saw that he had an audience, "'t is maany yeers since I seen th' ould craft an' f'r aal I can see she's good f'r maany more."

"You know her, then?"

"Do I know her? If aany one knows her 't is John O'Connor. Did n't I help ould Cap'n Tom to fit her out, an' was n't I goin' in her to th' Wist Injies?"

All of which the Tads were in no position to refute. But here was a bit out of the day's routine.

"Come aboard," invited Richard; "if we've got no old rope, there's a bottle of grog below I know of."

With a pull he was alongside and giving the dory a shove astern he rolled over the rail and made fast her painter.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed, straightening up,

"she's a troonk aaft, but f'r aal that she's the ould *Parrit* I knew maany yeers ago — an' hove ye done somethin' to th' rig?"

The Tads were about to explain when it seemed as though his throat suddenly went dry and he ran his tongue over his lips in a way that suggested, "Wull, how about that grog, now?" — and taking the hint they led him below. As the artist opened the cupboard a wistful look came into that strong face, which Richard set down as an animal longing for the drink itself. The next moment he shamed himself for the thought. Holding up the glass — ridiculously small in the grasp of his thick fingers — the junkman stepped back and saluted an imaginary fourth person. "Heer's to ye, Cap'n Tom — an' to yez," turning to the Tads. "Fair br'razes an' snoog haarb'rs." Whereupon he solemnly rolled the liquor into his mouth and tipped back his head for gravity to do her share.

"'T is maany a day an' some thur'rty yeers since I had me larst nip out o' that cupboard, f'r that wuz th' ver'ry day ould Cap'n Tom tuk sick, but we had no idee it wuz one o' his larst.

"'T is rhumored,' sez he, 'that I'm sailin' f'r Spanish gold — an' maybe I ain't — kape y'r yoong mout' shut, f'r we'll hove no tales a-chasin' this cr'raft — we're takin' th' sea air f'r our healt'.' Th' nixt day he tuk to his boonk,

there," pointing through the doorway to the wide berth in the stateroom, "but it warn't f'r long.

"I fetched a docther, one o' them yoong w'ippursnapp'rs that goes through th' wor'rld wid th' bit in thayr tayth, takin' his own way like a wessel wid too much heads'l — gripin'-like.

"'"'T is no place f'r a man wid th' noomony,' sez he, like th' cabin wuz a slimy cell dhrippin' wid wather.

"So we dhressed him an' I locked up th' ship, f'r we had no crew as yit, an' we rowed him ashore an' tuk him to th' horspittle in a carriage — but 't wuz not to his likin'.

"'"'T will be another kind av a foor-w'eeler ye'll be takin' me out in,' sez he, gloo'rin' at th' saw-bones.

"F'r a time he saimed to be dooin' wull, an' one day he begun taalkin' about an exthra fore-mast hand an' a cook. But that verra night — he'd been in th' horspittle nigh on to a sennit — he wint into a daycline an' too'ards marnin' th' docther begun ta shake his head. Frum th' look on our faces *he* guessed it too. While th' dawn wuz givin' way t' mornin' he lay wid his face too'ards th' windy, watchin' th' sunlight grow till it sthraimed in aal yellow an' bright. It wuz one av thim waar'm Septimber days whin a hors-pittle wud be th' larst place f'r aany seafarin'

man. F'r hours he'd spoke no wur'rd, just lookin' through th' windy and caughin' frum time to time. He saimed to be restin' aisier an' I begun ta hope th' yoong w'ippursnapp'r wuz mistooken afther aal, an' anuther day might find him sthrenthinin'.

"'Gimme a dhrink,' sez he, 'an' sind th' nurse out o' th' room, f'r I've a bit ta say to ye while I can.'

"We aised him a bit on his pillows an' thin th' nurse left us.

"'But f'r a brother I hav' n't seen these twinty yeers, I'm alone in th' wor'rld an' 't is nayther heer nor there w'at I'm thinkin' o' him.

"'T is you I'm tellin' this yarn, an' sence I've tuk a fancy to ye, an' it's yez I would have pr'rofit by it, f'r th' only good th' ould hermit's doubloons will do me now will be th' knowlidge that afther I'm gone, they'll pass inta seagoin' haands an' will buy ye a ship like th' *Betsy Ann.*'

"I nivre cud raymimber th' name av th' ould hermit an' I'm not so sure o' th' name o' th' vessel," put in the junkman. "But 't is no mather. An' wid this he begun th' yaarn, wich I'm tellin' ye th' best I'm able.

"'I wuz a lad o' sixteen,' sez th' cap'n, 'whin I shipped frim th' port o' Boston on me fir'rst v'y'ge — she wuz th' *Betsy Ann,* a smaal bark wid a gin'ril caargo, bound f'r Sain' Thomas.'

"Fig'rin back frim Cap'n Tom's age whin he died that must 'a' been about ayteen-twinty.

"'We put to sea too'ard th' ind av June an' be th' luck o' wisterly br'razes we fetched th' thrades a week lather an' th' nixt day we picked up Sombrero. Thin we run down f'r th' Wirgins, holdin' wull ta th' southard, an' th' nixt marnin' they wuz to looard. Th' thrade had been droppin' in th' night an' it kep' a fallin' lighter an' lighter through th' day till it lift us entoirely, rollin' in th' swell wid th' oilans clost aboord. There had been a moon-dog in th' night, but we gave little t'aat to it till th' glass begun to dhrop, an' too'ards noon th' sun showed big an' pale through a mist high up in th' sky. Wid that th' Ould Man begun ta worry an' he spint th' rest av th' day waalkin' th' deck lookin' at th' sun an' sweepin' th' horizon f'r a bit av wind. He knew these paarts wull an' I heard him tell th' mate, "I'm afraid we're in f'r a bit av a blow — though 't is early in th' saison, an' I'm thinkin if we c'n git a w'isper o' wind wid th' currint, we'll run into a cove I know, till th' weather clears, f'r Sain' Thomas is no kind av a place in a hurricane."

"'Too'ards avenin' a br'raze cum up frim th' southard w'ich carried us up past Dead Chist (I raymimber th' name frim th' haythenish sound av ut), an' here th' wind left us, dhriftin'

like a log. Th' tide kept takin' us to th' west'ard till we wuz only half a mile off th' cove w'ich th' Ould Man had in mind. Thin th' tide turned, an' f'r fear we might be carried out to sea we anchored wid aal sail set an' aal han's on deck waitin' f'r a puff that might help us inta th' cove. It wuz th' full o' th' moon, but aal we cud see wuz th' glow av him through th' greasy mist, an' nary a star. One bell had jist gone w'en th' Ould Man yells, "Thar she comes!" an' we seen th' black mountin' up out o' th' nartheast like th' horizon wuz tippin' up over us like a cover.

"'Th' mate dhropped down th' for'hatch like a rat, an' w'ile he wuz lettin' go th' bitther ind av th' chain, th' rist av us joomped aloft ta cut away. An' 't wuz aal we had time for, f'r th' blow wuz on us like a t'ousin divils. It sthruck us starn-to, w'ich we t'aat wuz lucky at th' time, but ef she'd only been braadsoide an' gone down w'ere she wuz, more av us wud 'a' been saved be blowin' ashore on th' land just unner our lee. Some o' th' men wuz sthill aloft whin th' black swept over us an' f'r a secind I had a glimpse av thim clingin' ta th' riggin' wid th' sails sthraimin' out frim th' yaards afore they wint aaf wid th' wind in ribbons. W'at wid th' roor av th' wind an' th' hiss o' th' sea, I heard nothin' but the beller av th' Ould Man, in me ear, ta give him a haand wid th' w'eel. Thin I seen th' spar'rks o'

th' chain sthreekin' out o' th' hawse-pipes an' th' low moon in th' west'ard, an' th' ind av th' oilan' goin' by, an' I t'aat we wuz safe in th' open sea. Me t'anks wuz still in me mind — whin we sthruck! Th' Ould Man bein' ta staarb'd an' liftin', flattened ag'in' th' w'eel, but me bein' clear an' pullin' down ta port, lift th' spokes like a rottin apple off a sthick an' I flew past th' cabin, skitherin' along th' deck, afoor th' wind. I fetched up ag'in' one o' th' frames in th' bul'ark an' whin I pulled meself up I wuz clost t' th' for-'ard riggin'. We had gr'rounded be th' edge av a smaal cay an' there wuz no gettin' back to ut. Thin I see a oilan' ower th' bows an' th' cloud covered th' moon lavin' us black as th' inside av a cat's belly. I fig'r'd th' ould ship wud break up in th' night an' her pieces go dhriftin' out t' sea an' th' quicker I got overboord th' better, f'r th' seas wuz pickin' up every minit. Holdin' ta th' riggin', I crawled onto th' rail an' joomped.'"

The three had long since seated themselves on the transoms, the Tads wide-eyed, facing the junkman, who for all the world was spinning the yarn as though it had happened to *him* and not to Cap'n Tom. Gus, a not unwilling eavesdropper, had found some puttering job in the galley. And then, strangely enough, the yarn

began to take on a personality of its own — it was not some tale which had been bottled up these thirty years and conned over many a time till it had almost become the junkman's own experience — the yarn seemed to be spinning itself. And it was no mere drop of grog that had washed out the dam of the junkman's memory — but you'll have to ask the hermit as to that!

"'W'ether I wuz swimmin' or just sthrugglin' ta kape me head up an' th' breath in me, I can't raymimber, but whin I begun ta think I wuz a fule ta lave th' ship, I cum ta aisier wather, an' th' nixt minit I wuz on me haan's an' knees on sandy bottim. There wuz no sthandin' in th' wind an' I kep' a-crawlin' till I sthruck ag'in' a smaal tree. There I set f'r th' rist av th' night wid me arrums aroun' th' troonk an' shiverin' in th' wind thet wuz roorin' over like it wud tear up th' oilan' an' blow it out ta sea.

"'Daylight cum, but it wuz like th' dark day av' winther. No sun, just a glimmer be w'ich I could make out land acrost th' wather. I had swum into a smaal cove. Thin th' wind died down an' in a few minits it was calm a'most as whin we anch'r'd th' night afoor. Th' sky was clearin' an' I cud see a landin' at th' head av' th' cove, an' I stharted waalkin' along th' beach thinkin' there wud be a house an' some payple.

Afther a time I see th' waals av a smaal stone house wid th' roof blowed off just back o' th' beach. Thin I heer th' roor o' th' wind ag'in an' I barely had time t' craal inta th' roons whin 't wuz on ag'in, this time frim th' so'east. Aal day she blew harder than iv're, but I wuz bether aaf f'r I wuz out o' th' wind an' me clo'se had dhried on me. I must 'a' fell ashlape, f'r whin I woke it wuz marnin' an' th' sun wuz ower th' edge av th' wall an' I opened me eyes full in th' face av him.

"'"Pore bhoy," sez a rumblin' voice rusty wid disuse, an' th' nixt minit he wuz a-bendin' over me. F'r aal I knew he might 'ave been auld Nick his-self, f'r he wore a big w'ite haat th' likes I'd nivre see afoor an' a bloo jackit buttoned back onto itself wid a wes-kit hangin' down ta his knees. "Wuz I off'n th' barque?"

"'I thried ta spake, but me lips moved widout sound an' he fetched a nippurkin o' wather an' put it to me mout'. Thin I tould h'm th' barque had sthruck on a reef an' how I joomped overboard an' swum ashore. He had seen us workin' inta th' chann'l two nights afore, an' suspectin' we'd been drivin' ashore he had cum down wid th' first light o' day. He'd found nothin', he said, an' wuz on his way back ta his house whin he passed th' ould sthore-house. Whin I tould him how we sthruck, he sez, "I feer they've aal been

carried out ta sea, an' ye can thank God f'r th' miracle that fetched ye inta this cove." '

"Av coorse," said the junkman, "I can't raymimber th' very wor'rds o' Cap'n Tom, but I'm givin' ye th' yarn purty neer as he give it t' me, an' sich things as th' hurricane an' th' ould man wid th' white hat an' th' wes'kit hangin' adown ta his knees, I'll nivre fergit till me dyin' day.[1]

"Thin he tould me how th' ould man fetched him to a little house in a clearin' neer th' top ov th' oilan' where he lived aal alone, an' give him goat's milk an' sthrange vitt'ls th' like he'd nivre et afoor, an' kep' him out o' th' sun till he cud plait him a hat out'n sthraw.

"Aal summ'r long Cap'n Tom stayed wid th' ould man, helpin' him wid his goats an' fowl an' workin' in his gardin. Once in a w'ile a naygur sloop wud run inta th' cove an' th' ould man wud buy rum, an' he sint ta Sain' Thomas f'r clo'se f'r th' boy, an' though he sould nothin' he had plinty av money.

"But as time wint on, th' yoong Tom begun thinkin' on his folks ta home an' th' heat made him long f'r th' cool o' Noo Englan'. Th' ould man cum ta sinse w'at wuz goin' on wid th' lad, f'r one night he sez ta him, 'Ye'll be layvin' me

[1] When I got the yarn from the junkman himself — writing it as he spun it — he told me that he had never heard the name of the old man of Norman. Nor have I been able to find it in print, so far.

soon, f'r it's Octhober an' 't is no good f'r th' likes o' you ta be livin' wid a ould hermit like me. Ye hove seen how I sell nothin' an' yit I have coin o' th' realm ta buy frum th' naygur sloops. But there's anuther kind o' money on th' oilan' an' I hove no use f'r 't, f'r 't is Spanish gold an' shud th' black divils learn av it 't wud be th' death o' me.' Thin he tells yoong Tom how he discoov'r'd a doubloon on the flure av one av th' caves in th' wist ind av' th' oilan'. An' he digs 'roun' an' finds a square hole in th' rock filled wid eart'. O' coorse there's a ir'n chist in th' hole an' 't is filled wid doubloons like th' one he found on th' flure av th' cave.

"Arragh, he must 'a' bin a quare one," put in the junkman, "f'r in these days ye find th' old ones thet hove that f'r a whole ar'rmy t' live on, scramblin' neck an' neck wid th' yoong, clawin' f'r money, till they're aal boxed up an' shuvel'd inta th' grave. But ta raysume — it seemed he wud n't hove th' gold an' he left it there an' said nothin' to nobody till th' yoong Tom come ta th' oilan'.

"'Th' nixt day,' sez Cap'n Tom, 'we wint ta th' cave an' dug th' dirt out o' th' hole, an' sure enough there wuz a ir'n chist a bit smaaler than a seaman's chist. Th' hingiz wuz so rusted it tuk th' two av us ta lift up th' cover, an' thin — by aal that wuz good an' Holy! if 't war n't full

o' doubloons, nothin' but doubloons, showin' yeller be th' light o' th' lantern.

"'I put some inta me pocket — an' damn th' luck as ye shall heer. We taalked it over, an' be th' couns'l av th' ould man I wuz to ship back to th' States an' thin git a smaal schooner an' cum down an' take th' doubloons away wid me.

"'Whin I landed at Sain' Thomas there wuz ships in plenty, but none homeward bound, an' I put up at a smaal boardin' house to bide me time. It wuz th' naygur crimp that run it, seen th' doubloon roll out o' me pockit one day, an' though he said nothin' them wickid eyes o' his sthickin' out like sojer crabs' said more wickid wor'rds than ivre cum over his tongue. An' feer cum inta me heart f'r th' ould man. Be good forchune there wuz a sloop just lavin' f'r th' oilans an' I sint a letter ta th' ould man — not mentionin' doubloons, o' coorse — but so's he cud put two an' two tagith'r an' make more av it than th' naygur crimp.'

"'T wuz a long yar'rn f'r a dyin' man ta be tellin' an' his mind begun ta wander, f'r he lift af about th' doubloons an' begun tellin' how he quit th' sea an' bought a far'rum up in Ver'r-mont, an' thin he wint af in a faint. I caaled th' docther, but there wuz nothin' we cud do, f'r his loongs wuz fillin' like a scuttled ship, an' I kep' sittin' by, expectin' ta heer th' death rattle

aany minit. Too'ards avenin' he opened his eyes an' seemed ta be tryin' ta tell me ta cum neer'r. I bent over him an' put me ear clost t' his mout', but aal I cud make out wuz som'thin' about a pig.

"'Th' light pig,' he wuz muttherin', 'mind th' light pig.' An' thin he slipped his larst moorin' an' we closed his eyes.

"An' th' *Parrit* wuz sould — th' new owner wanted me ta go wid him, but I had no fancy ta see anoth'r shlapin' in Cap'n Tom's berth there."

"So, for all you know, the doubloons may still be on the island," said Richard, after a long silence.

"F'r aal I know."

The long afternoon had spent itself with the spinning of the yarn, and the slanting rays through the skylight had been steadily creeping upward, growing more and more yellow till at last they began to fade into twilight. The little ship's clock struck the hour in halting twos.

The Irishman sprang to his feet. "Six bells an' heer I've been yarnin' th' hull afthernoon!" And before he could be persuaded to remain aboard for a bite of supper with the Tads, he had pulled his dory alongside and was rowing off in the dusk.

"What a yarn!" began the artist, as they sat down to their supper. "Somehow I have no picture of the old captain, I'm always thinking it was the old junkman who was wrecked."

"Yes, but what puzzles *me*," said Richard, "is how, after all those years, Cap'n Tom knew he could still find the doubloons. The hermit must have received his warning and removed the doubloons from the cave and buried them elsewhere. Then, in some way, he had sent word to his friend. If any one suspected there were doubloons on the island, the cave would be the first place he would look for 'em. But *why* had Cap'n Tom waited for sixty years before starting down for them?"

They fell to speculating as to whether Cap'n Tom had by any chance left some key to the buried treasure. Perhaps it had been a simple one and after committing it to memory he had destroyed it.

"But if the key was too complicated to trust to memory," ventured the artist, "or if the place was marked on a chart, the old captain would have hidden it somewhere."

Gus had now cleared away the table and the old men were stretched out on their transoms speculatively blowing the smoke from their pipes up toward the skylight, where it hung for a moment and was then caught in the upward current

and swept away into the darkness. I'll lay a Johannes to the first Irish pennant ye'll find on the *Golden Parrot*, the old hermit was up there somewhere in the black night snuffing the wraiths from their pipes and softly cursing the Tads for the mildness of their tobacco.

"Now the chances are that it was hidden aboard the schooner," continued the artist, puffing harder and harder till the bowl of his pipe sizzled and spluttered like a tiny crater. "And then comes the question —"

"Hold on!" cried Richard. "You'll have us sailing for the Wist Injies afore you know it! The chances are even that the key either died with the old captain or was left in substance, which leaves us fifty per cent in hopes. Then the key may have been removed when the schooner was sold; which cuts our chance of finding it down to twenty-five per cent. The lawyers must have heard of the purpose for which the schooner was built, and if they found the key they might have gone down to the island on their own hook. But even if they did n't find the key and it was left hidden aboard some place, don't you remember when we took out her papers at the Customs we found that she had been rebuilt in '98? Now the odds are mighty big against us that the hiding-place was discovered when she was rebuilding and that would take away twenty-four out of

our twenty-five per cent and leave us one chance in a hundred."

Smooth-browed Reason sat with the Tads in a long silence, broken only by the clatter of dishes for'ard and the occasional thump-thump of the rudder. Their pipes grew cold and they relit the heels, but even tobacco failed, and they could only pucker their brows while their thoughts chased about in circles which grew smaller and smaller, and finally, losing radius, became mere points fixed in their minds as in space — that last chance.

But it was in sleep that Fancy gave the sign manual to Reason. Richard heard the old captain — but in the form of the junkman — pacing up and down the deck, impatient to be off for the West Indies, and he awoke to find that the tide had turned so that the softening gale blew a neglected halyard against the mast with a pacing tap-tap. The artist got farther along and dreamed the old schooner was roaring down the trades, but he awoke to find her still on even keel, and the rush of the sea along her planking was only the water from Gus's bucket gurgling around the corner of the skylight over his head.

Even the bright glare of the morning sun as it came down in a broad path through the open companionway could not dispel the air of romance which the junkman had left in the old schooner.

She was no ordinary yacht, for had she not been built for a treasure cruise? And what old sea captain of seventy-five would be fool enough to contemplate hoisting his jib on a fool's errand? The rumors of his boyhood days on the bay came back to Richard in force. The *Golden Parrot* became a luring fact and the yarning junkman no liar!

They had been relating their dreams over their after-breakfast pipes. Through the open passageway Richard was speculatively watching Gus as he removed his apron and disappeared up the hatchway hauling the galley bucket after him. He was about to speak when the Swede yelled down the skylight:

"Aye tank ve have good vind to-day."

"Wha'-d'-ye-say?" from Richard, jumping up. "Damn the doubloons! We can't always sail."

They were hoisting the mainsail when the peak halyard became strangely reluctant and they lowered away again to investigate the trouble. "De sheeve yam," announced Gus, who advised that he had better go to town to buy new pins and sheaves for all the blocks aloft.

"All right," agreed Richard, suddenly losing all interest in the wind. "You'd better go as soon as we've put on the covers and — oh, by the way! — I'll give you a letter to take to the office

which will require an answer. We'll get our own luncheon, so you need not hurry back."

"What was the idea about the letter?" asked the artist, after Gus had left.

"Thought it would be a good chance to poke about — and I wrote Clausen to keep him waiting in the office for an hour or so — he won't be back till evening."

"And who's damning the doubloons now?"

"Well, I did n't mean to damn 'em exactly, but it *would* be bully to find that key."

"And then it'll be you that will be havin' us sail f'r th' Wist Injies?"

If the key *was* aboard the schooner, the Tads reasoned that its hiding-place would be somewhere aft of the galley; in the lazaret, or the cabin, or most likely of all, in the stateroom where the captain would be most secure from observation.

They began in the lazaret where with hammer taps they followed every frame from horn timber to covering board and every deck beam, like twin Jonahs trying to tickle the whale into a disgorging laugh. But the sturdy old frame only mocked them in its soundness. Catch any old hooker like the *Parrot* giving up her secrets in such easy fashion. Then like militant housewives they charged the cabin whence they carried on deck bedding and cushions from berths and transoms, even the loose panels of the floor, shelves from

lockers, and drawers, every movable thing came out but the ballast, and even portions of this they shifted in order to examine floor beams and timbers. With a flash-light and a small mirror they made minute examination of the spaces between ceiling and planking which they could not reach with their hands. Oh, they were sore bitten,these funny young oldsters, on hands and knees, grunting and squirming and peering like a pair of ant-eaters rooting in a hill. But they found only those small evidences of former ownership which gravitate to the bilges of all old boats. Stray hair-pins, a bilge-soaked letter penciled on the ruled stationery of a Mr. Gilhooley, "Prop. Family Hotel," written with considerable *abandon* and indited to "You Charlie," who also went under the *alias* "deerie," and there were further suggestions of past high life in the form of labels floated from beer bottles. But of the key? Not a suspicion.

It was at about this stage of the hunt that the junkman, coming in from the upper harbor, laid his course for the *Golden Parrot.* When he was almost alongside he turned in his thwart to hail the schooner, and then a strange thing happened. At the sight of the disorder of cushions and bedding strewn about the deck and hung over the boom, his jaw dropped like a gaping cod and he sat for a moment holding his oars clear of the

water while the breeze rapidly carried his dory away to loo'ard. His look of surprise slowly changed to one of perplexed amusement. "Wull, wull," he muttered, "I haad no t'aat me yarnin' ould tongue wud —" But instead of finishing his sentence he took to his oars again with a guilty chuckle and giving the *Parrot* a wide berth, he rowed away toward the head of the bay.

The cabin had occupied the Tads till the middle of the afternoon when they answered the call of empty stomachs. The stateroom had been left as a last tid-bit where they could browse with greater leisure even should Gus return before they had finished their work. Just why they should wish to keep their search a secret from the old Swede did not occur to them at the time — perhaps they feared losing caste for taking too much stock in the junkman's yarn. Even the stateroom proved as barren as the cabin and the lazaret, and at dusk they had finished their work and put everything ship-shape once more. Then Richard hung out the riding-light as a beacon for the belated Gus while the artist started the galley fire.

Strange to say, it was with a feeling of relief that the Tads at last stretched their tired bones on the transoms in the cozy glow of the cabin lamp.

"Well, that's *one* thing off our minds," sighed

Richard. "What the devil would we do with a mess of doubloons, anyway? We'd be a fine pair of old fools to go a-treasure huntin'."

"Only goes to show we're the like the rest of folks who don't know when they're well off. We can get *our* adventure out of books — and it *is* a load off our minds — if the key's still with us it must be pretty well hidden. Wha' do you say we run over to Wellfleet for a barrel of oysters?"

CHAPTER VI

A WARM breathless afternoon — Nature was dozing like an old housewife who has finished peeling her potatoes for the evening meal and has nothing on earth to do till it is time to light the fire. The outgoing tide had swung the craft in the bay so that they all salaamed to the westward like a flock of sun-worshipers. The surface of the harbor, like dusty glass, showed no sign of a ripple. An empty crate floating near the schooner seemed fixed, as though even the tide were now taking a nap before it should turn and flow in again. The Tads dozed in their long easy-chairs in the cockpit, while for'ard Gus had fallen asleep over a bit of fancy tiller rope, his legs sprawling out on deck and his back propped against the hatchway.

The man on the bridge of the Station paced slowly back and forth to ease the monotony of the long afternoon watch. Presently he stopped midway in his beat and, picking up a pair of glasses from the box behind the weather cloth,

focused them over toward Neponset on a small white patch which was rapidly growing larger. It grew till one could make it out to be a sizable cruising launch with a sturdy buff stack that gave her the appearance of a small steam yacht. As she neared the Station her bow wave died down to a ripple, and, silently coasting by the schooner, she lost all motion a stone's throw away.

"Let 'er go," spoke a figure in shirt-sleeves on her baby bridge deck, and then followed a splash and a rattle of chain as a white-jumpered sailor tripped her anchor from its davit.

"Hello!" cried Richard, sitting up with a start; "looks like a new launch."

"She ban new last year, sir," from Gus; "she yust go in commission for de vinter — das owner skal meet her in Florida."

The Tads took to inspecting the new-comer much as two persons — from sixteen till the very end — take in the new clothes of the lady across the way. But more frankly, because of the little bit of blue bunting which hung from the arm of her signal mast, proclaiming the absence of her owner. The shirt-sleeved one, after a casual survey of the chain gear for'ard, walked aft and disappeared into the cabin. He reappeared in a moment with a freshly lighted cigar, and easing into a large wicker chair on the after deck, steeved his heels on the rail and abandoned himself to his

thoughts — whatever they were. Then a second, also in shirt-sleeves, came up from the engine hatch amidships, submerged into the cabin and reappearing likewise with a lighted cigar, took up a chair by the side of the first. The white-jumpered sailor, having swung the anchor davit inboard and secured the falls, went to the bridge, where he slipped clean white covers on binnacle, wheel, and telegraph, returned for'ard, and sitting with his legs down the crew's hatch, proceeded to light his pipe. Behold a picture of self-satisfied content. Fresh paint and varnish everywhere, the launch looked like a new toy. There was nothing for *her* crew to worry about. After a good fat summer, here they were in commission again and all ready to go south to continue their easy life. Their daily beer was assured and plenty of beefsteak for'ard. No freezing work for *them* on coasting schooners on a fare of salt horse and Halifax mutton this winter!

"Guess they won't look so spick and span when they reach Florida," commented the artist with a touch of pique.

"Oh, dey look yust so good — dey don't poun' salt water."

"What do you mean — don't pound salt water?"

Gus came aft and explained how one could follow the seaboard from New York to Key West

nearly the entire way, through inland waters, providing one's draft was not too great. Five minutes before, the Tads had not the slightest notion but that they were spending one of the last God-given days of that year on their old schooner. Now visions of an indefinite cruise began to take hold of them.

"Could *we* go down inside?" asked Richard.

"Ve could go til Beaufort alright."

"But where's Beaufort?" from the artist.

"Oh, das vay below Hatteras, unner Cape Fear."

"And then what?" in unison.

"Den ve go outside to Sharleston oond inside til Fernandina. Ve could vait in Mayport for good vedder oond den fetch Myami vid power 'n' sail in tree day. Yust vait a minute —" as though the Tads might spring immediately to windlass and halyards, and drawing the dinghy alongside, he jumped in and rowed over to the launch. The first shirt-sleeve, whom you might have guessed to be the captain, was seen to take his feet from the rail and disappear below, whence he reappeared with a gray book which he passed over the rail to Gus.

It proved to be a paper-covered pamphlet, worn and much-thumbed, with the inscription "Inside Route Pilot — New York to Key West" on it, and it bore the authoritative stamp of the

Department of Labor and Commerce. Its pages were filled with minute directions as to canals, sounds, inlets, and towns, and in the back cover was an envelope containing folded charts. Going below, they spread the charts out on the cabin table, where they followed the Swede's stubby forefinger as it traced the thin red line of the route. Although Gus had never been down by the inside route, he knew the coast from the outside like a book. He had been into all the ports, and from the local knowledge of the wharf-sides had heard how small vessels could sneak inside under Hatteras and dodge in among the inlets of the South Carolina and Georgia coasts while he and his mates in the larger vessels had to fight the winter gales outside. As his finger cruised southward the Tads could imagine themselves sailing in waters perpetually warm and swarming with sharks and alligators, their decks loaded with oranges and cocoanuts and bananas, while the sky above was an ever-blue dome curtained with fleecy clouds like unto the pictures in railroad folders. When Gus had at last piloted them safely to the earthly paradise of Ponce de Leon, he concluded with, "Oh, das vould be fine cruse," and began to replace the charts like any man of the cloth who has finished his pet sermon on "Youth and Old Age." The sleepy afternoon had gone in a trice, and they finished their perusal of the

charts by the light of the cabin lamp. Gus told them he dared not keep the book any longer, for they of the launch would be turning in early as the captain expected to be off before daylight.

When Gus returned, it was high time for supper, and as the Tads discussed this new problem which even grew to the proportions of a small crisis, he would occasionally put in a word or two during opportune lulls.

"Well, I dunno —" began the artist, who was always the leader in these discussions — that is, he began them and then led the more cautious Richard to say what he would like to have him say.

"Can't say there's anything wrong about it 's far's I can see — there's nothing to keep me here."

"Me neither — we can stop paying rent in Boston and put our things in storage."

Richard looked over at his friend to try and see what it had cost him to say, "we can stop paying rent." Did the artist mean that he was ready to give up the little home that had known him for so many years? Was it in part a sacrifice to the younger man's longing to cut loose altogether from the old life? Richard's apartment had never been more to him than a mere place to read in of an evening and to sleep, but with the artist it was different. *His* abode had been

a part of him — it had been a part of his wife. Had he loved William less he would have put his arms around him. But he only blinked his eyes and reached for his tea-cup.

"S'pose I give up my apartment and bring my stuff down to your place and we'll go halves on the rent — it won't be much more than the storage."

"Thanks, Richard — maybe — we'll think it over," answered the other with a slight catch in his voice — when one is fond of dry toast the crumbs *will* get down the wrong way, at times.

"Plendy vil' duck in Ches'peek Bay," came from the galley, by way of an anti-climax.

Visions of rows of slain mallards hanging by their feet from the rigging took possession fore and aft, although neither the peaceable old Tads nor the harmless Swede had ever known a shotgun.

"Ve could cruse to Dry Tortugas war das ban fine fishin'," whereupon tarpon and amberjack and barracuda joined the festoons of ducks, and even a huge man-eating shark was mentally hoisted for inspection on the foredeck.

"Seems I've read of sea-cows bein' down around there some'eres," ventured the artist; "we might tame one and then we could hoist him up in the davits every mornin' and milk him — only it 'ud be a she sea-cow, of course."

Oh, the Tads were in a merry mood, and they laughed as they had not done these many years, while the subtle old Gus came as near chuckling as any salt-boned scowegian can chuckle, for he began to see the end of his worries for *that* winter at least. And so they talked it over through their supper and far into the night. Perhaps they ought to take on an extra hand. Did Gus know of a good man?

"Oh, yas, a yung man, Ole Yensen, he vould yust suit."

"A square — Is he Swedish?" asked the artist.

"He ban Dane, but he gude faller."

With the first streak of sunlight the Tads stuck their heads out of the companionway to find that the launch was gone.

At the end of a week the Tads returned to the schooner — a bit worn from their exertions ashore and tired from restless nights spent in confined spaces. First they had moved Richard's belongings into one of the back rooms of the artist's abode — a simple operation which used up a couple of days. But their nights ashore brought on a strong hankering for the freer airs and broader prospects of their little sea home.

"Richard," confided the artist on the third morning, "I guess we've been spoiled for city living." And they started all over again and packed their things for an indefinite sojourn at a

storage warehouse. When they at last closed the door on the empty rooms in the alleyway and squared away for City Point, the artist had remarked, "I always had an idea my final exit from the old place would be in a wooden overcoat."

Richard laughed. "The best of plans sometimes go wrong, don't they?"

Perhaps their ancient humor may have been a little forced, but that was only to cover queer fuzzy feelings in their old chests and an uppish something in their stomachs — sentimentalists would call it the effect of emotion; but avast on such a lay, it was only the itch to roll the wheel once more and the call to the good sea cooking of Gus.

The Swede had been no less active. The sailmaker had been called upon for a storm trysail, and the compass had been adjusted by a professional from town. Ole, the new foremast hand, a big boyish Dane from Skagen, had already been a member of the crew for several days and the two had sent down her topmasts. The *Golden Parrot* was ready for sea. And it was high time, for it was now well into the first week of October and the gales which would soon be blowing off Cape Cod were not the pleasantest diversions to contemplate. Reports came from up country, so the papers said, that the squirrels had been gathering an unusually copious store of acorns,

which to all students of nature is an infallible sign of an early winter. Another day or two, one inferred, and snow would be in the air.

October by the calendar, but it was really summer hanging on to bid the Tads *bon voyage.* There were four pairs of hands now and the sails went up two at a time. Then the Tads stood by while the squareheads applied their "fish-guts and soup-bone" to Miss Gypsy for'ard.

"Yudas Priest! she comin' hard. Yump on de chain, Ole! — now she come, heeve-ho, ay tank she broke — *she broke,* Sir!" And they filled away to the light northerly breeze which showed signs of coming on harder. From the crew of the Station came a wild "Good luck!" which they answered by dipping their ensign as they headed down the harbor. The least thought in the minds of the Tads was of the yarning junkman of whom they had seen neither Cape Ann nor rusty dory since his romantic "gam" in the cabin. Little did they know that it would be many a moon and another winter before they should see the Station again; and as for the *Parrot* — she presently shouldered the swell from an incoming tramp and nodded in her sly way, and I believe she even tried to wink her weather hawse-pipe as if to say, "Th' light pig, mind th' light pig." Perhaps she was only screwing up her nose at the smell from

the municipal sty on Deer Island, so let us not romance.

The wind settled back into the northwest and, like a motherly nursemaid sending the baby-carriage ahead for a little coast by itself, it pushed the Tads across the bay and around the Cape to Handkerchief where a southerly breeze of tropic breath blew them safely into the narrowing arms of the Sound.

One morning they found themselves chugging through Hell Gate with a fair tide which, before they knew it, swept them into the busiest thoroughfare of all New York, East River, where the courtesy of the sea is but a weak spirit, and size becomes right, and you little fellows keep damn well clear of us big ones, for our time's worth more than you are. Gus took the wheel while the Tads gave themselves up wholly to gaping at the towering, droning city on one hand and Blackwell's on the other, with its brooding, ominous buildings turreted and barred — a copy-book example of cause and effect; and then as the first bridge soared over them they bent backward till Gus had to caution them lest they lose their balance, perchance, and fall overboard. To be sure the Tads had been to New York before, but the cañon of lower Broadway had meant only height to them — here was immensity and stupendous movement. Here was an education in

one huge lesson too concentrated to be readily digested. Great must be the men behind all this, and they mentally took off their hats to those of Wall Street, not in respect but in awe — they were hideous in their greatness. As they passed under the last bridge, Brooklyn, the ancestor of them all, they thought of Brodie of slang fame who seemed to typify the chancy spirit of the New York they knew.

The river broadened and they swung around the Battery with its lower buildings toeing down to the upper harbor. Here was expanse. The Tads were no longer mites, but men on their own ship. It was good to catch a glimpse of the open sea beyond Sandy Hook as they sailed past Staten Island, and at last they anchored in the quiet reaches of the Raritan with the feeling of a long day's chore happily finished. The next morning they entered the canal and stepped ashore at the toll office by the lock.

"First time we've been ashore since Boston!" exclaimed the artist. "How do you like the feel of New Jersey?"

Whereupon Richard sprung his knees and brought down his heels on the soil of New Jersey as though it ought to have its individual temper as well as its distinguishing color on the map. "A mite springy, I should say." And from that time they made it a practice to go ashore at the ear-

liest opportunity as they came to each new State — "to get the feel of it."

A wheezing little tug escorted in a deep-laden canal-boat and backed out again, gracefully enough, but with a plaint in her aged exhaust that muttered, "I ain't what-I-use'-ter-be, I ain't what-I-use'-ter-be." And when the lock was at last opened to the canal, the rangy old barge-skipper, who had handled her lines, opened the hatchway for'ard, walked down into her hold, and reappeared a moment later leading a pair of diminutive donkeys who followed nonchalantly across a small gangway to the tow-path where they patiently waited while he hitched them tandem to the tow-line. Then he returned aboard, drawing the gangway after him, and sat down on the rail to light his pipe, while his wife, a no less heroic figure, appeared from the neat little cabin-house aft, hung a dishtowel on a line between a couple of poles fastened to the house, and sat down on a chair with her arm crooked over the long tiller. The old man cast off his lines, spoke something in donkey language, and resumed his pipe on the rail while the tow-line slowly lifted from the ground and the barge assumed slow motion.

The canal became a new and fascinating delight to the Tads, not without its moments of mild excitement, for at every mile, it seemed, a

bridge would loom up ahead, and while Ole stoutly tooted the horn, they would anxiously watch the bridge-tender's house, and then, at the very moment when they were about to stop their engine, a deliberate, lumbering figure would appear and the bridge would slowly open for Gus to pilot them through. Or there would be locks which called for quick work with bow and and stern lines and careful snubbing at the bitts to keep the schooner in mid-stream while the water poured in to float her to a higher level.

At sundown they tied up by the canal-side at the very doorstep of a farmhouse, where they spent the evening with the man and his wife. There was a delicious novelty in yarning familiarly enough with people they had never met before and yet knowing that their home was out there in the darkness, only a few feet away.

The next day they continued through wooded country and open farm-lands — an hegira of absorbing interest. The day was wine to the Tads, who would not go below even for their luncheon, which they ate in the cockpit with all the delight of school-boys viewing the landscape from the windows of a dining-car.

At Trenton, people held at the open bridges brought back the truant feeling in the breast of Richard, while the more free-lance artist only

saw in them victims of the unescapable treadmill of civilization.

Then they were let down from this man-made hill of water and set sail along the Delaware to another canal which brought them to the Chesapeake. Little did the wild ducks know what the sparkling winds of this inland sea spared them. That there were no firearms aboard the *Golden Parrot* may have been a minor reason. When there was a breeze the Tads would rather "sail than eat"; it became a by-word with them, and they bowled along to Norfolk, where they anchored in the snug little basin called The Hague.

But no sooner had they walked the kinks out of their sea-legs than the hanker for the wheel crept back into their palms and they continued on their journeys. The weather held in persistent good humor.

"Seems too good to last," Richard commented one day. "I'll bet the wind tears our pants off as soon as we poke our nose out to sea at Beaufort." And the mental horizon of the Tads began to cloud up with vague forebodings. But the *Parrot* bowled merrily along and kept her own counsel. She might have said, "You can't expect smooth sailing all the time — a little worry will do you good — all good skippers worry, you know."

They were following the "day-marks" of the

last mile of tortuous channel which winds around behind Beaufort, and Richard had just remarked, "Well, there's the town — we've had mighty good luck so far" — when he suddenly swayed forward and caught hold of the back-stay. There was a sickening feeling that their keel was touching; the deck heaved under them and the *Parrot* came to a dead stop, pitching forward like an old horse that has stumbled to his knees. They were hard aground, and even as they looked overboard they found that the tide was ebbing away from their boot-top.

"Yust in de middle of de channel, by Crass!" swore Gus.

"Why in time did n't I keep still till we were at Beaufort?"

"Vell, Mister Hewes, ve're newwer in port til de anchor ban owerboard."

There was nothing for them to do but wait for the next tide. Across a mile of water to the eastward a church spire and a roof or two of Beaufort showed tantalizingly through the trees of a small peninsula. To the west lay the expanse, dotted with the straggling posts and beacons by which they had followed the invisible channel, forlorn as some flooded bottom-land. The water looked cold and forbidding under the steely light of the late afternoon sun that was sinking into a greasy horizon. Directly astern, to the north, a hard-

rimmed cloud-bank was slowly creeping up into the sky.

"Ve get plenty vind to-night, an' yust so soon dar ban high vater ve haal aaf and swing to de anchor til ve can see in de mornin'."

After sundown came the wind-lipper of the north wind, but it quickly grew into wavelets and then to short, angry little seas which began to pound under the stern, swinging the rudder viciously against the gear till the Tads thought it must twist off at last and leave them helpless even should they succeed in getting off the bar. The wind increased to half a gale. There was no sleeping for the Tads who sat out the night, till at last in the gray dawn Gus announced that the tide was full, and they started the engine astern and hove in on the warp they had put out over their counter. But the warp came in very slowly and they found that they were only dragging their anchor through the mud. Gus shook his head in despair. The wind, he said, had blown the surface water out to sea and they should have to stay where they were till the gale blew itself out or swung into another quarter. All the next day and the following night they hung on the bar; the Tads moping disconsolately in their cabin with the doors closed to keep out the cold wind, and an ache in their hearts for the patient old schooner unable to escape her agonizing buffeting.

It was on that second night that Richard awoke from a fitful doze to the sound of gurgling water. As he got out of his berth to light the cabin lamp, his bare feet struck the cold wet of a soggy carpet and he shook up the artist to tell him that they must have sprung a leak. So far it was only a trickle, however, for they pumped her dry in half an hour and it took two hours for the water to reach the stateroom floor again. But it was misery to the Tads, who began to imagine all manner of dire calamities. Gus, the only hopeful one of the four, swore that the *Parrot* was too sound to be so easily strained, and as soon as they could dock her they would find that it was only some weak seam — they would recaulk her from garboard to rail and she would be as tight as a bottle again, they should see. The confident old Swede somehow put the Tads into a happier mood, and now they came to look upon their disaster as a bit of adventure. Their faith in the old schooner began to return — had they not been a bit disloyal in thinking that a little pounding could do her harm? — and who ever heard of a cruise, that is a real cruise, without a leak in it somewhere?

The wind died out with the night, and when Gus awoke the Tads it had slunk around to the southeast and brought cheer in the warm breath of the Gulf. They came on deck to find that the

schooner was already giving to the strain of the hawser and soon they were clear of the bank and riding free to their anchor. Then they fell-to to a glorious breakfast of bacon and eggs and coffee — they swore they had never had a better — and they were discussing as to whether they had better proceed on their own, or row to Beaufort for a local pilot, when they heard a voice alongside.

"On board the schooner! D'ye want a pilot?"

Did they want a pilot! The Tads scrambled on deck to find a battered skiff alongside with a long, lean man who seemed equally battered, standing in her with his arms hung over the rail of the schooner.

"Seen ye yasterd'y, but I knew ye would n't git off till the wind shifted, so I did n't bother to come out till now."

"We thought we were in the channel — till we went aground," said Richard by way of explanation.

"So you was, but the man who had the last contract f'r cleanin' it left a lump of dredgin' right in the edge of it. It's only you long-legged fellows as fetch up on it — a fishin' smack was hung up here a hull week last winter, so you're gettin' off easy. Take ye t' Beaufort all safe f'r two dollars."

With this he sprang on deck and fastened his painter to one of the bitts.

"An' if I put ye aground ag'in, I'll give ye leave to cut my bloody throat." A safe-enough promise, for I doubt if there was a knife aboard the *Parrot* with temper equal to that shagreen-covered member. "Me name's Bill Ropes, and I'm a pilot and a sea-cook and a damn good one." Had he said, "I'm a son of a sea-cook and a bloody pirate and I'll end up with a rope around my neck," he might have fetched a bit nearer the mark. But the Tads only saw in him an eccentric character who had come to them as a good angel disguised as a pilot.

"Finish y'r breakfast; we got all day to make Beaufort an' you won't be goin' outside, I'm thinkin', f'r some days — this 'll be snortin' out o' th' so'west to-morrow."

The Tads sat down again to their table while the stranger perched himself on the top of the companion-steps, eyeing them like some weird sea-fowl. He wore a pair of faded dungarees, neatly patched at the knees, and a blue-and-white checkered cotton shirt with sleeves rolled to elbows exposing a pair of gorilla forearms. On the inside of his left arm, where the hair was less dense, as in a clearing, lay a beautiful maiden tattooed in shameless nudity and entwined by a huge snake, like a fouled anchor. A wide-

brimmed, coarse-braided, straw hat, which he had thrown down on the cockpit floor, exposed a smallish head, weather-browned and with small tufts of hair springing from ears and nostrils. His face was that of a down-east Yankee, and were you to overlook for the moment the smooth black hair above it you would say that it belonged to a man of fifty. Deep lines guarded his mouth like parentheses as though he were used to damning and gritting his teeth, and wrinkles radiated from his eyes from much squinting at the sun. The hard lines of his rather low forehead even diminished its height. But his hair was that of a man of thirty, and we'll not go far wrong if we split the difference and call him forty.

"Tidy little ship you've got here — thank ye, I *will* have a slog of java. Thought you was a blue-fisherman till I come alongside an' seen ye had no gear and was all slicked up like a yacht. Goin' to Floridy, I s'pose. Well, ye ought t' be snug as a couple of roaches in this cab'n — would n't ask f'r nothin' better meself."

Suddenly their visitor cocked his head to one side. The schooner was rolling slightly and from her bilges came the telltale gurgle of water washing over pieces of ballast. "Har! The old girl's leakin', is she?" He said it as though he had discovered some crime — the Tads might as well be frank with him first as last.

"Only a trickle," admitted Richard.

"Alright if ye know just war it is, but if ye don't —"

"Thought we'd haul out and have a look at her," admitted the artist.

"That's right. But the railway here has filled up with sand an' if ye don't draw mor'n six feet I guess they can take her."

They had to admit a draft of seven. Perhaps by taking out their ballast and stores they could get her out on a high tide. Otherwise, they were told, they would have to retrace their steps to Elizabeth City, nearly two hundred miles. This was not the pleasantest of news to contemplate, but when they were once underway the Tads blithely dismissed their doubts with, "Oh, we'll get her out somehow."

The easy confidence with which the pilot toyed with the wheel inspired them with the hope that he might in some way bring strange tricks of the sea to their aid. There was a fascination in watching the movement of the muscles in his forearm which gave the snake the appearance of writhing about its nude mistress.

They were now approaching the open drawbridge of the railway which connected Beaufort with the intervening islands and the peninsula on the opposite side of the Newport River, where Morehead City could be seen in the distance. As

they passed through the draw, they came upon a cove, large enough for the anchorage of a fisherman or two. The pilot nodded shoreward at a small boat-yard with dock and railway which extended cheering welcome to the Tads. "We'll anchor off the town first and then talk with him, an' don't tell him y're leakin' — till ye have to."

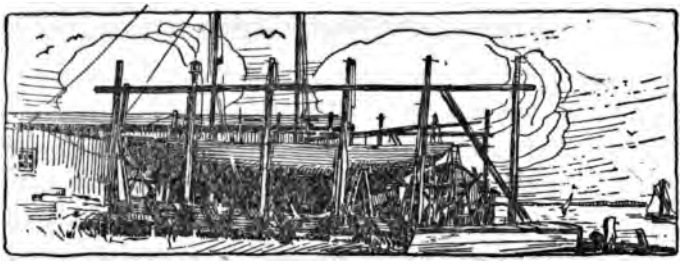
On the seaward side of the peninsula and built along the water's edge, the town swung into view. A bar that nearly dried at low tide formed the outer barrier of the harbor which was in reality only a bit of deep channel. Here they anchored not far from the only other occupant, a graceful hull with two stumpy masts and a stack like a tug. She was, the pilot told them, the old *Pilgrim* — ex-cup racer. Once the pride and hope of Boston, her hoodoo of unsuccess had clung to her, even as a fisherman, for her rig had been made too small and her power was not adequate. The rest of the fleet had gone out with the morning tide.

Perhaps it began with the old *Pilgrim*, which the Tads well remembered from the days of her prime, the feeling that here they would like to rest awhile, which grew as they inspected the water-front with its wharves and fish-houses and ends of streets of clean white shell, beyond which they caught glimpses of neat little cottages along the main street. They swore that here they

would rather spend a week, if necessary, lightening their schooner so that they might haul out in this pretty little town. Had the good Lord descended and with his twelve sea-going disciples performed a latter-day miracle of lifting out the *Parrot*, recaulking and painting her bottom and setting her afloat in a day, and then sent an offshore breeze, the fickle old Tads would probably have made sail instanter, with the excuse that they could always come back some time — but they could not always sail. But such a thing as a latter-day miracle was perhaps the least thought in the minds of the Tads as they tumbled into the pilot's skiff.

"You c'n always ketch him aroun' feedin' time," promised Bill Ropes, as though the yard-owner were some timid animal of precise habits.

"We'll stalk him while he chaumps," said the artist.



CHAPTER VII

RUMOR, like its freemartin twin, Scandal, even though apparently dead, has a Lazarus habit of coming to life at unexpected times and in strange places, especially when it concerns things feminine. Take any young miss who may have been generously endowed as to underpinning, and the designation "piano-legs" will gayly skip along in her wake even though she takes to long skirts and changes her habitat from time to time. So it was with the old schooner. Richard had first mentioned it when he bent down that day at Lawley's and read her name on the counter. Then the junkman, and now the yard-owner at Beaufort. She was a born treasure hunter and she would remain one till the very end.

He was an old man, the yard-owner, neither metropolitan nor rural — rurban, as Mrs. Thompson has put it, and he talked like a Northerner. At the mention of the schooner's name his eyes had brightened with recognition.

"*Golden Parrot?* Why, I knew an old yacht by

that name when I was in the towing business in East Boston. Sure enough! She was built for old Tom Packard — they said he was going to the West Indies in her, but he died before he could get off on his cruise. Are you any kin of the old cap'n?"

"Same old boat, but we're not related to the captain," answered Richard, who went on to explain how they had bought her to use as a house-boat, and then had rigged her for cruising, and now were bound for Florida.

"They said it was n't for health he was cruising," pursued the old man; "he'd been in the West Indie trade and the old gossips along the water-front did n't allow as how he would be going down there again in a small packet — just for pleasure."

He said it as though he might have been one of the "old gossips" himself and more than half suspected that the Tads might have some ulterior motive in cruising in the "small packet." Bill Ropes, standing off to one side a bit, was all ears at this, and he caught the expression of surprise in the faces of the Tads as that "last chance" had so unexpectedly poked its nose at them — and unfolded its fingers.

"By Yimminy! Haar ve got a yob!" exploded Gus the next morning when they lifted the cabin

floor to get at the ballast. They were lying alongside the dock in the cove and had already stripped the schooner of all movable hamper till she looked as bare as on the day when the Tads had first seen her. Now came the more serious business of taking out her movable ballast which had been covered with the oily muck, washed down by the leak, from the engine. This was no task for the Tads, whom Gus had dismissed with "Ay tank you better leave das yob til us." The pilot, with feet braced apart on the floor beams, started the chain by fishing up the chunks of lead and passing them on to Ole, who in turn handed them up the companionway to Gus, who stood in the cockpit and swung them over the rail to the dock. The Tads, who were not averse to loafing in the bright Southern air, — it reminded them of the September days they had left behind them, — sat on the cabin-trunk, smoking. There was a touch of adventure in the feeling that here they were in a strange, new country with a small calamity on their hands. Or — they might be captain and supercargo watching the unloading of their ship. What fun it *would* be to poke their old bowsprit into some foreign port, some day, with their yellow jack flying as they had read in books, till the port doctor should come aboard and tell them to haul down and then to barter over the side with bumboats till the harbor-

master should give them pratique. Oh, they knew much of the sea from books and now they were learning a bit of it at first hand.

Their day dreams were suddenly broken into by Gus, who seemed to be performing some strange dance in the cockpit. No, it was n't a dance, he was only trying to keep his feet from under a greasy piece of ballast which threatened to slip from his hands. Then, by hoisting his knee under it, he managed to secure a firmer grip. But instead of throwing it immediately to its fellows on the wharf he held it for a moment testing its weight end for end.

"Das djeval narly got avay, he ban light in one end like Master Humpty-Dumpty." Then Ole appeared with another piece and the work went on.

"Must have an air-hole in it," observed Richard, stepping over to the dock. The artist followed, not unwilling to enter into a bit of idle investigation. Queer, there seemed to be no sign of an air-hole, and after wiping it on a piece of old canvas, they carried it aboard the schooner again and laid it on the trunk between them. Then they rolled it over and over and took to lifting it end for end. It certainly was light in one end like a Humpty-Dumpty, as Gus had described it.

"Hello!" exclaimed the artist, who was now examining the light end, "here's something."

"Looks like a sort of plug that has been soldered into it. Now, why in time should any one want to plug up a hole in a lead pig?"

"Not unless — WHY, YOU ALMOST SAID IT!" And leaning over, he whispered into Richard's ear, "Why, it's the LIGHT PIG!"

Had he turned his head a bit farther, the artist would have seen the pilot just below — half turned from passing a pig to Ole — his face reflected up through the skylight at them from the mirror in the cabinet. To one in the cabin it might have seemed a casual glance, but had the Tad seen that face in the mirror unease would have entered his soul. There was all the cunning of old John Silver in those narrow eyes. They saw and guessed as his ears had detected the faint swash in the bilge and guessed the leak. Eccentric character, *my grandmother!* You *might* call it eccentricity — the way he had of ferreting out things which might or might not be his business, or the particular shift by which he might ease a knife between your ribs, or the manner in which he'd crook his thumb into your windpipe, if he'd gain anything by it. But the artist did not see, and moving close to Richard, he fell to cutting away the stubborn lead with his jackknife.

He had shaved off the hard solder and was now working around the inner edge of the plug which fitted in a true circle about an inch and a half in

diameter. Evidently the pig had been bored out with a large drill. Suddenly one side of the disk gave way and it swung on its axis like a damper in a flue. It came out easily enough. With a hand trembling from the unwonted exertion of cutting lead, the artist inserted his forefinger into the hole and drew forth a cylinder of paper some six inches long. Hastily thrusting it into his pocket he glanced down through the skylight. The pilot was bending in the act of extricating a stubborn chunk from under one of the floor beams. The mirror only reflected his checkered back hunched at honest toil. Then in a tone that was calculated to carry down into the cabin, the artist said, "Nothing but a blow-hole. Let's chuck it back onto the dock."

But for some reason, known only to the Tad, the light pig did not join its fellows, for, as the artist was lifting it over the rail, he let it slip from his hands and it dove into the muddy water with a splash.

For a long time the Tads sat on the cabin-trunk, neither talking nor smoking — just wondering with far-off gaze and long thoughts. Below, the pilot stooped and rose, and every time he turned from handing his burden to Ole, his face looked up at the mirror which only reflected the backs of the motionless old Tads. And they — well, there could be no doubt but that the paper in the

artist's pocket was the missing key. No one had seen them remove the paper from the pig — they were sure of that; they would only have to bide their time till they could examine it in secret.

"I wonder how much she's lightened," ventured the artist, getting up at last and leisurely making for the end of the dock. Richard followed. The *Parrot* had risen appreciably — a good six inches, they thought — and this information they called out to Gus, who in turn told Ole. "Get her up nine inches," the yard-owner had said, "and we can haul her on a high tide." The Tads continued standing there, out of earshot of the schooner, and from their gestures one might have thought they were discussing the chances of getting her up on the ways.

"By Gorry!" began Richard, pointing at the ways, "I believe it's the key all right. Do you think they caught on?"

"What if they did? Those two squareheads are safe enough, and the pilot — what could he do?" returned the artist, waving his arm at the clouds coming up out of the southwest.

"Nothing but talk."

"I'm itching to look at the thing, but I guess we'd better wait till to-night. Suppose we take the first watch at the pump."

There was, however, no need for the Tads to pump that night, for with the turning of the tide

came the gale Bill Ropes had promised them. It started in the southeast — a bit unusual for these parts, but then I believe the old hermit had his finger in it — and piled up the water on the back of a spring tide so that the lightened *Parrot* rode nicely enough over the cradle and by dusk she was high and dry on the ways. I can imagine a grin of relief on her whiskered old bow, for no self-respecting craft is very fond of lugging a lot of bilge water about in her innards — if it were rum, it would, of course, be different.

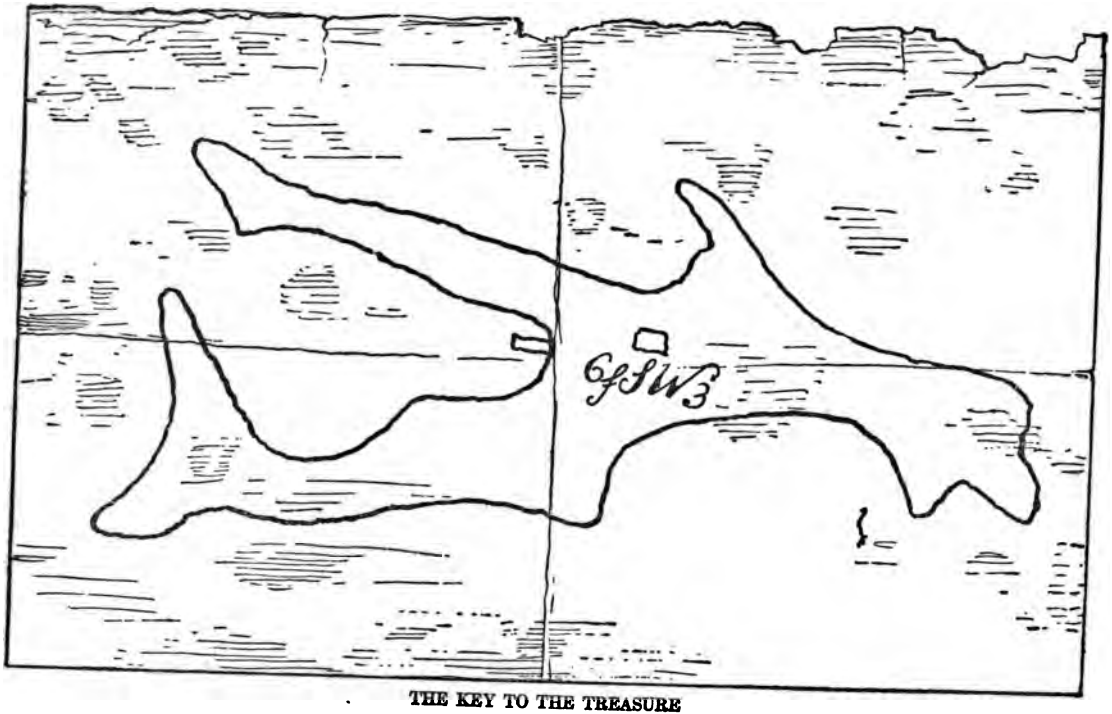
"Smooth as the hair on a she-mouse's belly," commented the pilot. "I knowed all we'd have to do was to pull off a few of her feathers and take the *seeds* out of her old crop." He must have had one seed in particular on his mind, for he strode off in the darkness without waiting for Gus's invitation to supper.

The squareheads turned in, after supper, dog-tired from their work of ballast shifting. When the heavy breathing for'ard became regular, the Tads quietly pulled over the cabin-slide and closed the doors and skylight. As an extra precaution they stuffed folded newspapers against the ports in the cabin-trunk lest some spying villain should sneak up the ladder and peek down at them. Then they lifted the cabin-lamp from its bracket, and dimming its light, set it down on the table between them. Thrusting his hand into his in-

ner pocket, the artist paused a moment in silence. Through the door leaked faint Scandinavian snores scarcely audible above the monotone of the gale humming through the schooner's rigging and the brash of the ruffled cove. Presently he withdrew the key from his pocket and rolling it out on the table pinned down the corners with outstretched fingers. The paper was thin, somewhat rough, and had once been twice folded and showed the soil and wear of long residence in a pocket. Smoothly cut on three sides, the fourth was torn as though it had been hastily snatched from a book. Perhaps it had been a fly-leaf from the very volume of the "Naval Chronicle" which Southey mentions. Sprawling over it, like the body of some partly dismembered cuttle-fish, lay a crude outline done in ink that had faded to a light brown. At one end of the island — for what else could it be? — lay a deep bay. At the head of the bay a small rectangle projected into the water. Some distance back, almost in the center of the island, was a small square; under it stood the symbols "6 f s w 3." There was nothing more, just the bare outline, the two rectangles and the three letters guarded by the two numerals.

"Not much to go by," said Richard, with a shade of disappointment in his voice.

"No; but you would n't expect an old man on



THE KEY TO THE TREASURE

a lone island to make a fancy sailor's drawing of it with an ornamental rosette to show where north is, and whales spouting in the water and palms and natives running around like Adams and Eves. And he would n't put the letters upside down so as we read 'em, north is probably at the top of the sheet, east on the right hand,— and so on. Remember how the young Tom swam into a cove opening to the westward — well, *there she is* — and that thing sticking into the water is the wharf he found in the morning when he walked along the shore in the lull. Now that little square in the middle of the island —"

"Is the old hermit's house? But how about those letters?"

"Oh, that'll come easy. The six and the three mean paces or feet or something. The 's w' probably means southwest. Six something southwest three something. Six feet! — no, that's too near the house. *I have it.* Six FATHOMS! Six fathoms southwest three — Why, of course." The artist's old brain was now galloping along at high speed. "*Down three feet!* The old hermit would n't be able to dig very deep — he probably put it in his garden near the house where the digging was easy. All we have to do is to find the house and measure six fathoms from one corner — most likely the southwest one — in a southwesterly direction, and then dig till we find something!"

"Hold on! We have n't found the island yet — and maybe the house is gone by this time."

"Gee, Richard, where's your imagination? We know the island was near Saint Thomas; most likely it's still there, and all we have to do is to get a chart of those waters and pick out the island that looks like this. There can't be more than one with such a shape."

"I guess you're right, William. But the next question is to get the right charts." I have an idea that Richard may not have been as stupid as he seemed at the moment to the artist — perhaps he had caught on to the other's little game of baiting.

"Damn it all, Richard, do I have to do *all* the thinking?" exploded the artist, looking up just too late to catch the smile on the face of his friend. "Don't you remember when we bought our charts, the man gave us an index chart of the whole coast down to South America? All we have to do is to pick out the numbers that go with the rectangles covering the areas we want and then send a list to Washington together with a money order. In a few days we'll have the whole business." The artist was in a fever of excitement.

"And would your aunt approve of all this?" from Richard of graven face.

"Hang my aunt —" burst out the artist, with not a little show of exasperation which suddenly

calmed as a grin broadened on Richard's face. "But if I had one she'd come in handy to look after you." They had come just about as near to a scuffle as any gentle young fellows such as they and upwards of sixty are apt to come.

At last they folded the key as it had been folded when Captain Tom must have carried it around in his pocket before he hid it away in the light pig, and they put it away in a tin dispatch box which was safely locked in the desk. Then they blew out the cabin-light and pushed back the companion-slide. The easterly, having done its duty, had backed into the southwest, dragging platoons of dark-bosomed clouds across the face of the moon, which alternately showed the stark nakedness of the old schooner — cold as a winter landscape — and then left her a darkened mass, dimly outlined about the Tads.

"So'west wind — southwest direction from the hermit's house, or the ruins of it," muttered the artist.

"By Gorry! I believe it's a good omen."

Four days after, Richard might have been seen stepping out of the post-office with a long roll in his hand. As he approached the yard he concealed the roll under his coat; that is, all but the lower ten inches which he carefully kept to loo'ard of him while he navigated his way toward

the schooner. Near the ways lay a pile of lumber held up from the ground on cross-pieces, and in passing — he paused for a moment to see if any one were looking — he suddenly stooped and slipped the roll under the boards. But why all this secrecy? Perhaps if you were cruising in a reprobate old hooker that was continually rumored as a treasure hunter and one day, out of a clear sky, suddenly changed your plans from Florida to the West Indies, you'd be doing very nearly the same thing. It is a part of the game.

That night, under cover of darkness — that is, before the moon had come up to see what progress had been made with the caulking — Richard quietly sneaked down the ladder to return in a moment with the mysterious roll, which he laid upon the table before the expectant artist. If the excitement of the Tads had been intense when they first examined the key which they had found in the light pig, it was nothing to the emotion they now felt. Somewhere in that roll lay the proof of the key. With eager fingers they tore off the wrapping, bit by bit. How in time did those fellows in Washington make such a thundering tight job of it? At last the charts sprung free of their wrapping like any corpulent lady emerging from a tight corset. The Atlantic coast and the Bahamas were incontinently chucked into the port berth — they could wait till later;

but that third chart, of the little islands to the east of Porto Rico — that was what the Tads were after. Sure enough! They were the Virgin Islands — the Tads now recalled the name from the junkman's story. And there, *by all that was good and holy!* was a sprawling island with a cove open to the westward, like the island on the key. It was the only one of its kind, and under it they read the name — "Norman I."

"Well, I'll be damned!" muttered the artist.

"Me, too," echoed Richard. "Mebbe that one chance is working out after all."

"See *there!* It says 'Treasure Point,' maybe that's where the caves are — I wonder if the hermit *did* leave something there and it was found later and the point named from it?" A clammy fear crept into the hearts of the old Tads for the safety of the hermit who must have been dead these many years. Treasure Point began to spell tragedy to them.

"And there's 'Privateer Bay'! It must have been a real Treasure Island, William."

Then their eyes caught sight of "Dead Chest" which the junkman had remembered "frim th' haythenish sound av ut." On a larger island, Peter, they found the deep cove, Great Harbor, which must have been the refuge the skipper of the *Betsy Ann* had hoped to make. And just north of the end of Norman lay a small cay, Peli-

can, on the edge of which the barque had probably struck. There, before their very eyes, lay the romance and the tragedy of the sea. On those few square inches of chart the ill-fated *Betsy Ann* had made her struggle against the tide, and up from over the edge of the chart had come the black hurricane that had blown her to destruction. Somewhere under that smooth surface with its scattered soundings lay the bones of the old barque, and the Lord knows where the bones of her crew had fetched up at last. On that octopus-like island had lived the hermit, in solitude till the coming of young Tom — and after he had gone? — that chart said nothing.

"What do you say, Richard? Shall we go down there?"

"Of course! Why in time did we get these charts?"

"Was n't sure," answered the artist; "first we got this old hull for a house-boat, then we rigged her, and now instead of going to Florida —"

"If you 're still thinkin' of Florida and oranges and alligators and sea-cows, you 'll have to put it off till another time. *I'm* goin' to sail this craft down to Norman if I have to put you in irons and ship another crew."

"An' if ye do, I 'll eat off me hands an' gouge out yer eyes with th' stumps of me arms an' have ye hung t' th' yard-arm."

I repeat these tender sentiments to show how the fire of youth, which had been dormant in the Tads all these years, had only been a-smouldering. They would have put to sea that very night were they left nothing better than the stone trough of the holy Maël and a shirt for a sail.

Sober thought now brought on a fresh problem. They could not so suddenly change their plans and set sail for the West Indies without taking Gus more or less into their confidence. They would sleep on it. They slept on it for several nights — for it was not till they were down off the ways and back in the anchorage off the town that they found their opportunity. Bill Ropes had been paid off and was showing the town, or, more specifically, a blind tiger, to Ole who had shore leave. A row of jumpers and dungarees hanging on a line from the stays'l halyard, like the signal of some freak code, bespoke a dirty job happily finished. Below decks Gus had spread the contents of his ditty-bag on the galley table and was busy overhauling his blues. The Tads were stretched out on their respective transoms in the cabin. For some time they had been speculatively blowing smoke up toward the skylight. They would call Gus presently — but somehow, now that their chance had come, either through pure cussedness or the deliberation of their years, they lay and waited in silence. They had been

doing so for some twenty minutes. At last Richard glanced across at the artist, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and cleared his throat.

"Oh, Gus, come aft a moment."

The Swede appeared in the doorway and looked inquiringly at the Tads. Something, he guessed, was on foot, for the old gentlemen had been strangely restless and between pipes had taken to smoking three-for-a-quarter cigars, which the pilot had informed him could only be bought at the new drug-store with its ice-cream saloon. It was on the strength of this that Bill Ropes had inferred that the Tads must be millionaires, an opprobrium which the astute Gus had stoutly denied.

"Gus — do you remember one day last summer when the junkman came aboard and spun a long yarn in the cabin about the old captain who had this schooner built? Did you hear any of it?"

"Ol' *Roarin' Forty?* Ay could n't *hjelp* høre das woice."

"Remember when you were taking out ballast the other day and there was a certain pig you called Mr. Humpty-Dumpty?"

The Swede nodded, smiling at the recollection of his antics in the cockpit. Richard lay off on another tack. "How do you think the old schooner will stand an offshore cruise to the Virgins?"

"She ban aalright now — good ting she spring a leak yust afore ve should go outside."

"Well, if she had n't done it right here where we had to take out her ballast to haul out, we would n't be cruising to the West Indies."

"*Vel nu skal jeg høre!*" from the astonished Gus, who had relapsed into his parental tongue.

"All we're tellin' you now, Gus," said Richard, earnestly scrutinizing the Swede's honest face, — "all we're tellin' you now is that we're goin' to make a little cruise to the Virgins. The less you know the easier you can lie about it if any one asks questions."

"*And* we're trusting you to forget all about the junkman's yarn," added the artist.

"Ay onnerstan, Sir."

"And *now*, how shall we go down?"

"Ve could make right for San' Thomas, but for dat ve vould need a sextant oond chronomaytre. If it is no hurry ve could yust so easy run down da coast til Yupiter Inlet oond den cross da Gulf Strøm to da Bahamas. Dere iss plenty places below Sharleston vere ve could run in if de vedder vas bad. From das Bahamas it vould be easy. Das longer, but it vould be no vorry."

This advice appealed to the Tads, and so it was decided.

"Another question we ought to settle," continued the artist; "there are only four of us on the schooner. When we come to go ashore some dark night to dig for — well, worms or something —

we'll both want to go, of course, and we'll take Gus with us. Suppose we can't anchor in the cove or for some reason we may have to keep the schooner under way while we're ashore, Ole ought to have another hand aboard to help him."

"You're right about that, William, but where can we find another man we can trust?"

"The pilot 's the only one we know; we could ship him as cook."

"I suppose we might do worse, and so long as he knows nothing what could he do? If he should try any monkey business that big Dane would eat him up."

"Which reminds me," put in the artist, "we have n't any guns aboard, not even a shot-gun for those ducks and oysters we missed in Chesapeake Bay."

"Gus did n't say anything about shootin' 'em; he only said they were there."

"All the more reason for running in at Charleston on our way down," said the artist, ignoring this weak stroke on the part of Richard; "'t would n't do to buy firearms in this gossipy little town."

"We'll be a regular pirate ship by the time we get through."

"Ay tank ve skal have some fun — you can take my vord ven da time come ve can trust Ole, he ban good boy."

CHAPTER VIII

THE *Golden Parrot*, sailing out of Beaufort one fine day, was quite another vessel from the schooner which had stumbled on the bar in the channel ten days before. To the eyes of the landlubber she appeared the same, but to any wharf loafer there was a difference. It was all in her behavior, as though in the process of recaulking she had tightened her belt for something more important than mere meandering southward in search of softer climes. Ships that have a heart — some of 'em are born with a streak of cussedness that makes 'em gripe when they're close-hauled, and when off the wind they will yaw at every chance and turn round and look you in the face like a balky mule; you're always fighting 'em at the wheel till the whole crew gets down on 'em, and the captain feels their depravity and finally puts 'em on a reef, for insurance, or they sulk because some bull-headed mate has loaded 'em too heavy in the ends — but those that have a heart, like any dog of sense or horse of spirit, will reflect

the mood of their skipper and crew. Such was the *Golden Parrot*, and she had become what is known as a taut ship.

It began that very morning, after Richard had finished his second cup of coffee — the pilot certainly had Gus beaten seven ways for Sunday in making coffee — and shoved it back on the table to give room to fold his napkin.

"Cook!" he almost bawled it, "leave your dishes till we get outside. You'll pilot us till we're clear. Tell Gus to come aft."

"Gus!" — to the Swede, who appeared in the doorway nursing a match with butt end carefully shaved to a chisel point — "we'll up anchor."

"Aye, aye, Sir!" answered Gus, rising to the occasion with no little delight at the authoritative tone of the Tad.

As the wharves of Beaufort began to slip behind them, the pilot took up his position on the grating, grasping the fore-stay with one hand while his free arm directed the wheel to port or starboard, circling the hand to left or right, or momentarily reaching up at an angle with the command, "Steady!" The artist, standing a bit aft and to one side, relayed the orders to Richard.

"Port a bit," as the hand circled inward.

"Port a bit," echoed the artist.

"Port it is," from Richard at the wheel.

"S-s-teady!" semaphored the arm.

"Steady!"

"Steady it is."

Real ship stuff to delight any boy of sixty.

So they moved out to sea through the yellow sandy water while the squareheads lashed anchors crown to crown with shank painters and secured the dinghies inboard.

The water under them changed from tawny to pale blue and then to a deeper hue as they rounded Fort Macon, half buried in the dunes of the point which marks the western side of the sea entrance; and they felt the long, easy ground swell underfoot which means, to all who know it, the heave of the ocean. The buoys of the outer channel now stretched out before them in an arc curving away to the south'ard in the sun path, as though they were saying, "This way, gentlemen." The pilot let go his hold on the stay and, turning aft, said, "We're all clear, just follow the buoys, Sir." And from now on we'll know him as the cook.

A fresh hand at the bellows sent the old schooner romping on her way with her scuppers in the boil and plenty of work at the wheel. The watches reeled off merrily enough to the humming of the little patent-log on the taffrail. At night the vibrating rigging sent down low murmurings which, from the cabin, sounded like subdued voices on deck. To the Tads it became the *causerie* of old

Cap'n Tom and the hermit of Norman conspiring through the night watches while they followed the old schooner in the fulfillment of her destiny. Something, they began to sense, was acting beyond their own volition — they were becoming true seafarers. Superstition, the child of fear, crept into the make-up of the Tads; not that they were cowards; but there was something awesome in going to sea in their little craft. There had been that delightful tingle in Richard's forearms as he handled the wheel on their way out of Beaufort and it had run up through his shoulders and gamboled down and up his spine all the way to the lightship off Charleston. It reminded him of racing from tree to tree in his boyhood days of Puss-in-the-Corner.

At Charleston — they would have an all-night rest at anchor — the Tads chose to row themselves ashore, where they bought certain blued-steel implements of persuasion, two spades, and took out a bill of health for the British port of Nassau. Before leaving the dock, they tied the spades to one end of a fathom of small line, lowered them into the harbor, and then secured the other end of the line to the dinghy's rudder. With the artist sitting in the stern, Richard rowed in a wide circle to fetch up under the *Parrot's* counter, so that no one aboard the schooner could see the bit of line trailing down into the

water behind the artist. Climbing aboard over the rail, they tailed the dinghy astern and sat in the cockpit till the crew sat down to their early dinner in the galley. When they were assured that the two squareheads and the cook — they feared only the loose-hung tongue of Bill Ropes — had their feet well into the trough, as the artist put it, Richard hauled the dinghy alongside, fished up the spades and smuggled them into the cabin while the other kept an eye on the fore-hatch.

"Smooth as the down on a humming-bird's chest," paraphrased the artist; "we'll have no gossip aboard this schooner if we can help it."

One morning they raised the low line of the Florida coast and then they picked up the red-brick lighthouse at Jupiter Inlet — as Gus had said they would. Dead reckoning and soundings would fetch them anywhere they wanted to go along this coast, they learned from the confident Gus, who seemed to know the ocean floor as some of us know our own back yard. And now, for the first time in their lives, the Tads bade good-bye to their native land and sheered off for the Bahamas across that tepid stream which had so long been somewhere to the east of them and had almost become a myth whose existence they had begun to doubt. As the lighthouse slowly sank back again into the horizon astern, they began to

feel that they were sailing in new waters. There was a difference in the pulse of the sea. "Ve ban in de strøm now," Gus explained; the current steeped the seas — the *Golden Parrot* was caracoling with a northeast breeze abeam, the spent breath of a gale that had blown itself out under Hatteras, or it may have been a stray bit of the trade which had wandered northward to welcome the Tads to the tropics. The water took on a starchy hue in contrast to the colder, deeper blue of the inshore current down which they had come. The air grew warmer and somewhat humid. Masses of strange-looking sea-growths floated past, and the artist reached down with a boat-hook and fished up his first bit of gulfweed with its curious little berries and sandy feel, for closer inspection. A Portugee-man-of-war bobbed impotently between wind and current like an iridescent bubble. A foolish hawk's-bill swimming northward, yellow-brown and white-satin-bellied, reminded them of a colored illustration in "Swiss Family Robinson." That afternoon Gus pointed out the bank-blink of Bahama Island reflected in the eastern sky, and warned how skippers, confident in the absence of it, had come to grief. Little by little the water under them darkened again to the clearest ultramarine they had ever known, as sign that they were now in "de oshun," as the natives called the deep channels

between the islands. The bank-blink vanished like the sailor's pride-o'-th'-morning, and with nightfall came the friendly glance of the little red light on the island itself, abeam now, to give them a safe bearing for the night course. In the morning New Providence lay before them.

It was while they were lying among the fleet of sponging schooners in the thoroughfare off Nassau that a small incident occurred which was to arouse the Tads' first suspicions concerning Bill Ropes. All hands and the ship's cook had slept the clock around on their first night in a foreign port, and after a late breakfast the Tads had gone ashore with Gus, to stretch their legs. From the very first days when the Tads had played about Boston in the old schooner, it had been a habit of Gus, when he had finished his work in the galley, to make up the berths aft and fill the lamps during some opportune time in the forenoon while the Tads were busy loafing on deck. The galley work for just the three of them was not enough to keep one from getting lazy, he had explained, so they had let him have his way. Even when they had taken on the Dane, Gus had jealously continued with his small duties aft as cabin-boy. These were little intimate services which should not pass out of *his* hands so long as he should be with the Tads, and so it had gone on when they had taken on the cook.

On this morning the cook seemed particularly slow in getting through below decks. Ole, who had been busied for some time replacing a worn halyard, began to wonder why the cook had not stuck his head up from the crew's hatch for his his usual morning blow. The clatter of dishes had long since died away. Then, while stooping to pick up a bit of rope yarn, the Dane happened to glance down through the skylight where he saw the top of a black head moving across the white partition in the stateroom. It was Bill Ropes, now bending over the desk. As Ole watched him, the cook began methodically to go through the pigeon-holes and small drawers which he carefully examined in turn as though he were looking for some one thing in particular. But he evidently had not found what he was looking for, and presently closing the top, he squatted down on his knees to pursue his search in the lower part of the desk where the Tads kept their tin box. Here his search ended, for the door was locked and the key to it was evidently ashore with the Tads. As the cook got to his feet, the Dane hastily resumed his position on the cabin-trunk, crouching over the halyard, with his back toward the skylight. Then he took up the halyard and walking aft with no less than the usual measure of noise necessary, sat down in the cockpit where he could look down into

the cabin. The cook was busy making up the berth.

"Thought I'd help out Gus this mornin'; we'll be busy enough takin' on water and stores this afternoon if we're goin' to sail to-night."

It was when Gus was relieving him at the wheel that night that Ole told of the strange actions of the cook. "Dar brin som'tang queer vid dat cook-faller, ve better keep an oye on ham," he had begun. Gus in his turn told the artist. The Tads, strangely enough, seemed but little disturbed upon learning of the cook's actions. "Snoopin', is he?" commented Richard. So many strange things had come to pass since they had bought the old schooner that they came to look upon this small incident almost as a matter of routine. And was there not an air of conspiracy in the seductive breath of the tropics? And who ever heard of a sea-cook, anyway, who was other than a villain? How could one expect to go a-treasure-hunting without at least one scoundrel in the crew? Even if Bill Ropes *had* taken in the yard-owner's reference to the ancient gossip of East Boston and—By Gorry! Perhaps he had seen them sneak the key from the hole in the light pig!—but after all, what of it? Bill Ropes could only suspect, and now, so long as they kept their eyes on him, what could *he* do? And the incident of Nassau only served to weave romance into

their lonely night watches and their day dreams as they ran down the outer cays of the Bahamas, Eleuthera, Cat, Rum and San Salvadore, Crooked Island, the Caicos and Turk's — all names to conjure with and dream about — and then held up a bit to give Silver Bank a proper berth.

Then, one afternoon, as the sun was swelling himself to take breath for his plunge into the Caribbean, the *Golden Parrot* fetched into the picturesque harbor of Charlotte Amalie, its houses rising from the water-front, up the hill slopes, like flecks of foam on a huge green breaker all but ready to curve over them.

Saint Thomas in those days, like any well-ordered island of the West Indies, had its Governor, a high dignitary of whom one found mention in the pilot book, but never saw. He was there in print and one took it for granted that he was there in real life. Somewhat lower in the scale one found the harbor-master and the port doctor, who came aboard to examine our papers and give us pratique, and then went on their way. But on the heels of the harbor-master and the doctor came a little personage not in the service of the Danish Government, but fully as important as any — at least below Governor — in the sum total of his many offices. He was Consul for Mexico, Peru, Chili, San Marino, and Persia,

and I don't know how many more he may have acquired since I last saw him. He will coal, water, and consign your vessel to any known port, or, if he loses your trade, to the devil. In his store, which at the time of the Tads stood in the arcade by the King's Wharf, he would sell you anything from a case of Gamle Carlsberg beer made in Copenhagen to a fancy hat-band from Philadelphia. Here were all manner of external and internal commodities to suit the figure, heart, liver, stomach, or lungs of man. A fine spider's nest for the tourist to come afoul of and the rendezvous of many a West Indian skipper. His name — you already know it if you know Saint Thomas and if you ever go there you cannot miss him, for he will not miss you. We'll call him the broker.

Upon the departure of the Danish officials, he steered his spacious bumboat alongside the *Golden Parrot*, and with an injunction spiced with sonorous Spanish oaths, he ordered his black henchman to stand clear of the "Gentlemen's yacht." Springing up the side ladder he presented his card to the Tads.

He was a rotund little man, in a suit of white and a boiled shirt with a standing collar girt with a black bow tie. He wore a white felt hat which he removed from time to time in order to wipe the top of his partially bald head with a large silk handkerchief. There was nothing of the sea-

farer in his smooth-shaven, untanned face with its dark Semitic eyes.

"My card, gentlemen, and if I can do anything for you while you're in Saint Thomas, I'm at your service."

The Tads were inclined to be a bit frosty, and Richard thrust the card into his pocket without looking at the name. But they were presently disarmed by sheer pressure of the broker's volubility. He liked Americans, he said — his uncle had been consul at one time — and if there was any service they needed ashore he would be glad to put them onto the ropes. They were a rotten crew of robbers in there — waving his hand indefinitely toward the wharves — who would rob your vessel from under you if they but had the chance. Then he produced a sheet with the latest telegraphic news and said, "Oh, by the way, you must remember to leave your papers with the American Consul when you come ashore in the morning. If you'll name the hour, I'll send my boat for you and carry you there myself."

The Tads warmed up a bit to the little man and Richard drew the card from his pocket, read the broker's name in the fading light, and proceeded to introduce himself and the artist. They asked him below, but he promptly declined saying that if he stayed aboard another minute he would become seasick. The schooner was slowly rolling

under them to the incoming reflex of the Caribbean. Then —

"You Nat'aniel! Come alongside, nuh — mind the gentlemen's paint." And to the Tads, "Adios. I'll send my boat for you after breakfast — nine o'clock — American time," and he backed down the ladder and into his boat and was rowed away. The Tads stood for a moment watching him disappear in the fast waning light and then suddenly seemed to discover that it was night.

"Why, the sun went down only a few minutes ago!"

"Ve ban in de tropics now," came from Gus, who was setting out the stern light.

CHAPTER IX

THERE was something strangely reminiscent in the breath of the morning air as Richard lay awakening in his berth, and yet the more he tried to define it the more it seemed to elude him. Then by that squid-like habit which memory has of jumping backwards, the Swede's words rang in his ears as though they had been spoken but the moment before. "Ve ban in de tropics now."

"So ve ban!" he mimicked, beginning to realize that they were not somewhere along the Maine coast, nor in Beaufort, nor even Nassau, but in Saint Thomas and only twenty miles — less than half a day's run from Norman. Too tired to discuss plans, they had turned in early, and now with a mind wonderfully clear Richard lay speculating on what the next few days might bring them. They would spend a day or two at Saint Thomas to get the lay of the land — perhaps a few stray bits of information about the Virgins might come to them — the broker would prove a good medium — and they could lay their

plans ashore where they could talk without fear of being overheard. And then his mind cruised to the Virgins and he had begun to picture Norman when the thump of bare feet on the cabin floor, followed by an exclamation, brought him to his elbow and he saw the artist in pajamas, his head cocked up at the companionway.

"Who'd ever thought I'd be standing here some day, looking right smack up at a town. Why, if there was an earthquake we'd get a deckload of houses and things, all of a sudden."

Richard got up and looked, too, and then, instead of mounting the steps for their morning sniff and survey, the Tads turned-to for a glorious clean-up now that they need no longer hoard their fresh water till they should put to sea again. The harbor could wait. There were those frisky white flannel suits they had bought at an end-of-the-season-sale on Washington Street, to be fetched from the depths of the clothes-locker, ties of almost unmoral hue, and soft harbor-gaskets that had been a-languishing these many months, for their old mahogany necks had known no collar since spring. Saint Thomas should soon behold the gay attire bought for shore-going at Miami, or even Palm Beach, and surely would not suspect such youthful Tads of piratical designs on hidden treasure. Then, too, there were busy sounds from the galley and — well, Bill

Ropes had a way of making them eat like boys even if he might be a sea-cook and a villain.

When at last they came on deck, the bumboat was alongside, and a few minutes later they stepped ashore at the King's Wharf, where the broker awaited them in a dilapidated fiacre skippered by a negro in faded blue livery and a plug hat. Their new friend sat beside the driver, on a seat which was turned inboard, as one might say, so that he would face the Tads, and as they eased themselves into the cushions he gave the command, "To the American Consul!" as though here were a couple of potentates going to call on the President himself. The native urged his little insular horses into a rapid trot by judicious administrations of a broken-backed whip and they were off. From the consul they pattered back to the wharf, where they found Gus and the cook. These two were put in charge of the broker's clerk, who was detailed to help them buy fresh provisions at native prices — so the broker said. Then the fiacre started off again on a riotous cruise while the broker recited the attractions of Charlotte Amalie. In a vague way the Tads caught the names Blue Beard's Castle, Maneke's Villa, and Krum Bay; but their attention was fixed or rather strewn among the strange sights whirling by on either side as they clattered along the main thoroughfare. The narrow street, walled in by

phalanxes of small shops and warehouses, none above two stories, held crowds of natives, ranging from coal-black to jaundice, which the horses were continually breasting and which closed behind them like the wake of a ship. There were glimpses of washed-out-looking Danish gendarmes in pale blue uniforms which heightened the impression of sickliness; a bluff down-east skipper from Portland; a sprinkling of rosy-cheeked, sweaty-handed German sailors and a pair of spruce officers from a British cable ship; kaleidoscope impressions that melted into the whole of a busy foreign port. Busy for the time being, because a mail steamer had arrived, a collier had brought bunker food from Cardiff, and a tramp had stopped in from God knows where and would be on her way again as soon as the Old Man had refilled his private locker. All Saint Thomas was abroad like the population of Centreville when the afternoon train stops to drop the Boston papers and a passenger or two.

Their land cruise came to an end with considerable flourish at the portals of the Grand Hotel where they debouched stiff-leggedly, and found grateful anchorage at one of the round iron tables, like those of a *trottoir café*, in the huge open room which extended along the harbor side, on the second story. Between the columns of its three arcaded sides ran an iron fencing, waist-high.

The far end was laid out as a dining-room with tables already set for the West Indian breakfast — which we know as luncheon.

Below was a small plaza with shade trees and palms and laid out in paths radiating from a tiny grass-plot where stood a granite base bearing an heroic bronze bust of the late king, Christian the Ninth. Over the trees to the left, the red-and-white flag of Denmark curled valiantly in the breeze in brilliant contrast to the blue sky with its ever-passing trade-clouds. Before them, green hills closed in to the channel which opened to the Caribbean. Hugged in at the dock at the far side of the harbor lay the collier and the cable ship. Preëmpting the fairway sat the trim mail steamer like an important liner. Farther out, skulked the truant tramp. Closer aboard, in shallower waters, a condemned Norwegian barque rode patiently at anchor — stripped of canvas — and waiting, the broker told them, to be sold and towed by the breakers to her last berth. A Lilliputian windmill on her poop waved its arms in desperate protestation while frantically pumping water from her leaking bilge. Off the King's Wharf — which forms one side of a basin where the bumboats, the sea-crabs of Saint Thomas, congregate — lay a Dutch trading schooner from Saba; a trim black sloop with the blue colonial British jack at her topmast — from Tortola the broker said;

and their own clean-lined little sea home, now a haughty little aristocrat among her rougher sisters.

In eventual answer to the hand-clapping of the broker, a lanky native in shabby whites shuffled the length of the room and took up his position near the Tads. A small napkin dragging from his hand indicated his present office.

"Tell Madame breakfast for three and fetch two bottles of Carlsberg quick!" The native slowly resumed his deliberate journey as though haste might at any moment prove fatal. The three resumed their survey of the harbor.

The artist, who sat nearest the rail, suddenly fixed his attention upon a familiar figure on the wharf.

"Why, there's Gus and your clerk loading the dinghy! Guess we'd better let him know we won't be out for luncheon."

He was now on his feet, and in turning to make his way to the stairway his eye caught sight of a checkered shirt and floppy hat almost below him, across the way. There is no end of checkered shirts and floppy straw hats in Saint Thomas, but that figure, even though the artist could not see the face under the brim, could be no other than the cook.

"Hello! Here's Bill Ropes; I'll call him."

The broker, who had also jumped up, turned to follow the gaze of the artist.

Just around the corner from the dock stood the cook, talking with a gaunt mulatto of about sixty in pongee suit and pith helmet. The two were apparently engrossed in earnest conversation, for, as the artist and the broker watched, the cook eased the bundles in his arms as if to gather more clearly the import of what the other was saying.

"Carrahua! It's that dyam Tompas!" and grabbing the artist by the arm the broker drew him back so that they could watch unseen, through the grill of the railing. Bill Ropes was talking now, while the mulatto seemed to be keeping watch around the corner. Presently Gus finished loading the dinghy and started back along the dock, apparently in search of the cook. The native addressed a short sentence to Bill Ropes, who nodded and rounded the corner as though he had just arrived at the wharf. The mulatto remained for a moment in contemplation, and then, turning on his heel, he walked down the street.

"Your cook ever been in Saint Thomas before?" asked the broker.

"Not to our knowledge," answered Richard, who was now standing by the other two; "why do you ask?'

"That old Tompas is the dirtiest scoundrel this side of Hayti and he's a dyam good man to keep your cook away from."

"Yes, but what could *he* do?" The words came with unpleasant familiarity and Richard could hardly conceal a trace of anxiety as he added, "We'll only be here a few days."

"The old pongo has the only small dock between Barbados and Cuba," took up the broker, "and if he can get you up there it'll cost you dear before you get down again. If your cook's in cahoots with him, kerosene is n't the only way to make a bilge leak; or a cut lanyard might let your mast go as soon as you get out in the breeze — he's got the only spars in Saint Thomas and he knows it." The broker seemed to be quoting from past experience. "He's full of dirty tricks."

By this time the cook had reached the dinghy and the artist bolted down to the street and ran to the wharf just as they were rowing off to the schooner.

"We'll stay ashore for luncheon and come out later in a bumboat," he called. His pace slackened as he turned back toward the hotel. Damn Bill Ropes, anyway — he was too good for a cook, for in a hundred little ways the Tads had come to recognize the superior seaman in him — had he taken his berth on the long chance of the yard-owner's words and their subsequent change in plans? That loose tongue of his was hung in a hard head. They suspected him of guessing something of their mission to the West Indies, but if he

was waiting for big stakes, why should he bother with so small a matter as petty graft with a native? Suspicion chased one thought after another, but the artist seemed to get nowhere. "Guess we'll just have to keep a weather eye on him and let it work itself out," he muttered in conclusion as he reëntered the hotel.

Richard and the broker were again seated at the table where the beer had arrived and was already poured out. As the artist sat down, the broker lifted his glass, saying, "Welcome to Saint Thomas; I hope I'll see you gentlemen here often."

"Not if we have luck at Norman," thought the artist, reaching for his glass. Nor could the mild beer of Copenhagen take his thoughts from the mulatto — it was some time later that he remembered how delicious it was.

"What did you say his name was?" asked Richard, by way of turning the conversation back into local channels.

"Tompas—we've called him Old Tompas ever since his father died. My uncle used to tell how the Old Tompas — the grandfather of this one — got his start in business. 'Way back in the twenties, when the harbor was so full of ships you could almost jump across from one to another, the Old Tompas kept a sailors' boarding-house and was his own runner. In those days

there lived an old hermit on one of the islands to the east of here. In some way Tompas learned that the hermit knew where there was Spanish gold buried on the island."

At the mention of the hermit and the treasure the Tads' hearts leaped within them, but they betrayed no outward sign, and the broker continued:

"Tompas went to the island one night and he must have forced the hermit to tell him where the treasure was hidden — at any rate, he sold out his crimping business one day and bought a trading schooner, and after a while he bought more till he had a small fleet of them. Talk about nigger luck! Carrahua!"

Richard looked across at the artist as if to say, "That must have been a mere dollop he left in the cave to avert suspicion; he must have received young Tom's letter."

"But what became of the hermit?" pursued the artist.

"Oh, he died in time and then Tompas bought the island — said he was going to raise sheep on it; but he never bothered about the sheep; and when he died it passed on to his son, and then this Tompas kept it for a while, but he sold it at last to a man from Tortola. The people said he let it go because he did n't find what he was looking for."

A gong sounding from the depths of the hotel

announced that breakfast was ready and the broker convoyed the Tads to a table which had been set for three. The skipper from Portland appeared, in tow of his consignee, a dapper little Dane, and took possession of another. A flock of noisy tourists drifted in at intervals and arranged themselves like the counters of an abacus at a long table. The lanky native of the shabby whites presently entered bearing a huge tureen which he placed on a forlorn oaken sideboard of early Grand Rapids vintage, made a preliminary survey to count noses, and then proceeded to ladle its contents into a row of soup plates.

The Tads, who had found a veritable mine of information in the broker, allowed him to ingurgitate his soup in peace, but as soon as he had finished, the artist was at him like a persistent mosquito.

"And what island did you say this Tompas owned?"

"It's called Norman. One of the British cays to the east of here — I've never been there, but my uncle used to speak of it. They say there's an old tree on it with pirate marks on the trunk. But no one has ever been able to make 'em out, and if any one had, he would n't have told. The natives used to go over there and dig all around the tree till at last the Commissioner had to put a stop to it. When a native once got the fever it spoiled

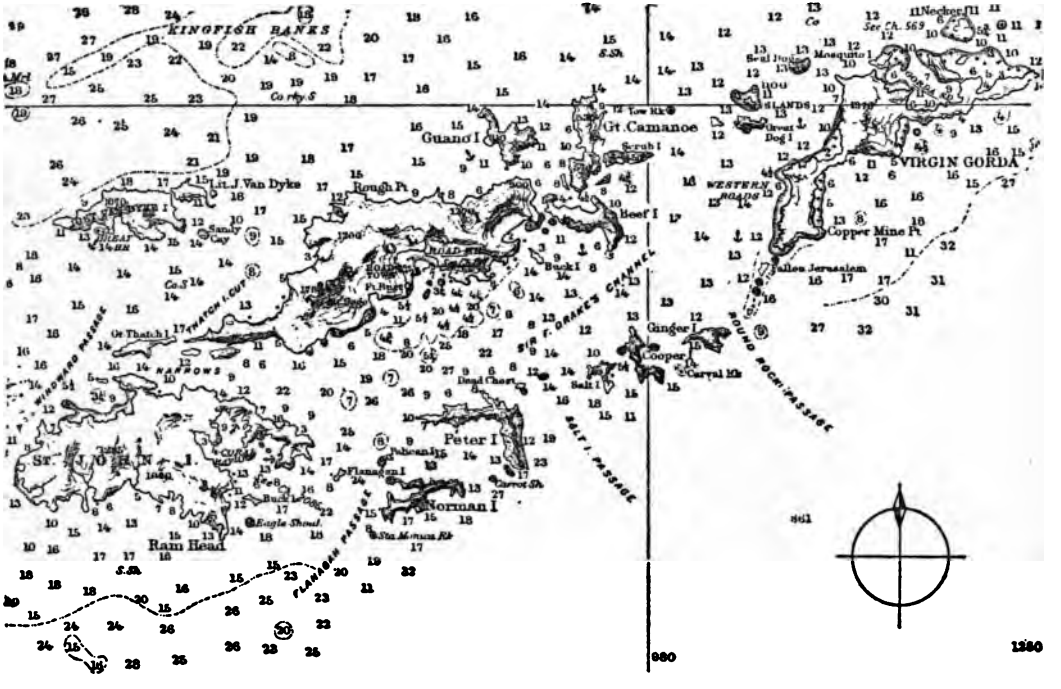


CHART OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

of his hand and then held it out to the Tads. "It's pitch. Long ago there was a boat-yard under the hill where this road lies. When they were leveling the land for the roadway, the natives found some old Spanish coins and necessity-pieces, and ever since they have suspected that the boat-builder must have been an ex-pirate and buried his treasure somewhere in his yard. This is the second time they have dug here since *I* came to Tortola. The other time it was under that tree," indicating a gnarled sea-grape near the landing. Then, as they continued up the path toward the house, "They've done so much digging around the island and on the cays that we had to make a law to put a stop to it. Once they get a smell of treasure the natives let their gardens go hang and it's too hard to get them to work."

Here was an agreeable subject, and as soon as they were comfortably seated in the hammock chairs on the shaded veranda the artist harked back to it.

"Necessity-pieces," he began, "how interesting. As I am a collector I know them from the catalogues, but I have never actually seen one."

The Commissioner curled forward out of his chair and disappeared into the house to return presently with a small triangular piece of silver in the palm of his hand.

"Here is one I got from Breese, the harbor-master, you know," handing it to the artist.

It was a sector cut from an old shilling-piece, but so worn that its identity could hardly be made out.

"In those days, it seems, there was a scarcity of copper coins in the colonies, so they had to cut up the silver ones and use the pieces by weight. You'll see a tiny 'T' stamped in one corner, which, I believe, stood for Tortola." It was evidently much prized by the Commissioner who hovered over it during the Tads' examination, and when William gave it back, returned it to its place of safe-keeping before he sat down again.

"Speaking of Treasure Island," continued the Commissioner—the Tads were quite certain that up till now Treasure Island had not been mentioned — "do you see that little knob sticking out of the water between those two islands?" pointing in the direction of Salt and Peter. "The natives call it 'Duchess,' but it's really 'Dead Chest,' and they say that Kingsley's mention of it suggested Bill Bone's song. I've quite come to feel that the story is real, you know, and that Norman is the real Treasure Island — you must have passed it coming in. Breese tells me that about ninety years ago treasure was actually taken from one of the caves on the island

— perhaps you saw them on the western side — and that there is a tree somewhere on the island with pirate markings on it which no one has been able to decipher. No wonder the natives go silly over treasure. The amusing part of it is that the craziest one of the lot is the only one who gets anything out of it. An old woman, in the bargain. Oh, she does n't dig, she lets the others do that — modern business methods, what? She lives over by Sea-Cow Bay and has periodic fits and dreams and when she comes out of her trances she tells the natives where to go to dig for doubloons — after they have come over with the local backsheesh. These fits always seem to come at about the fulling of the moon — the Doctor calls her a *lunatique circulaire*. Oh, these natives love to be fooled, and she always tells them that the conditions were not quite right or the moon was not full enough, or too full, and she spends their money on tobacco and rum and keeps more or less full herself till it's time for another fit."

"Why don't you lock her up?" asked Richard.

"Good Lord! If I did that we'd have an insurrection and they'd have to send over another commissioner. Hello, here's the Doctor."

They were struggling out of their chairs when a pair of hands, palms toward them, followed by two arms and a young man in riding-breeks came out from the doorway.

"No good getting up for me," he said. "Hadley has just told you who I am and Breese told me who you are, and it's devilish hot for Christmas." Even so, he dropped into a chair beside them without removing his coat. The Tads soon found that no one seemed ever to go coatless in those parts, except those who had none — it was not the custom. They were immediately fascinated by the olive-green puttees of a material that resembled felt, wound from ankles to knees in spirals of mathematical exactness — so neat that they wondered whether the winding of them was a part of the Doctor's daily toilet or whether he went to bed with them on, and how in time he could wear a hot poultice like this, anyway — the thought made their calves itch. His neck was done up in a white stock. Otherwise, he seemed to be a very sensible young fellow. But years in the tropics had taken the bloom from his face and replaced it with a sallowness that might have passed for tan. He had that common failing of the tropics, a liver.

"These gentlemen have been kind enough to throw in their lot with us for dinner — they've come down for a bit of fishing."

"So Breese said. If these people did n't persist in sleeping in tight houses and eating underdone pork, I might have a little more time for fishing myself, but I'll be glad to let 'em have my Salt

Island man and he can show them fish till their arms ache."

Salt Island evidently switched the Doctor's thoughts from fishing, for he pointed to the channel and began,

"Do you see that bit of a cay —"

"Morrison's off," interrupted the Commissioner; "I've already told them all we know about Duchess and Norman, and, oh, by the way, the old woman of Sea-Cow Bay has been off in a trance again. Some one dug a hole in the foot of the hill the other night."

"Rum lot, these natives, but still if *I* had any idea as to what those tree-marks are, I'd go over to Norman some night myself and make a try for it."

"Then don't let *me* hear of it," warned the Commissioner, grinning, "for I'll put Breese on you and we'll take away all your gold and lock you up for an example."

"*You* won't know, I can assure you, but don't come around and try to borrow ten pounds if I chuck Government some day and go back to England," laughed the Doctor.

They were now joined by the Curator, a Scotsman of reddish hair and florid face that might have stamped him as any head gardener at home till his speech betrayed him as an educated man and a scientist. He, thought the Tads, was the

most sensibly dressed of them all, in cool white duck. His coat, rather loose in fit, was buttoned up to the throat, where a low military collar encircled his neck like the outer wall of a dry moat. On further acquaintance, the Tads discovered that he wore no shirt underneath. "Just the thing for us, Richard," — this aboard the schooner, — "you jump into your pants and give 'em a hitch, button on your coat, and — there you are, all set for the day and you can wash your face or not, when or if you have a mind to."

"Do you know," began the Curator, when the introductions were over, "that Kingsley in his —"

"Oh, I say," put in the Commissioner, "I've told 'em already. They'll think all we're here for is to dig up a bally mess of doubloons."

"*Would* we be here if we could?" answered the Curator, lifting his hands as though it might some day be the will of Providence to show any one of them the way to hidden treasure.

At this point the Parson appeared in the doorway, a man somewhat older than the other three; dressed in shiny broadcloth, the coat opened at the neck, showing a small area of white dicky attached to a collar which closed in back.

"What do you say to a swizzle before the cook calls?" said the Commissioner. A gong sounded from below. "Cook's ready now — well, come

along and I'll show you how it's done." And he led his guests down to the cool dining-room on the ground floor. Its bare concrete walls had been given so many coats of white paint that it seemed the room must have been cut from a solid block of marble. Long windows high up under a ceiling with immense hand-hewn beams admitted the trade breeze which passed overhead. Against an inner wall stood a massive sideboard of Santo Domingo mahogany, passed along from the days of the former Commissioner and probably many before him. Under one of the windows stood a chest of the same wood, on heavy legs curved as though they had been bowed by the weight of many years. The floor was of wide, unpainted boards, kept scrupulously white, like the deck of a yacht, from much scrubbing with coral sand and salt water. Occupying the center of the room was a large, round table covered by a snowy cloth that hung nearly to the floor, and set with places for six, with high-backed mahogany chairs. At each place was a buttonhole bouquet of some tropical flower unknown to the Tads. On the center of the table was a large frosted cake. On tiny crossed staffs stuck into the top of the cake were the British Jack and the Stars and Stripes — made of paper and evidently colored by the Commissioner with his red and blue pencils. It was a charming bit of

courtesy which the Tads did not miss. One would scarcely have thought this to be a table planned by a bachelor for a dinner where there were to be no ladies. But then, I have sat in company with dinner-coats in a bungalow marooned in the mountains of Dominica, while the umpity-tum, umpity-tum of African drums on lonely hillsides has drifted in on the cold night air.

The Commissioner, who had been working with infinite care over a tall glass pitcher in which he had proportioned an amber mixture from various bottles from the chest, now took up a long slender stick of white wood with a knobbed heel at one end which he lowered into the liquid. From a bowl of cracked ice he selected several pieces with a large silver tongs, and dropped them into the pitcher. With a deftness born of considerable practice he set the stick into rapid motion between the palms of his hands. The liquid changed from its dead amber to the lively gold of champagne, and as the foam rose and muffled the clink of the ice till it was heard no more, he suddenly stopped and with remarkable dexterity poured the swizzle into six glasses standing in a row of close formation. In a twinkling the glasses were passed around, and holding his to the Tads, he said, "Chin-chin, and the best of luck!" Whereupon all hands drained the

contents of their beady glasses. So the Tads had their first lesson in the making of the swizzle which had captivated Willie "T," and for all I know, led me to their part of the yarn.

"You must make sure to remind me, after dinner," began the Parson as they sat down, "to point out a little cay whose name suggested —"

"Oh, I say! Padre —" arose from the throats of his three compatriots. The rest was lost in a roar of laughter.

The swizzle had performed its duty, and although at first blush there seemed to be a wide gulf between the rather timid old Yankees and the young Colonials, they quickly found many traits in common. The underlying strain was the same — environment, only, had made them superficially different. But a good dinner takes no account of such things, and, according to the Tads, it was a wondrous success. There were tiny oysters from the mangrove swamp, Virgin snapper, English beef, ducks from Gorda Sound, Yorkshire ham, iced *pâté de foie gras*, Italian claret, Spanish port, and, what pleased them most, a delicious coconut ice-cream, flavored with the vanilla-bean grown by the Curator himself. As the dinner progressed the company gradually drifted into a happy state of internal well-being till the old negress who waited upon them was in a continual chuckle. When they finally

quitted the table and dropped into their chairs once more on the shaded veranda, all six dozed off shamelessly over their coffee and cigars.

Richard was the last to awaken, and as he opened his eyes he saw that the negress had brought out a small rattan table and the Commissioner was about to serve tea. The cake which had been untouched at dinner was now cut. The Tads, who had no suspicion that their visit was to be prolonged to such an extent, remained till the table was removed and the conversation began to fray out into local topics. Then they arose, and after thanking their host, made their way to the landing. There was movement aboard the schooner and they saw Gus put off for them in the dinghy.

"Fine mess we've gotten into now!" growled Richard reflectively.

"Wha' d' ye mean?"

"Here we've accepted the hospitality of the Commissioner, knowing all the time that we've come to break the law that he's here to uphold."

"By damn! I never thought of that," returned the artist, as this new complication dawned upon him.

"I wish he had n't been so darn decent — we should n't have accepted his invitation — why the devil did we leave the schooner? I feel as though we have been unfaithful to the old ship

and now as a punishment we've done an ungentlemanly thing."

Prudish Conscience seemed to be holding high carnival with the swizzle and the claret and the port. Then the gleam of a fresh idea came into the eyes of the artist.

"Yes — but the island is n't *his*, strictly speaking."

"No, nor the doubloons either; the old hermit found 'em long before there was any fool law against treasure hunting."

"And *he*," put in the artist, "intended giving 'em to the young Tom, did n't he?"

"Then Cap'n Tom tried to pass 'em on to the junkman — and if *we* find 'em we've got to pass 'em on to *him*."

The Tads were suddenly struck aghast at the turn their own argument had taken. Till now it had never entered their heads that after all, should they find the doubloons, they would rightfully belong to the old junkman. It was the adventure of finding them which had taken such hold upon the Tads ever since they had discovered the key at Beaufort, that they had not even thought of what they would do with the doubloons should they actually secure them. But they were the Tads — how stupid of them.

"After all," said Richard, as they got into the dinghy, "are n't we like the old man of Norman?

We have all we need and more, and we'll feel all the better about it now if we give the doubloons over to their rightful owner."

"Das yust vat ay tank, ven you vent ashore das mornin'," said Gus, who had caught the drift of the conversation.

With lighter hearts the two climbed aboard their home and they slept through the most peaceful night they had ever spent on the old schooner.

For a week—one of the most remarkable in the annals of Tortola — the Tads gave themselves up to the delights of day cruising along the channels. In some mysterious way the people of Tortola seemed to have entered upon an era of exceptionally good health — cherubs and seraphs could not be more blooming, the Doctor had remarked. Also, a wholesome respect for the law had descended upon the island like a spiritual vapor, and the Commissioner found little to occupy his time, especially during the day — so why not go fishing with the Tads? As for the Botanical Garden, well, things *will* grow even if one is not there to watch. And the Padre — he had discovered that Sunday came only once in seven days. The Tads were not lacking in company.

The Doctor and the Curator, the Tads found, were great chums, and these two were the first

upon the field, so to speak, for on the morning after Christmas — the Tads were at their breakfast — the Curator appeared alongside with a boat-load of plunder from the Botanical Garden just beyond the mangrove swamp. There were delicious jelly-coconuts, which were to be a new delight to the Tads, luscious ripe bananas, grafted mangoes with custard pulp, pink-skinned Bermuda potatoes, and golden pineapples that gave to the touch. Then came the Doctor, a very close second, rowed out by his Salt Island man. "Best man in the islands, is n't he, Mac?" he had said, turning to the Curator for corroboration. "Smuggles, I suspect, when he gets a chance, and he knows *all* the cays. He goes with us for a shilling a day and half the fish we catch, but I dare say he'll ask more from you. You're reported among the natives as millionaires — all Americans are millionaires, you know," he continued, surveying the cozy little cabin as though he, too, would apply this stigma to the Tads. "But I would n't give him more than two shillings, or you'll spoil him for us."

The Salt Islander proved to be an active appearing native of about forty, almost pure African, the Tads thought, and with a smiling face which showed rather more than average intelligence. He called himself William Penn, a name probably borrowed and handed down through his forbears

from the time of the dauntless admiral himself. At first he stoutly held out for four shillings, but the Tads promptly fetched him down to two — with the promise of a bonus at the end of his time.

At night, they would find themselves ashore, foregathered in the depths of the veranda at Government House, smoking and talking, feasting their eyes the while on the quiet moonlit harbor. It was an Utopian existence this, the like of which the Tads had never known, and they might almost have forgotten their purpose in coming were it not for the moon, coming up later and fuller each night to remind them that their time was drawing near. They would need that moonlight, not so much for searching out the hermit's abode, but the better to forestall any ambush which Tompas and his henchman might prepare for them.

The day arrived at last and the Tads had come ashore for their papers. Upon being questioned as to their next port of call, they had replied with naïve truthfulness that they were not sure where they could fetch. The Commissioner cleared the *Golden Parrot* for the high seas.

They were bidding their last good-byes on the jetty when the Commissioner remarked, "The place will seem quite empty when you are gone. Why, it seems empty already," he added, looking around, "there is scarcely a small boat on the

beach and last evening I'm sure I counted eight or ten. I wonder if that Sea-Cow woman has been up to more mischief — the moon's full to-night, you know." The Tads thought they caught a half-smile on the faces of the Doctor and the Curator, but they attached no importance to it at the time, for these two seemed always to be smiling over something or other.

The afternoon was well advanced when they at last laid their course for the reef passage, and dipping their ensign to the little group on the end of the jetty, heeled presently to the free breeze in Drake's Channel.

So far, they believed, they had remained unsuspected. There was comfort in the sight of the Government sloop, lying peacefully at anchor astern of them, her awnings up, and with the glow of the westering sun on her naked mast. There was only one cloud aboard the *Parrot*, and this became apparent as the town faded into the recess of the harbor. For once William Penn's face began to lose its usually cheerful aspect and he seemed more and more troubled. The Tads had paid him his two shillings a day, to be sure, but for some reason, even up to the very minute of departure, there had been no hint of the bonus. They had apparently forgotten him, and at last, while the anchor was being hove short, the negro had reminded Richard that he was still aboard.

"I know you are," replied the Tad; "now don't you worry about that, we'll put you ashore when we get to Salt — perhaps."

But he *did* worry about it. What did the old Yankee mean by that "perhaps"? And then he was not ready to leave Roadtown — just yet. Mr. Penn, as you should know, had a penchant for a certain dirty little rum-shop not far from the jetty — he had been saving his shillings for one grand taste of the flesh-pots of the small metropolis of Tortola ere he should return to his quiet retreat on Salt. Till the very last he had refrained — with native diplomacy — from mentioning this small matter of business lest, in being too forward, he might incur the impatience of the Tads. Then, as the cook went below, the artist beckoned to the negro, who pattered aft with expectant alacrity.

"Do you see this?" began the Tad, who was playing with a gold piece of substantial weight as if it were a mere lucky penny or perhaps a loose button he had just pulled off his coat.

"Yassur." The beaming native seemed to be trying to find a suitable place to put his hands.

"It's yours if we put you ashore this afternoon."

"Yassur — ef yo puts me 'shore dis evenin'?"

"But if you stay with us to-night, there'll be more like it when we put you ashore to-morrow

morning," the artist continued with a meaning look; "do you understand?"

"Yassur," from the puzzled native.

"You know damn well you don't." And then, lowering his voice, "We're going to Norman."

"You mean de *tree?*"

"Something of the sort; now can we trust you to keep quiet?"

"Doan' you trobble wid dat," answered the native, now all agog at the hint of adventure; "one han' wash de odder, bofe han's wash face."

The sun was now within an hour of his setting and the *Golden Parrot* lay close aboard Salt Island. For the sake of deception, lest they might be watched through the glasses of their friends at Government House, they ran into the shallow cove where a tiny village cuddled in the shadows of the island. Here they came into the wind. A native or two squatted on the beach where several canoes were drawn up under thatched roofs on poles to keep off the heat of mid-day. The glow of coal-pots could be seen in the gloom of the village and the odor of frying fish brought out to the schooner by the eddying breeze bespoke the evening occupation. The men on the beach looked on in idle curiosity, and receiving no sign, made no move to come out to the schooner. Bill Ropes, who had stuck his head from the crew's hatch upon the rattle of idle blocks on travelers, looked

inquiringly at the boats on the davits, turned his gaze on the figures inshore and then aft to the Tads. No one made a move. Then in a sharp tone Richard gave the order to back the headsails. The artist payed out the mainsheet and the schooner headed for sea. The venture was on.

CHAPTER XII

THE *Golden Parrot* stood out into the Caribbean till the sun left her, scarcely a mile from Salt, where she squared away for Norman, which could be made out just beyond the end of Peter. Giving the wheel over to Gus, the Tads went below to snatch a hasty bite. When they came on deck again the moon was coming up yellow, out of the sea, and Peter lay between them and Roadtown. The wind, which had flattened toward sunset, was now springing up fresh again with the moon.

"Get your supper, Gus, and then send William Penn aft," said Richard, as he took the wheel.

The Tads were alone, with the huge mainsail — it seemed huge to them and always inspired a certain awe as they sat astride the wheel-box on their lonely night watches — towering before them, chalky-white in the moonlight. All was quiet but the casual hiss of a following sea and the protesting groan of leather on brass as the gaff swung to the slow pitch of the schooner. As though deep in the sleep of ages, Peter lay off

their quarter, a dark outline like some earthy giant with his back to them, wrapped in his own shadow cast by the low moon. Neither spoke. The strangeness of it all seemed to hold them as in a dream. The tepid wind, scented with mysterious land odors frisked from the cays strung out astern, seemed to have settled on the afterdeck of the old schooner like some invisible fairy that would enter with their breathing and so cast her spell. They had neither age nor youth, those two; they were spirits, unhampered by the earthly, sitting on a cloud of their own that sailed over a deep blue sky.

The spell was at last broken by the low rumble of surf, and peering under the foreboom, the Tads saw Norman showing pale and ghostlike off their starboard bow. A form rose up from the crew's hatch and padded languorously aft.

"Did you ever hear of the old hermit of Norman?" asked Richard.

"Yassur, my gran'fadder —"

"Your grandfather never told you where he lived on Norman, did he?"

"No, sah, he ain' tol' *me*, but he tol' my fadder — de house gone long time — w'en my fadder li'l' boy."

"But do you know where it stood — are there any foundations left?"

"Oh, yassur, dey stones lef', I carry you dere."

"*Hooray!* Tell the cook to come aft, and I want Gus to take the wheel while you and Ole keep a lookout for'ard."

Now came unpleasant business and the Tads must proceed with caution, for as yet they had been unable to conceive a suitable plan of action. With uncertain feelings they watched the native go for'ard and bend over the hatchway and then take up his station by the forestay. Presently the lank form of the cook emerged followed by Gus.

As the Swede took the wheel, Richard stepped to the side of the artist in the cleared space of the cockpit, his right hand in his coat pocket. Bill Ropes had been watching the exchange in silence. Knees sprung a little, to take the motion of the schooner, hairy arms hanging down by his side, he faced them expectantly, his countenance betraying query which strove to conceal, in the bright moonlight, a touch of defiance.

"Did you want me?"

"Yes," began Richard; "why did Tompas hide under the deck of his sloop when he followed us out of Saint Thomas?"

The cook, who must have been expecting something of this sort, showed no sign of surprise, but the artist thought he saw him draw his eyebrows a little closer together as if seeking an escape from a direct answer.

"Tompas?" he asked; "who's Tompas?"

"Oh, come now — the colored man you talked with that first day at Saint Thomas — you saw him again the morning we left."

Instead of making answer, Bill Ropes glanced speculatively at the end of Norman which was just showing abeam. Divining his purpose, Richard drew his gun.

"Guess you'd better stay right where you are." And then to the artist, "He's fighting for time, William — bring her into the wind, Gus, we've got all night."

Gus spoked over the wheel, the foresail jibed with a bang, and the schooner swung into the trough of the seas, her sails flapping with reports like pistol shots. The Dane and the negro sprang aft to tend the mainsail.

"When we left you aboard that last afternoon," Richard continued, as the schooner came into the wind, her sails atremble, "you made for the stateroom right off and took the keys from my trousers in the clothes-locker — did n't you? Then you went to the desk and got at the tin box. You did n't find what you were looking for and you locked it again; then without looking anywhere else you put the keys back where you found them."

For once the cook was taken aback. How did those old fuddy-duddies know he had looked nowhere else but in the desk? Even Gus lifted his

eyes from the compass at this stroke. Penn gaped with open mouth and staring eyes, first at the gun, then at the object of its aim and finally around to the Tads.

"*Now*, what's your game with Tompas?"

"Honest to God, sir —" began the cook, but he was cut short by an impatient oath from Richard.

"Put your hands up over your head — that's right." Then, while the Tad held the gun at the pit of the cook's stomach, Ole was commanded to fasten his hands behind his back with a piece of small line. Then the Dane held him by the shoulder lest he lose his balance and fall overboard.

"We can't *make* you talk if you don't want to," said Richard, replacing the gun in his pocket, "but if you do you'll be all the better off when we reach Florida."

"Wipe me eye if ye ain't got me high an' dry," said Bill Ropes, who seemed to be taking it easily enough as though even were he high and dry at the moment, he would presently float himself off again on the tide of confession.

By the merest chance, he said, he had happened to look up through the mirror as the artist had thrust a paper into his pocket. This, the cook surmised, must have come from the piece of ballast the Tads had been investigating. Of course, the yard-owner's mention of the purpose

for which the schooner had been built immediately came to him, the cook, who put two and two together — as one naturally does. Then, the change in the plans of the Tads, a few days later, from Florida to the West Indies, clinched the matter. He was curious about it — who would n't be? When they had reached Saint Thomas, he had run afoul of Tompas, who wanted to get their trade in ship's stores and who was naturally interested in knowing their last port and where they were going. When he, Bill Ropes, had said that they had come from Nassau where they had only spent a day, and that their charts only took them to the Virgins, the mulatto seemed to smell a rat. "Ye see, I had a look at them charts that mornin' at Nassau."

"Yes, and they were not the only things you had a look at that morning," put in William.

"Parbuckle me liver fer a gang of white mice! I *thought* that squarehead," indicating Ole, "had his eye on me. And as *you* know, I did n't find it."

"Well," continued the cook, "I'd heard you say somethin' about Norman an' I told Tompas. Then he was sure, and he told me that he owned the island an' there was some stuff buried there, but he could n't find it. Then *I* told him about the paper thet come out of the pig an' if I found it we'd beat you to it and split even. But it

was n't in the tin box, so I figured you had it in your pockets. W'ich I told him that last mornin', an' I was to lay low an' he'd be waitin' fer us. I was to foller you ashore an' meet him on the beach while his man would be follerin' you — we figgered you'd take the squareheads along to do the diggin' — an' when you found the place his man was to come back an' we'd take you by surprise. No dirty work, sir, but seein' as he owned th' island —"

"Well, he lied to you about owning the island — and then you'd run off with the schooner?" pursued Richard.

"Nothin' like that, sir; I was to take the pins out o' th' steerin' gear so you could n't foller us. Tompas'd hide his sloop in a little bight just to th' east'ard of a landin' beach on th' south side of th' island."

The Tads turned to Penn.

"Yassur, dey li'l' cove at de en' ob de ilan'," asserted Penn, who was eager to show his knowledge.

"Guess he's telling the truth," said the artist; "that is, more or less of it. There must have been some sort of signal."

"Three low whistles, sir, an' ye c'n stew me Adam's apple ef I ain't tellin' th' truth."

"P'r'aps you are. Help the cook down the forehatch, Ole, and tie his feet," ordered Richard.

"Well, there are only two of 'em to reckon with," said the artist, when they had squared away once more. "What do you think we'd better do?"

"If I could say a vord — ay tank Ole ban yust de size of das cook — narly —"

Richard jumped at the suggestion. "We'll put Ole in the cook's clothes and have him follow us ashore. And when Tompas steps up to him — there'll only be *one* left." He chuckled at the picture of the huge paw of the young Dane shutting off all utterance from the mulatto's throat.

So they fetched the cook into the cabin where they stripped him of his dungarees and the same blue-and-white checkered shirt he had worn on that last morning in Saint Thomas. In the forecastle they found the floppy straw hat which he always wore when he went ashore with the market-basket. The exchange was quickly made. While Ole was of the same height as the cook, he was a bit the bulkier of the two, but they prayed that the deception might last long enough for the Dane to get his hands on Tompas. Then they ordered the cook to sit on the floor and with legs and arms encircling the mainmast, they tied his hands and feet.

"You can hug that for awhile — it's a good alibi to ease your conscience for missing your

appointment with Tompas," grinned Richard, as they left him, leaning comfortably enough against the bulkhead.

While the *Golden Parrot* is heading up for Flanagan Pass, let's go below and have a look at the chart of old Norman's island. A bit over two miles in length, it lies with its main axis running nearly east and west, some six miles south from Roadtown and almost under the lee of Peter. Stretching out octopus-like to the northwest, its juncture with the backbone of the island forming the bowl which encircles The Bight, lies the arm which holds Man-of-War Bay. Like all these small cays which form the southern barrier of Drake's Channel, the island is covered with a low bush which, in the winter months when the cool, moist trades sweep over, trailing frequent rains, presents from a distance an appearance of being thickly wooded. But upon nearer approach the traveler finds that the only trees are a few stunted coco-palms which despairingly encircle The Bight, and groves of small trees which creep up under the protection of the higher portions of the island. At the southern entrance to Man-of-War Bay lies Treasure Point with its two caves which look out upon Flanagan Passage. From these caves a path ascends along the ridge of the point to West Hill, scarcely three eighths of a mile to the south'ard, the highest point on the

island. From the top of this hill which commands Privateer Bay, the eye can follow almost the entire shore-line of Norman except that part which is called the Landing Bay, and is cut off from view by its sister hill to the eastward. With glasses one can not only penetrate the depths of Road Harbor, but also sweep the entire length of Sir Francis Drake's Channel from Saint John to Virgin Gorda and the Caribbean from Gorda to Saint Thomas. A more ideal cay for the use of privateers could hardly be imagined, for here, at the head of Man-of-War Bay, The Bight afforded excellent anchorage during the season of the trade-winds, while on the approach of a sail of suspicious cut, ample warning could be given to slip cables and run for the high seas or lead a merry chase through the intricate passages about Saint John, and finally elude pursuit under cover of night in one of the numerous coves to the westward. Directly across Flanagan Pass, at the head of Coral Bay on the neighboring island of Saint John, lies Hurricane Hole, where, during the calms of the dreaded hurricane season, the privateer could remove ballast, send down his top hamper, and hidden from the sea by the surrounding hills, heave down his ship in one of the shallow coves to repair the bottom from the ravages of the dreaded teredo, secure from winds or human enemy.

At the head of The Bight stands the rickety old jetty. It was here that I had landed when I visited Norman a year later in the *Yakaboo*. To the northeast of the jetty, in a grove which mounts the ridge, stands the pirate tree, of a species of hard wood locally called cedar, with certain cabalistic markings cut deep into its smooth bark. Southeast lies the tiny clearing with the ruins of the old store-house and the ancient well now devoid of water and half filled with débris. From the clearing a goat-path leads directly inland to the small plateau where stood the house of the old hermit. Another path lies through a thick grove choked with bush to the Landing Beach on the south side of the island, and beyond this you will find the tiny cove (marked with a small anchor) where Bill Ropes has told us Tompas would secure his sloop.

Since Columbus first sighted these islands from the rolling deck of his caravel as she wallowed down the trade from the Lesser Antilles, Norman's owners have been few, probably only the pirate, the hermit from Peter, and the three Tompas; its only continuous inhabitants countless generations of goats, the descendants, doubtless, of those first left there by the early Spaniards.

The moon was now swinging up over the back of Norman as the *Golden Parrot* with only her mainsail standing — like the erect fin of some

huge sailfish on some snooping venture bent — chugged into Man-of-War Bay where every rock and tree stood out as in broad daylight. The Tads stood in the bows watching the bottom pass under them, so near, it seemed, that their keel must strike at any moment. Even the waters of the Bahamas had not been as clear as this. In some mysterious manner, the *Golden Parrot* had come upon a stratum of buoyant air on which they were gliding over a surface of white marble where the shadows of the dinghies, swung out on their davits, accompanied that of the schooner like wingless birds.

Suddenly the engine became silent and a moment later they saw the anchor plunge down to meet its shadow and come to rest on the white sand like that of a toy boat in a bathtub. There was scarcely a ripple, so close were they under the lee of the hill which bowled up around them, and the soft brash of the tiny swell from their wake was the only sound as it broke on the even beach.

The Tads went below to gag the cook while Gus put the two spades they had bought in Charleston into the larger dinghy, and lowered away. Then the negro, followed by the old men and Gus, got in and silently pulled for the jetty.

While Gus was making fast at the end of the jetty, the Tads looked up and down the beach

in search of footprints. As far as they could see, the smooth sand lay undisturbed. "Cute beggar," muttered the artist; "I'll bet he's watching us from behind those coco-palms."

"All right, Penn," commanded Richard, and they set out, the Tads following the negro and Gus bringing up the rear with the two spades. The native headed directly for the coco-palms, standing like a colonnade with a cleared space, almost a wagon-road width, between them and the grove which climbed the slopes behind them, and turned south along this *allée*. Over their shoulders the Tads caught glimpses of the *Golden Parrot* between the tree-trunks, fleet glimpses in which their loving old eyes saw their trim little home sitting jauntily on the glassy bay, the peak of her mainsail swaying in the high airs like the tail of a faithful dog, as though she were trying to say, "Oh, shucks! What do you want with those old doubloons, anyway? Let's go to sea for a romp." A figure was emerging from the crew's hatch when their attention was diverted by Penn.

"Look de sto'-house!" They had come upon the cleared space where the stark walls of a small stone building shone sepulchral in the moonlight.

"By gracious!" exclaimed William; "this must be the store-house that Cap'n Tom mentioned to the junkman." All thought of the schooner was

swept away and they were suddenly back in the days of the old hermit. There was no vestige of a roof and they wondered whether it had ever been replaced after that hurricane of 1820. They would stop to peer through the crumbling doorway at the place where the young Tom had found refuge after the lull of that awful blow, but the inexorable Penn held on with quickened gait — past the ruins of the old well where the hermit had fetched water for the parched lips of the sole survivor of the *Betsy Ann* — and plunged into the grove directly for the heart of the island. William Penn was in no romancing mood this evening; his sole purpose was to take these queer old men to the place where they might dig up doubloons — lots of 'em — the tale of which his wrinkled old grandfather had crooned to his father on the doorstep of their little hut on Salt, and which he in turn had been passing on to his wide-eyed pickaninnies.

"Sh! — what's that?" whispered the artist, catching Penn by the arm as the crash of leaves smote their ears.

"Dat ain' no nigger — dat on'y lizard in de leav'; I t'ink we wreckin' dere sleep." But this sound of lizards crashing through dry leaves was something new to the Tads, and it kept their thoughts on the native who must be following them somewhere through the lights and shadows

of the baby forest. The trees began to thin and presently the four came out upon an open plateau, a scant acre in extent lying under the brow of the hill. Penn halted a moment to get his bearings and then made for the center of the clearing.

"You stop here," he commanded, as he started off again on a widening détour. Suddenly he turned and beckoned to the others. Drawing near, they made out a rectangular patch in the scrub grass, which resolved itself into a low wall of masonry scarcely a foot high, some thirty feet square and formed of rough blocks of coral rock cemented together. This, the Tads guessed, had been the foundation of the old hermit's house. Of the house itself, which must have been of wood, there remained not the slightest trace — myriads of ants had long ago seen to its destruction. Nor was there any other evidence that here had once been a human abode. Within the enclosure the ground was humped and hollowed and in places the foundation had been broken and the coral blocks cast aside.

"Plenty people been diggin' 'roun' here," chuckled Penn, "but de ol' hermit, he cute, he know better dan plant money *inside* de house."

"Guess he did," answered Richard, fishing a small compass from his pocket.

As on the paper of the light pig, the founda-

tions lay to the cardinal points. Placing the compass on the southwest corner, the Tads sighted a line directly southwest along which they measured off six fathoms. At this point they laid off a square of some six feet and here Gus and Penn began to dig. The ground was loose and loamy, admirably adapted for a garden, and it was not long before the Swede and the native had cleared a hole knee-deep. But to the Tads the time dragged on into eternity while the moon seemed to be sailing over them at a furious rate. So much had passed since sunset, that morning must overtake them before their task was accomplished and with sunrise would come the danger of detection. Native sloops were in the habit of fishing in Flanagan Pass and the report would quickly spread that the *Golden Parrot* had been seen in Man-of-War Bay. Richard looked at his watch and found that it was only ten o'clock. Then, as if action on their part would hasten the digging, the Tads took to walking back and forth between the foundation and the deepening hole. They were like a couple of young husbands pacing the hallway without the room whence the announcement might come at any time that they were fathers. They were expecting many little yellow children. A yell from the negro suddenly brought them to the hole which was now almost waist-deep. The earth had sunk away a few

inches in one corner and here Penn was excitedly burrowing with his hands.

"Oh, my fadder — wot is dis!" He held up a lump of something in one hand while still digging with the other.

It was a crumbling piece of rotted wood. Then, sitting up on his haunches, he rubbed something on the ridge of his thigh and held it up to the Tads who were bending over him. It was round and shining, and yellow, and showed the austere features of Carlos IV, Hisp. & Ind. R., and bore the date 1771.

"Ay tank — " began Gus.

"'*Ay tank*' we've found the wherewith to keep the old junkman in rum and tobacco for the rest of his life!" shouted William.

Penn cleared the earth from a hole into which he had thrust his hand. There were more pieces of crumbling wood and the hole widened to a circle of metal some two feet in diameter. It was the rim of an iron pot, such as was used in the old days for boiling soap, filled nearly to the top with earth-stained discs. Again he reached down — with both hands — and dumped a load of clinking doubloons on the grass by the knees of the Tads. Nothing but doubloons, as the junkman had said.

"What a find!" exclaimed Richard, as the sweating native, working like a crazy steam-

shovel, scooped up the doubloons by the handsful. "I wish the old junkman were here. It was too easy!"

"Easy, you said it, easy," chimed in the artist; "but how in time are we to get 'em all down to the schooner; we can't fetch 'em in our pockets. Never thought of *that*, did you?"

But the resourceful Gus had already thought of it, and, jumping out of the pit, he began to remove his trousers. Then he knotted the ends and began scooping the doubloons into the twin bags. When they were about half full, he stood up and hoisted them to his shoulder, slinging the legs fore and aft.

"Das yust ban good cargo," he said, as he put them down again.

The Tads were not slow in following suit, nor Penn, till the entire contents of the pot were distributed among the four pairs of trousers.

"By gracious! I never thought they'd weigh so much," said the artist, struggling to his feet with his burden; "I must have all of sixty pounds." The Tads had been given the lighter loads, and they estimated afterwards that there must have been some two hundred and sixty pounds in all — sixty-eight thousand dollars — a tidy enough bit for any old junkman. This, of course, was not the sixty-thousand pounds sterling mentioned by Southey, nor would old Norman have

left any such miserly sum, and that is why, from the very first, I have maintained that what the Tads found was only a part of a picayune cache left by some upstart privateer of a later day. But enough of this, and now, while our four shirt-tailed adventurers are trudging bare-legged on their way to the beach, I'll have to whisk you to other scenes, and because thirteen is an unlucky number we'll go right on to —

CHAPTER XIV

It seems that one evening, after the *Golden Parrot* had cast anchor at Tortola, Rumor glided down to Roadtown from Sea-Cow Bay and raised its head in the little rum-shop of one Chattergoon, hard-by the market-place. The old woman, it whispered, was having another fit.

"She allus habbin' fit — she doan git no mo' ob *my* shillin'," said one, rather hastily finishing his dram of rum. "Me t'ink me go home now, me go fishnin' in de marnin'." When he had departed, another said —

"Fishnin'? How dat fool nigger lie, de on'y fishnin' he ebber bodder wid is de gol'fish w'at nebber swim in de sea!" Whereupon a second patron finished his dram and left, explaining that his old woman had been suffering from chills and might need the doctor.

"He ol' womin!" from another; "you t'ink dat jumbie cyat bodder wif de doctor ef she dyin'? Mebbe I see ef he ain' stop in Sea-Cow Bay on he way home." At which the others roared loud

guffaws, for none of them lived out of town. But their minds were hard at work to think up as plausible excuses for getting away from their cronies. When at nine, the last of his guests had left — a full hour earlier than was his wont to close his shop — old Chattergoon swung-to his shutters and barred them, not without considerable care to do so noiselessly, slid a shilling or two and some thruppences into his pocket, from the little till under the counter, and was about to close the door — from the outside — when a feminine voice from the dwelling half of his establishment arrested him for the moment.

"Hiah, you ol' Chattergoon! You ain' foller dem ragtail to Sea-Cow Bay?"

"Me? Dyam de fittin' ole womin! Me go down by de jetty." And he locked the door on further utterance.

Chattergoon did go down to the jetty — and then he betook himself along the beach, in the direction of Sea-Cow Bay.

Now the old woman of Sea-Cow Bay, being a dyed-in-the-wool astrologer and soothsayer, was hardly in the habit of rubbing the froth of the soapweed on her lips and simulating the epileptic fit without first consulting her chief ally, the moon. From sundown to sunrise are the only propitious hours for the prognosis of treasure-hunting. But half the nights in the West Indies, as

everywhere else, — taken by and large, — are devoid of moonlight, and it is on the dark nights that the jumbie lurks to catch the native who wanders from his own shack. The jumbie shuns the bright light of the fulling moon, however, and on such nights the coral road to Sea-Cow Bay, winding around the double point from Roadtown, lies like a gleaming white ribbon, unshadowed as at high noon. And so, at varying intervals, the door of her little shack was opened to the entrance and departure of the quondam customers of Chattergoon, and finally Chattergoon himself.

It is well known that pirate treasure is jealously guarded by the spirit of the one who buried it, and that he has the power to move it from place to place underground till at last it is revealed to the one he intends shall have it. That's why I told you to begin with that it was only the hermit's doubloons the Tads found, and that old Norman, who fell in love with the dainty little *Yakaboo*, will guard it for me till I can finish this yarn and go down for it in my schooner. And so, just to keep him in good spirits, I leave the cork out of my rum-bottle so that he can slip down at any time and help himself. I often find, after a night of no moon, — you see, the jumbies keep the natives off the island on dark nights and old Norman can leave his treasure, — that the level in the bottle has gone down a bit, although I

keep it securely locked from my Bahama boy and carry the key in my pocket.

No one, not even the old woman of Sea-Cow Bay, can tell how the spirit of the one who buried the treasure may be disposed toward the searcher. That is far from her province. All she can do is to tell where, on the night of a full moon, the lucky one may dig and perhaps be rewarded. After all, it's a gamble, and she, better than the rest of us, knows the craze of the negro for gambling, else why the growing pile of coin of the realm, George's, and Edward's, and Vic's, and even old William's for that matter, under the ant-eaten floor of her hut?

Her clients had invariably been sworn to secrecy and each would be given a certain night and a certain hour for his operations. But this, as you shall see, was an unusual case.

"O Lard! O Mary!" she groaned from her crummy bed, "I heers dem doubloon clinkin', dey's movin' roun' an' roun' de pirut tree. Dey's bin oneasy ebber sence de schooner cum. Dey knows de ole men knows whar dey be, but dey doan' wan' no 'Mericums take 'em 'way."

"Whafur do?" from the uneasy client, who begins to scent obstacles.

"O Lard! O Mary! Dey oneasy, dey ain' goin' stan' still fo' no nigger," and she falls back rigid as a stick of logwood.

After an awesome moment in which she is making up her mind as to the financial status of her client, she murmurs:

"Close ma eyes wid silvah — shillin's is bes'." And if her client is one of the opulent, it is, "Trupansis," or even "sixpansis on top to hol' 'em down."

The rite of the silver having been performed, her body gradually relaxes and from the oracular her voice becomes confidential.

"Lissen you! De ole white men dey know how stop dem doubloon frum goin' roun' an' dey dig 'em up. But *w'en* dey dug up, on'y Africum kin take 'em 'way — dey doan' wan' go 'way wid white men, das why dey goin' roun' an' roun' de tree.

"I tells ten people an' dey mus' each sen' one odder to me, an' dey mus' go in ten skiff, two by two like de animuls in Noar's Ark. Dey mus' hide in de bush by de pirut tree an' bide fo' de ole men an' w'en de clock strike ten — ef yo niggers cyan' git dem doubloon 'way frum de ole men —" But the effort was too much and her voice trailed off in silence.

Chattergoon, strange to say, was the tenth, and the next night the old woman had ten more visitors, and so it came to pass that on the night before the Tads left Tortola, ten boats found their way to the beach on the south side of Norman.

The whites of twenty pairs of eyes gleamed in the bush around the pirate tree, and as the moon swung up past the place where she ought to be at ten o'clock, twenty souls opened for Unease to enter, whereupon Doubt followed after to flirt with Unease and breed Restlessness.

"Me t'inkin' dat ole woman trick us; de ole men ain' cummin' heah dis night," said one.

"Mebbe dey cyan' fin' de tree," suggested another.

"Cyan' fin' de tree nuttin'; ain' dey took Willyum Penn wid 'em?"

"O Lard, wha'f dere 'nudder pirut tree we doan' know nuttin' 'bout?"

"Das right. An' here we fool niggers is sittin' all night w'ile de ole men mebbe sailin' 'way wid de doubloon."

It was then that Chattergoon suggested, "Le's we-all go down de bay an' see ef de schooner dere." Upon which the other nineteen of His Majesty's subjects of Tortola rose from their haunches and followed Chattergoon down through the bush toward Man-of-War Bay.

We'll leave the twenty, as we did the Tads, marking time in this sort of literary treadmill while we round up Tompas and his henchman, Josil, and then with our three rope yarns unlayed and the ends whipped, so to speak, I can splice up this chapter in proper fashion.

By those devious underground methods known to diplomats and natives, Tompas had learned that the *Golden Parrot* had cleared from Saint Thomas for Tortola, and, since any small vessel cruising for pleasure in these parts was looked upon with suspicion, the Tads would sail directly for Roadtown to bide their time and learn the lay of the islands ere they would make their attempt on Norman. So when he followed the Tads out of Saint Thomas that morning, his sloop was, in all probability, well stocked with water and provisions. I say in all probability, for this is what I should have done were I in his place. You see, Tompas and his man, Josil Jean, are the only ones in this yarn I have not interviewed in person concerning what went on at Norman on this particular night — I have my own private reasons for keeping clear of Tompas for a while at least. It is safe to assume that Tompas made up his mind that the Tads would plan to land at night and that they would bring the *Golden Parrot* into the only safe anchorage for a vessel of her draft — Man-of-War Bay. As we know, there was no habitation on the island. According to Bill Ropes, Tompas had planned to camp in one of the caves and would keep his watch on the *Golden Parrot* from the top of West Hill. We shall not be far wrong in guessing that after Tompas had seen the *Golden Parrot*

stand in to Road Harbor, he loafed under the lee of Saint John till sundown and then, under cover of darkness, he ran across Flanagan Pass to Treasure Point. Here he landed his stores and then sailed around the south side of the island, where he beached his sloop in the cove between the double points. As the rise and fall of the water in these parts is not more than a foot, even during the spring tides, the sloop would be safe enough as they left her with a line run from her bow and hauled taut with a tackle to a small tree up the beach. After carefully hiding all their gear in the bush, they made their way back to the caves. Here the two, alternating their vigil from the top of West Hill, must have watched the goings and comings of the *Golden Parrot* on her fishing expeditions in Drake's Channel.

I can imagine that wicked old eye of Tompas peering through the end of his battered telescope as the schooner stood out on that last afternoon, eagerly watching her every foot of the way across the channel till Peter cut her off from view. Then, perhaps an hour later, he could not have failed to pick her up again coming up to the south of Norman, her white hull shining like a lazy whitecap under the dark shadow of her sails, and when he was at last assured that she was heading up for the passage, he betook himself with Josil to

OLD CHART OF THE VIRGINS

the head of the bay where they hid themselves in the bush. Here they saw the four land at the jetty, and then Josil left his master to follow them into the bush.

Soon after, Tompas saw the figure of the floppy hat and the checkered shirt hoist itself from the forehatch and slowly walk aft to the dinghy hanging in the port davits. So it was all according to programme that he of the checkered shirt should lower the boat, slide down one of the falls, and row to the jetty. Tompas waited until the figure had advanced halfway up the beach and given the signal of the three whistles. Then he stepped forth to meet his ally and his ally came on — a bit precipitously as it might have occurred to him later — and Tompas opened his mouth to speak.

At that very instant a long arm shot forth with a huge paw on the end of it which fetched up around the back of the mulatto's neck like a cargo-hook, and before the words which were framed for utterance could be launched, the flat of a calloused hand — too broad to bite — was thrust against his mouth. Then something akin to a cow-catcher swept the bewildered Tompas from his feet and he was let down upon the sands, while a great weight descended upon his stomach and a vise began to squeeze his ribs. The floppy hat rolled off, and his staring eyes

beheld the Dane sitting astride of him, gripping with his knees. Rage followed on surprise and Tompas shot forth his hands in an attempt to reach the other's throat. The cargo-hook let go from the back of his neck, but came back in the form of a sledge-hammer and he knew no more. Like any first-class A.B. handling a sail, Ole gagged him, rolled him over, and tied his hands and feet. The operation was altogether neat and ship-shape—but Ole had made just two mistakes. First, he had tackled the mulatto a little too close to the coco-palms, and then he had incautiously turned his back on them to tie the native's feet. As he turned, two forms sprang from the bush and he suddenly lost all interest in mundane affairs. With great ease and alacrity and no small amount of chuckling, these two gagged and bound him and, leaving him beside his victim, sprang into the bush again.

It was Tompas who groaned and came to first, and then to ease the cramp in his neck turned his head. His eyes beheld his prostrate assailant and began telegraphing the news through numbed nerves to his slowly waking brain. For a space he lay there absorbing the fact, and then cautiously rolling to his side he bent his knees and brought his feet to his hands. Painfully his puffed fingers unloosed the knot which had all but been hauled taut. At last he pulled the line from his ankles,

rolled over on his stomach and got up on his knees. Old buck that he was, he managed to get to his feet. With reeling steps he approached one of the coco-palms and backed up to it. To push the gag, so that it fell down around his neck like a cinema cow-puncher's bandana, was not so difficult, but his hands, that was another matter. Like a cinnamon bear scratching his back, Tompas rubbed the lashing of his wrists against the trunk, but these knots had been yanked taut and the bark was smooth.

Ole was groaning now and the native realized that he must work with speed. Then he bethought himself of the rough corners of the storehouse and he ran for it. Just as he was about to step out into the clearing he saw some one emerge from the bush at the opposite side, and he drew back into the shadows.

"Josil, dat you?"

"Whar you?" answered the familiar voice, and Tompas ran out to meet him.

"Loos' ma han's! man — loos' ma han's — we done tricked."

Josil cut the line while jabbering excitedly to his master.

"How you come tie — whar de cook — dey diggin' by de hermit lan'."

"Hush, niggah, dey trick us — sen' de deck-han' asho' in de cook clos' an' he hog-tie me. Den

sumbodie mus' 'a' tie de deckhan' — an' dar he lie on de beach — ain' no use we stop heah."

"Wha-do?"

In lieu of direct answer, Tompas suddenly bolted for the beach, Josil at his heels. "You take de odder," he ordered, as he jumped into the nearest dinghy and shoved off for the schooner.

Two bumps that would have called forth a fathom or two of Gus's choicest language, had he been there, announced the arrival of the boats under the counter of the *Golden Parrot* and the two natives crawled in over the rail and made fast. As he straightened up Tompas looked down into the cabin, where he saw the face of Bill Ropes in the moonlight which shone in through the skylight. In a jiffy the cook was freed, whereupon he rubbed his slobbered lips on his sleeve — and spat.

"One o' them swivel-nosed, fish-eatin' scow-hoovians seen me huntin' in the desk," he began, and then in forceful terms he outlined the scene on the deck of the *Golden Parrot* on her run down from Salt.

Tompas, in turn, explained how Josil had seen Gus and Penn digging by the ruins of the hermit's abode, and then he wound up with the discovery of Ole lying bound beside him on the beach. He could n't fathom *that*. Only one thing was clear — they had possession of the schooner.

"You say we clear out with the schooner and lie off and dicker with 'em? What if they find the sloop?"

"Den we foller 'em — de gol' b'long ma islan', doan it?"

At this Bill Ropes solemnly closed one eye and cocked the other up toward the skylight with an expression of divine inspiration.

"It's a blind sailor can't see th' soft side o' his donkey's breakfast," observed the cook.

To heave the anchor clear of the bottom was but the work of a moment and Bill Ropes and Tompas set the foresail while Josil got up the head-sails. Then the cook ran aft to the wheel, and while the others tended the sheets, the *Golden Parrot* slowly swung on her heel by the urge of the high airs, and with sails set wing-and-wing she headed for the channel.

At this moment Chattergoon came out upon the beach.

"Look de schooner."

Nineteen others looked and saw, and with a wild yell they charged after the schooner.

"Holy Fadder!" came in unison from Tompas and Josil.

For once speech failed the cook as he turned and saw the whirlwind of Africans flying after them. Speed is a latent quality of the West Indian, who rarely moves faster than a walk — he

does n't have to; but by the law of compensation, when fear of jumbies or the pursuit of doubloons calls for rapid motion, the energy he has been accumulating acts like a charge of high explosive and he becomes a black projectile. Also he can swim like a porpoise. The channel at the entrance to Man-of-War Bay is narrow. Under the lee of the island the schooner was as yet moving hardly faster than a walk. Bill Ropes knew this as well as Tompas and Josil and the horde on the beach.

The cook might have started the engine, but in that moment when he had closed one eye and cocked the other skyward, an idea had come. If the Tads had really gained possession of the treasure, would he not fare better, as Richard had said, by sticking to them? So he would gain time through making no mention of the engine. But how to get rid of Tompas and Josil whose suspicions would be aroused by any untoward move on his part? Then, while they were making sail, a plan had come to him. Now a complication had arisen, or rather twenty of 'em, which demanded haste.

There is an ancient trick of the bugeye, the oyster-dredger of the Chesapeake, and well known among all small-boat sailors, which is called "paying off." For this the bugeye, a small schooner with slanting masts and leg-o'-mutton

sails, is admirably adapted because of the facility with which she may be jibed without undue strain to her gear and rigging. Off season she is usually handled by her owner and a boy, but when the dredging time is on there is need of extra hands to man the tongs. As often as not, the skipper will "go foreign" to some out-of-the-way town he has never visited before to take on his extra men. Then, after they have dredged up a full cargo, he will lay his course for the home town of his crew and when he's close inshore he calls them aft, ostensibly to pay them off before landing them. At this time he always manages to be sailing before the wind with a free sheet so that his silver will not slide off the wheel-box, when — well, you can't keep a vessel on her course, if she's a bit cranky, and count out money at the same time, and he ducks just as the heavy boom jibes over and sweeps the crew off the narrow deck. Providence, as you might say, has taken a hand and the skipper does n't have to bother with the money after all, nor with landing his crew — they swim ashore. Bill Ropes had at one time been the owner of a bugeye.

So when he had gone aft to take the wheel, he slacked the lifts to let the boom hang low — and bided his time.

The natives were almost abeam now, and Tompas and Josil stood gaping at them with their

backs inboard when a rampant squall — probably in cahoots with the old hermit — bellied the sails. With the craft of his kind, the cook toyed the wheel till the mainsail began to waver. Tompas suddenly recognized Chattergoon who was bringing up the rear.

"Wha' yo' doin' on ma islan'?"

"Tain' yo' islan' — whar de ole men — whar de doubloon?" came back to him.

Then the boom swung and Tompas's answer became mixed with the salt water of the bay. Josil had left the schooner at the same instant. When the two came to the surface the nearest dinghy was just out of their reach and the *Parrot* was gathering speed.

Chattergoon tried again —

"Whar de ole men — whar de doubloon?"

"Me an' Josil knows," answered Tompas, who, realizing that "de good Lard" had sent him strong allies, was now putting in his best efforts to gain the shore.

The Tortolans had stopped and were now gathered at the water's edge to await the landing of Tompas and Josil. Presently Chattergoon espied four figures at the head of the bay. They were helping a fifth to its feet.

"Me, too!" he exclaimed and started off in pursuit. Like a school of fish which suddenly reverses its course, the twice-baffled twenty now

headed back in furious chase. The five disappeared into the bush.

Flight came as first thought to Penn as he made for the bush while the others followed instinctively. Then Richard thought of his gun and reached for his pocket. But his hand only touched the hem of his fluttering shirt-tail and he made another try somewhere in the region of his neck.

"It's gone!"

"What's gone?" from the panting artist.

"My pistol — I must have dropped it when I took off my pants — what'll we do? Those fellows will comb the island till they find us and we can't stand 'em off." The artist discovered that he, too, must have lost his gun. They were now at the edge of the clearing.

"Dey mus' hab boat on de landin' beach," yelled Penn over his shoulder as he tore past the store-house and darted into the bush where the path led away to the south. The five had a start of nearly half a mile and a stern chase is always a long chase, but a trousers-load of doubloons is no feather weight for such as the Tads. Ole had shouldered William's load and the two old men were bringing up the rear swinging Richard's between them. But it was awkward going at best as they followed in the narrow path while the bushes switched in the wake of the others with

vicious cuts. Their torture did not last for long, however. Soon the bush began to thin out and they came into the open once more where the half-moon of the landing beach stretched away before them. As their eager eyes swept the shore there was not a boat to be seen. Then, halfway to the point, what had at first appeared to be a group of rocks, lying about a hundred yards offshore, resolved itself into a fleet of ten small skiffs drifting out to sea with the breeze.

Their one last hope — they were not wasting any words — now lay in Tompas's boat which ought to be in the cove just around the point half a mile away — unless the mysterious agents who had first overcome Ole, and had now set the skiffs adrift, had beaten them to it. So they ran on, along the hard sands by the water's edge. Here was easier going, but the Tads were still lagging behind like a couple of barefoot boys making off with a bag of apples. One must not expect too much from men of over sixty even if they have been in the habit of rowing twenty miles or so in a wherry every Sunday for a quarter of a century or more.

The Tads had covered nearly half the distance to the point, with Penn and the Scandinavians now well in advance, when a blood-curdling yell came up from behind. The natives had come out upon the beach and in one glance had seen their

boats drifting away on the tide and their quarry legging it for the point — two lagging behind with a burden between them. The chase was getting hot. Picture 'em, — mouths open like wind-sails and nostrils distended to the breeze like ship's ventilators, — spurred on, with diabolic energy after the laboring Tads. Chattergoon was in the ruck now with Tompas and Josil, while youth was serving the young bucks in the lead. Three of these, running abreast and some lengths in advance of the rest, seemed to be covering twice the distance of the Tads who jogged valiantly on. But it was of no use. Presently the Tads could hear the pounding feet behind them, coming nearer at every step, and William finally gasped, "Oh, let 'em have it." So they dropped their load like the golden apple of Hippomenes, and freed of their burden, sped after the others.

As I got it from the Tads later, I do not know of any one who ever dropped some fifteen thousand dollars' worth of gold, with greater reluctance, and yet, having dropped it, experienced such a feeling of relief. Also, each took me aside when the other was out of earshot and swore that when they let go the trousers, his heels had been bouncing off the shins of the native behind him at every step for at least a hundred yards, and if they, the heels, had not been of rubber but of good hard leather, they could have broken those shins

and in turn put the whole gang of natives *hors de combat*, and made off without the loss of a single doubloon, leaving the beach of Normar strewn with broken shin-bones, as you might say.

But this being a perfectly true treasure yarn, I must adhere to fact, and while the foremost natives were very close astern of the Tads, they had not been as close as all that.

When the trousers fell clinking to the sand, the middle one of the three was half a stride ahead of the other two. The West Indian native, when you come to know him, is, *ab initio*, a socialist of the deepest dye. Let one of a community rise above the rest and the mass will leave all else to pull themselves up to his level, or to drag him back to their level, whichever way you may choose to look at it. Immediately the Tads let go their burden, the two flanking ones reached forth, and using their companion as a sort of moving fulcrum, projected themselves through space and landed on the trousers, each with a strangle hold on a leg.

"Das mine!" both shouted, beginning to pull away in opposite directions. Whereupon the one they had so basely used wedged himself between them, sitting against the face of one and bracing his feet on the face of the other in hopeful endeavor to dislodge one or both. I should have

explained that among other interesting characteristics of the native is his ability to use his teeth for fighting purposes. So while one set of incisors was sinking through the worn portion of a trousers' seat, another began what might have been a rather expeditious operation for the cure of congenital flat-foot. There being no local anæsthesia at either of these incisions, the pain was acute, and with a howl, number three rolled clear while his traitors secured firmer grips. Had Richard's trousers been of a certain make one used to see advertised, an elephant hitched to one leg, while a long line of gallant Percherons strove to haul the other in the opposite direction, with no apparent discomfort to the trousers — I believe the illustrator had depicted a smile on their seat — the natives might have remained there augmented by the others as they came up, tailing eleven on a side, heels dug in sand and arms encircling bodies till starvation should put an end to their tug-of-war, and some chance traveler should find them, twenty-two skeletons bleaching on the sands, with the doubloon-loaded trousers grinning wickedly between them.

But like all trousers of my acquaintance, Richard's had human frailties, and long before the twenty-two had tailed on, they gave way under the tension, the seams ripped, and the doubloons poured out upon the sands. Whereupon

the two sides fell apart, separated, and came together again as an onrushing wave draws the sea away from a rock and then sweeps over it in a deluge. The place became a froth of doubloons, sand, and fighting natives. Chattergoon, Tompas, and Josil came upon a whirling *cheval de frise* of legs and arms. Then, as the wave passes on to leave the rock bare once more, the pile separated from the deflated trousers. Tompas gave one look and started anew after the fleeing Tads who were just disappearing around the point.

"You dyam fools," he shrieked; "dey on'y lef' you han'ful."

But when the natives reached the point, the five had already flung their burdens into Tompas's sloop, put their shoulders to her bows, climbed aboard, and with the floor-boards for paddles, were heading out into the Caribbean.

"De skiffs!" yelled Tompas; "dey ain' got oars — we ketchum in de skiffs." And once more the now weary natives reversed their course back along the beach toward their boats which were still within easy swimming distance.

I'll wager old Norman and the hermit were having a fine time watching those natives running first in one direction and then in another over the island. Something like this, perhaps, from the hermit:

"Well, well, I'm having more fun out of this than I ever did when I was alive. I say, Die and enjoy life. This will last me halfway through eternity."

"You've chantied a thorax-full," from old Norman, who delights in his slang. "I hope that fellow of the *Yakaboo* rigs up something for *my* doubloons — but I'm not grumbling, he gives me bully rum — I'll take you up sometime."

When the five put their shoulders to the sloop, they little thought that they should tumble aboard a craft with neither sails nor oars nor even a rudder, and that to propel her they should have to resort to the floor-boards for paddles. As they slowly urged her out into the breeze, it became evident that their only course would be down wind. When they saw the natives run back for their boats, the five made an attempt to reach shore again to search for the missing sails, but they found that they were now well out into the clutches of the trade against which they could make little headway. Their respite, they began to realize, was only temporary. With despair in their hearts they saw the natives take to the water and then the violent rocking of the skiffs as they were boarded one by one.

"Darn these doubloons, anyway!" swore the artist, "and we've lost the *Parrot*, too. We'll have to hand over what we've got; if we don't

they'll tear us limb from limb — they're wild enough."

"And not to mention my trousers," put in Richard; "they'll maroon us here and I'll have a fine time running around without any pants."

"An' den mebbe de Commish'ner fin' out, and *he* cum an' lock us up fo' diggin' gol' — dyam de doubloon; dey sleep heah so long dey ain' wan' go 'way."

"Darn the light pig, anyway," resumed the artist.

"And while we're darning we might as well include the junkman, and the ghost of Cap'n Tom, and the little girl who sat through the deck of our wherry."

They had given up paddling and were drifting with the wind till the Tortolans should come alongside to board them. Gus and Ole sat in Scandinavian dudgeon.

The moon had now swung past meridian and they could make out the rising and falling figures in the skiffs as the natives plied their oars. Then something began to edge out from the point beyond the skiffs. First a jib, then a staysail detached itself from the land — could it be the schooner or was it the Commissioner's sloop, snooping on suspicion — then the foresail, and at last the unmistakable mainsail of the *Golden Parrot*. The natives must have caught sight of

the schooner at the same moment, for the Tads saw them stop for an instant in their rowing and then take it up again more vigorously than before.

Was she friend or foe? The Tads had seen the familiar figure of the cook, in Ole's clothes, sitting on the wheel-box and steering her out of the bay. Then had come the sudden debarkation of Tompas and his man. Why had he first been an agent in the theft of the schooner and then rid himself of his partners in crime, and what was he doing on the south side of the island? A score of questions unanswered flitted through the minds of the five who now stood watching the schooner as she stood out on the port tack. She was coming about! If she lay on the other tack she could hardly gain headway before she would be on the rocks to weather of the point. Was the cook trying to wreck her? But instead of coming about she seemed to be hanging into the wind.

"What in time is he up to now?" said William, straining his old eyes at the schooner.

"Ay tank she heave to," answered Gus.

"No, by Gorry! She's coming this way — he must have the engine a-going — he's heading right up for the skiffs!" For several minutes the five watched in silence — she was certainly coming nearer.

"Well, here goes for the *grand finale* — whatever it's going to be," said the artist; "seems

we're between a crowd of devils and a deep-sea cook. I'll bet a peck of doubloons that rascal picks up a couple of boat-loads of those fellows and goes into the pirate business — initial performance to start in five minutes."

The *Parrot* was coming up rapidly now, scarcely half a mile down wind from the sloop, while the skiffs were spread out midway between the two. The distances lessened till the Tads could make out the lank form of the cook standing in the port side of the cockpit, his right hand on the wheel. He was waving his left arm and seemed to be pointing to seaward. Then he grabbed up a megaphone and began to shout. The schooner was edging out around the skiffs.

"Holy Jehoshaphat! He's tryin' to tell us to get clear of the natives!" shouted the artist, and the five grabbed up their floor-boards and started to urge the sloop out to sea.

But the natives had already caught the words of the cook, who had now declared himself, and were changing their course to intercept the *Parrot*. If the schooner continued to circle around them, they would surely reach the slow-moving sloop first, and there would be little the cook might do to aid the Tads.

The *Parrot* was upon the outer flank of the skiffs when the cook suddenly gave the wheel a mighty whirl and headed directly for them. He dodged

two laggards and sheered again to avoid another that lay directly on his course. But as he slipped by, the natives managed to catch the rail of one of the dinghies towing astern. He sheered again and picked up a second skiff on the other dinghy — it was no good trying to run them down, for then the negroes could easily jump from their sinking craft to the bobstay and come aboard over the bows like monkeys. On he came, zigzagging through the fleet, whirling the wheel frantically from port to starboard and back again, picking up skiffs on both dinghies like a magnet being drawn through a pile of iron filings.

The skiffs were all astern now, eight of them tailing off the quarters of the *Parrot*, linked bow and stern by their desperate crews, when Bill Ropes suddenly left the wheel, tore along the length of the deck, dropped down the crew's hatch and shot up again with a long knife in his hand. He flew aft and with a curse that ended with something about "turtle flippers," cut the taut painters while the schooner shot free, relieved from her tows.

In another moment, the *Parrot* ground alongside the sloop while ten eager hands caught onto her rail. For a few seconds the strain was terrific, but as the heavy sloop gathered way, it lessened, and Richard sprang forward to pass the sloop's painter around the main-shrouds. The doubloons

were hoisted aboard and the empty sloop was cut away.

For a moment the five stood there, amidships, hardly believing the feel of the deck under their feet, while a score of voices from astern called upon high heaven, the Trinity and all prophets, both large and small.

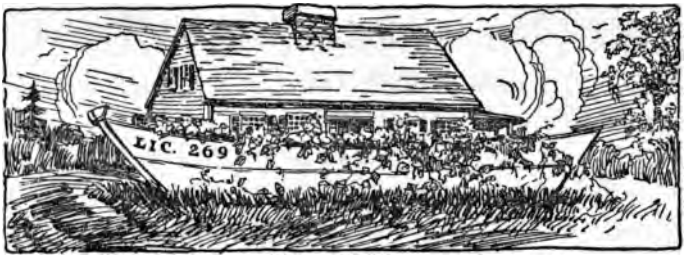
Bill Ropes sat grinning, on the wheel-box. Then followed a flagrant breach of discipline. The two shirt-tailed old skippers rushed aft and each grabbing an arm, pounded the cook's back with their free hands, calling him such endearments as, "you bloody old angel," "tattooed rapscallion," and the like.

"Wha'd I tole you," from Penn; "we fool dem niggers, I know'd we fool dem bush-cyats."

Gus and Ole, who had discovered the anchor at the hawse-pipe pounding against their precious paint, gave vent to their emotions in hoisting it aboard.

A long leg and a short tack fetched the *Golden Parrot* close under the lee of Salt, and just before dawn — his pockets filled with doubloons — Penn slipped over the side into the boat of one of his friends who had come out to tend fish-pots. And then, as John Smith told me that night on Peter,

"Dey square away she, an' dat wuz de las' me see ob she."



CHAPTER XV

It was a week later, on a crisp January morning, that a sturdy little white schooner, of clipper bow and offshore mien, picked up the channel at the head of Biscayne Bay, chugged haughtily past the sleek company lying off the Royal Palm — harbor-hunting yachts every one of 'em, flaunting mahogany and flashing polished brass — and came to anchor in the deeper basin off the coal dock at Miami.

Her trucks were graced with neither club burgee nor owner's signal, and her crew was heterogeneous. But her respectability, in a measure, was vouched for by two of them. They wore faded yacht's dungarees and, having let go the anchor, were now making up the head-sails. A third, in a blue-and-white checkered shirt, calmly surveyed the harbor from the forehatch like some inquisitive seal that has come up for a blow. A dish-towel hung over his shoulder. He, evidently, was the cook. Aft, in the cockpit, stood two elderly men. One, in shirt-sleeves and baggy

trousers of uncertain hue, had becketed the wheel and was putting on the cover, while the other, in pajamas, stood rubbing his eyes in the dazzling sunlight. He shivered a bit in the cool wind of the norther which was blowing itself out. They must have encountered heavy weather outside, for there was no evidence of boats at the davits nor lashed on deck.

A passing launch swung toward them and he of the shirt-sleeves hailed her owner.

"Some blow, these last three days," began the one of the launch, ranging alongside and taking in the empty davits and then the decks.

"Oh, *this*," answered Richard, sniffing the breeze; "did n't bother us much." And then, catching the significance of the query, "Lost our boats in a black squall down the West Indies — would you mind putting me ashore?"

"How about your friend?" The man in the launch, whose time was evidently his own, seemed not averse to a chance for a bit of sea-gossip.

William disappeared into the cabin, slipped shirt and trousers over his pajamas and with his shoes and stockings in his hands — he would put them on in the launch — followed Richard over the side. The artist confided to me, on one occasion and with great glee, that he had once followed Cornelius Vanderbilt down Thames Street in his

pajamas. Broad daylight! On my inquiry as to the whereabouts of Newport's police on that particular day, he had poked me in the ribs and said that, of course, he wore trousers and shirt over the pajamas — still he had been in pajamas.

On their way through the town, the Tads found a boat-yard where they negotiated for the hire of a skiff till the lost dinghies could be replaced. Then they went to the telegraph office where Richard penned, in much detail, a lengthy message to Clausen. It had something to do with the locating of a certain person well known to the waters of Dorchester Bay. He showed it to William and with a merry chuckle signed it "Ex-boss."

"Little crack o' the whip," he put it.

On another morning, five days later, the Tads landed with their sole pieces of baggage — two sturdy rope-handled boxes having considerable weight — upon the platform of the South Station. They were met by a palish young man in charge of four porters, who conveyed the boxes to a waiting taxi.

"And you found him?" inquired Richard, when they had paid off the porters.

"He's waiting at the office."

"We'll go to the bank," he said, giving his instructions to the driver.

There was not a little stir of curiosity in the cages of the tellers and cashiers when the fa-

miliar figure of William, an old stand-by depositor, in ancient tweed suit and soft shirt, burst in upon them, requested speech in private with one of the vice-presidents and burst out again accompanied by the bank's police and reappeared a moment later with the two heavy boxes, which were carried down the stairs to a large coupon room in the safe deposit department.

"Get that taxi under way again, Clausen, and fetch him here," ordered Richard, when the police had left.

"Be mighty glad to get rid of these things," he continued. And fishing a screw-driver from his pocket, he began to remove the covers from the boxes.

The ripple of curiosity had hardly subsided when Clausen was seen to return, followed by a tall, weather-worn old man, in tromping leather sea-boots, salt-rimed pea-jacket, and Cape Ann that covered his top like a smoke-head, whose astonished eyes wandered from this strange young man, who had so mysteriously sought him out, to the resplendent marble and polished brass and the curious faces behind the brass. His wondering increased as he was led down the steps and through a steel-barred door guarded by one who nodded familiarly to the young man, and finally to the small mahogany-paneled room where he beheld the two old men of the *Golden Parrot* seated on a table.

"Th' Gr'raand Banks f'rivre," he roared, as he recognized the Tads; "an' how's th' *Goldin Parrit?*"

In answer, the Tads sprang aside disclosing the two opened boxes filled to their tops with neatly piled gold.

"An' w'at do I see?"

"The hermit's doubloons." And then, to the great astonishment of the admiring Clausen and the greater wonderment of the junkman, followed the tale of their adventures since they had set sail from Boston.

"They're yours now — and if you'll look over this receipt and sign it, we'll be off for Florida."

The receipt read as follows:

Boston, Massachusetts
January 18th, 1910

ACCOUNT OF:

Richard Hewes and Wm. Baxter, with John O'Connor, Esqr.,

Total doubloons taken aboard the *Golden Parrot* (minus loss in conveyance from place of last deposit)			3366
To William Penn (reward for services)		50	
" William Ropes	do	100	
" Peer Gustafsen	do	100	
" Ole Jensen	do	100	
" Richard Hewes (loss 1 pr. trousers)		1	
" Schr. *Golden Parrot* (loss of two boats)		10	
Total		361	361
Balance delivered			3005

For a full minute the junkman held it absently. His face bore that impending look which comes to a child when a lollipop is suddenly thrust under its nose and one begins to wonder if it is going to laugh for joy, or cry because it does not want a lollipop. At last he brought the paper close to his eyes.

"T'ree t'ousin an' five doubloons! An' w'at are ye judgin' them is wort' apiece?"

"The cook said they would sell at over fifteen dollars. That would be about forty-seven thousand dollars in all," answered Richard.

"Forty-sivin t'ousin dollars — *an' aal becaase av a bluddy lie!*" Whereat he burst into a demoniacal fit of wild Irish laughter.

"What!" The Tads could scarcely believe their ears.

"Sure. Did yez think a dyin' man wud spin aal th' r'rigmarole I giv' yez that afthernoon? An' wud I be raymimb'rin ut aal thim thurty yeer?"

"But how about the light pig?" from the artist.

"That paart wuz thrue enough, but them wuz th' on'y wor'rds I had frim Cap'n Tom — his dyin' wor'rds."

"And the hurricane and the hermit and the crimp in Saint Thomas and —" a hundred other details that popped into the minds of the Tads.

"Th' hurricane wuz a bit o' me fancy — I knows th' Wirgins wull frim me yout'— aany one

in Tortola will tell yez about th' hermit, an' I know'd th' Ould Tompas, th' father av th' one you knows.

"'T is thrue enough," the junkman continued, "that th' *Goldin Parrit* wuz built f'r threasurin', so they sez, an' I wuz goin' som'eres t' th' Wist Injies wid Cap'n Tom, but I had nothin' frim him aside frim th' menshin av th' light pig. Thin whin I seen her th' day I cum aboord — me mind got t' romancin' an' th' yarn spun itself."

Of course, the yarn did not spin itself — it was the hermit who *made* the junkman spin it for the Tads — don't you see?

"Th' nixt day I wuz comin' back t' make a social caal, like, whin I seen aal y'r geer skathered on th' deck. 'Cud th' ould gaffers be takin' me wor'rds seerious?' I asks meself, an' I had not th' heart t' see yez ag'in f'r feer ye wud queschin me an' I'd have t' lie some more. I nivre t'aat f'r a momint —" And then he turned his gaze from the Tads to the doubloons on the table.

"Wull, th' Saints persarve me ould carkiss!" Which they would, through the agency of the hermit's doubloons.

And then this Honduras-paneled little room — with its luxurious rug and substantial table and complete appointments of leather-upholstered chairs, and scissors for cutting coupons and en-

velopes for your coupons, and no end of rubber-bands to put around your bonds; lights over and under the table so that you might not lose some valuable in a dark corner; secure from fire and riot by walls of solid masonry no end thick; breathing integrity from every inch — was the scene of such a wrangle as it had never known before. Oh, you may be sure it was used to wrangles. The wrangle of directors; the wrangle of children over what had been left by the nerveless body whose waking moments had been filled with the anxiety to provide for their happiness when he should no longer be there to protect them in their weakness of his own fostering, which had unfitted them for such battles as his had been; the wrangle of husband and wife, and no end of other wrangles — all of greed — which were just as well kept within its walls. But here was the wrangle of one old man who would share with two others who refused to share. Scooping up the doubloons from the boxes, the junkman had begun to form three piles upon the table.

"What's that for?" asked Richard. "Why not leave 'em in the boxes and have 'em locked up till the proper disposal can be made."

"I'm makin' th' pr'rop'r disposil at this momint," returned the junkman; "we'll share alike."

"We'll do nothing of the kind," from Richard.

"Ye will," answered the Irishman, continuing with his division.

"We refuse!"

"Ye will not rayfuse."

"We'll call in the police," spluttered the artist at his wits' end. This was a stroke.

Police, and that unfathomable agent, the Law, behind them, meant an outside power that would force them all aside while it fed on what was or might have been theirs, and to the relief of the Tads the old junkman gave in.

The Tads did, however, accept a doubloon apiece to keep for souvenirs, and as Richard was pocketing his, he suddenly drew Clausen aside and whispered in his ear. Clausen blushed and nodded.

"Perhaps," said Richard, "I might be persuaded to take just one more — for a special purpose."

Which explains how it comes that Mrs. Clausen wears a wedding ring that is unique. It is made of an old Spanish doubloon, beaten down after the fashion of sailors, who will sit by the hour patiently tapping with a hammer, a coin held on edge against an anchor-stock or a bitt-head, till the metal flanging down toward the center forms a band like the tire of a wheel. When it has been beaten down to the right circumference, the center is cut out, and behold! a ring, plain enough

on the outside when it has been polished, but with the circular inscriptions of the coin plainly visible around the inner edges.

One March day — the *Golden Parrot* had been cruising along the cays and down to the Dry Tortugas — the Tads were once more in Miami which had become their headquarters, where they found in their box a letter bearing a foreign stamp. It was from the Virgin Islands, and although there was no official mark upon it the sight of it chilled their spines. They were about to step into the street again when a voice stopped them in their tracks.

"Wait a minute, please, here's a package for you."

The clerk had come from behind the partition and was holding out a small bundle securely wrapped in heavy paper which bore various inscriptions. It had been originally addressed, "Care of Lloyd's Agency," and from there it had gone to Boston, whence it had been forwarded to Miami.

"Must be important," the clerk added, "for it requires a return receipt — queer there's no value given; you'll have to open it for inspection — might be dutiable goods — it's from the British West Indies."

"Feels soft," remarked William, pressing it with his fingers.

"Can't tell what's inside by feeling it," said Richard, who was eager to get off somewhere and learn what thunderbolt might be contained in the letter.

William fished out a knife and cut the heavy string. The clerk opened the wrapping, which disclosed, neatly folded, a garment of blue material.

"My pants!" exclaimed Richard, to the agitation of several wives and lady friends of a visiting convention, who were scribbling postcards at the desk. Richard held them up for all to see. The legs unfolded and hung down separately, showing to the astonished onlookers that by some forceful operation they had been divorced.

"Guess there'll be no duty on them," laughed the clerk; "must have some sentimental value attached to them."

"Now who the devil sent those pants?" asked Richard, when they had signed the receipt and were at last upon the sidewalk. "Maybe there's something in the letter." So with trousers dangling on his arm he led William into a certain ice-cream parlor which had become a favorite haunt on their excursions ashore.

They gave their order and sought out a table in the far corner. As with the parcel, the letter had been addressed first to New York, then to Boston, and finally to Miami. The ice-cream ar-

rived, they paid for it, and pushed the plates toward the middle of the table. Then Richard slit the envelope and drew forth several folded sheets. At the top of the first they read, "Botanical Gardens — Tortola." It was dated January 6th, five days after they had left Roadtown:

Our dear Buccaneers [it began]:

Two old Colonials, like the Doctor and myself (he is dictating while I am penning), should have learned by experience that practical jokes have depraved, redundant habits. In other words, they are boomerangs.

It was the Doctor's *brilliant* (?) idea — he chanced by Sea-Cow Bay that night after our dinner at the Commissioner's — to put a flea in the old woman's head, not that it was at all wanting in this respect, but a flea of another sort. It would be jolly good sport, he told me, to get a crowd of natives hiding about the pirate tree, and then, after we had set their boats adrift, to come upon them in black domino robes with skeletons on them in luminous paint, and chase them about a bit and leave them marooned to repent their sins till some passing fisherman should pick them up.

Your arrival at Norman was, of course, wholly unexpected by us, and when your man downed Tompas, the temptation to sprag your wheel was too much to resist. You see, we had rather stupidly surmised that you had taken a bit of stock in our tales of the pirate tree and were having a go at it on your own.

The rest you know, better in some details than we, except for a bit of a show of our own which came as a sort of anti-climax.

We had just put off from a secret cove on the north side of the island when your erewhile pursuers, homeward bound, caught sight of us. They gave chase. There was nothing left for us but to clear out, for the presence of a couple of Government officials in an affair of this sort — well, we could not have it come to the ears of the Commissioner. We could easily outdistance them in our light skiff, but how those devils rowed! Bullets would not have stopped them. We managed to lose them in Coral Bay, just before dawn, where we spent the day at a friend's plantation, returning to Tortola the following night.

Nevertheless, there are certain rumours which have come to the ears of the Commissioner, and we would advise, should you contemplate another visit to Tortola, to postpone it for another two years, at least, till his trick is up. Then, should either of us be here, you may count upon us as allies in whatever nefarious nocturnal investigations you may have in hand, should you be disposed to take us into your confidence.

With our sincerest congratulations, we hope to continue,

Your most contrite servants,

J. C. MACINTOSH

T. B. MORRISON, L.R.C.P.

P.S. We are sending, by the same post, a piece of nether clothing which in your hasty departure was left on Norman. We raked up a doubloon or two in the sand, but these we are keeping as mementoes of your visit.

And now my yarn is nearly spun. In what manner the key came to Captain Tom in the first place, we shall never know, nor whether he had ever known the hermit, and we shall have to lay it among the many mysteries of the West Indies that time, hurricanes, and ants have taken away forever.

Should you motor one of these fine summer days through a certain little village on the south shore of Cape Cod, you may chance to spy an old dory half-sunk in the shady lawn before a trim little cottage. Geraniums now send their roots where junk once covered its bottom and vines trail over its salmon-colored sides. The rubber bootheel still sits on the stem, spurning time, and if you'll brush aside the leaves at the bows you will still find "Lic. 269" in black characters of uncertain stance. But if there's a good breeze on the bay, there will be no use in dropping in for a "gam," for the old man is sure to be sitting in the stern of the *Betsy Ann* with his arm crooked over the tiller, rumbling an old chanty and thinking, perhaps, of Captain Tom and the Tads, while his little wife, of mild blue eyes, sits close by, knitting socks against the cold of winter.

As for the Tads, you may meet them almost anywhere from the cays to the coast of Maine, depending upon the season and their inclinations. Go aboard and tell 'em you know me, and if they

like the cut of your jib they'll most likely ask you below and mix one of their Roadtown swizzles — an art which they continue to cultivate, even in these days, by grace of surreptitious visits to the Bahamas.

Ole is no longer with them. With the proceeds from his doubloons he acquired a small farm and then a wife and the two have turned to the soil.

Gus, you cannot fail to recognize, even at a distance, from his erect little troll's body and old head. He has taken to smiling to himself and even grinning at times, but that may be to show his wondrous array of gold teeth like unto any steam yacht skipper.

Bill Ropes, should you see him go over the side, *au naturel*, for his early morning dip, shows evidence of having visited a certain little tattoo shop hard by the fish wharf at Newport. For cunningly charted upon his rangy chest, and so plotted that its natural adornment climbs the slopes even as the forestation of the island, lies Norman. On the beach can be seen twenty-two figures in hot pursuit of five others. And behold! should he be rude enough to turn his back, the *Golden Parrot* ploughing the curling main, under full press and with a lone figure at the wheel. She seems about to round his torso and come to the rescue of the five.

FINIS

GLOSSARY

Doubloon, 1. The dobla, a gold coin of Spain, introduced about the time of Peter I (1350–68). The original type had on one side a three-turreted castle, but this was followed by the portrait type under Ferdinand and Isabella. Struck principally for Mexico and the other Spanish colonies. The doubloons the Tads found were what are known as the new doubloons — some of which are dated prior to 1771. The recent date of the Tads' doubloons convinces me all the more that Norman had nothing to do with them, and that these were, as I have said, but a picayune cache left by some fool upstart of a later day. It is a rather interesting coincidence that in his yarn the junkman says that the chest in the cave was "full o' doubloons, nothin' but doubloons."

Blue peter, 2. A small blue flag with a white square in the center, hoisted when a vessel is ready to get under way.

Carry a priest or a minister, 2. There is a deep-rooted superstition among sailor-men that to carry any professional man of religion will bring bad luck to the ship.

Manchioneel, 11. A lofty tree of the West Indies (*Hippomane mancinella*), bearing a small apple, and, as Barbot says, "of so fine a colour and pleasant scent, as will easily invite such as are unacquainted to eat them; but containing a mortal poison, against which no antidote has any force." Its poisonous effects have been exaggerated.

Saw off me wooden leg, 32. The favorite expression of "chips" — an old ship's carpenter of my ken.

Wraith of a bit of obeah, 32. The dried, dismembered hand

of some person murdered for the purpose of obtaining this instrument of witchcraft.

Boot-top, 52. Where the underbody paint is carried above the water-line so that filthy harbor waters will not soil the top-sides, especially if they are painted white. The raising of the boot-top tends to reduce the impression of freeboard or the height of the vessel's sides above the water.

Ship-husband, 52. One who is wedded to the ship and cares little for going ashore.

Gone in at the hawse-pipe, 53. The favorite expression of those who first went to sea as boys, presumably small enough to crawl aboard through the hawse-pipe, and who almost invariably conclude with, "and I came out from the cabin."

Silent deaths, 53. A name given by old sailors and especially fishermen to steam vessels. Those who have found themselves accidentally in too close proximity to large steamers, more especially toward night, will appreciate the full meaning of the term, and will have discovered how silently these huge vessels creep along. (Captain Ansted.)

Marsupial Life-Saving Station, 57. A floating station with an open well in its after end to receive the life-boats — like the young of a kangaroo. This, I believe, is the only one of its kind in the United States.

Talking Dago, 61. The noise of the bow breaking into small seas, as heard in the forecastle.

Dinghies, 62. Small yacht's tenders. From the Bengalese.

Looard, 75. Leeward spelled as it is pronounced.

Cove, 75. This cove is just beyond where I landed on Peter. It was a well-known refuge in hurricane weather and I believe the Royal Mail steamer *Rhone* was trying to make it when she was wrecked on Salt Island in 1867.

Johannes, 85. The old "Joe" of Portugal — the half *dobrão* of John V, worth about $8.

Irish pennant, 85. Stray rope yarns that have no business on a smart vessel.

Salt horse, 94. Salted beef for use at sea.

Halifax mutton, 94. Salt fish, especially cod.

Miss Gypsy, 101. A windlass, also known as "wench."

Gam, 101. A visit, especially at sea, to get a yarn off one's chest or to exchange the news. Whaling vessels that have been at sea for a considerable period will often be hove to while their captains and mates foregather aboard one of them for a "gam."

Wind-lipper, 108. The first ripple of a new breeze.

Whiskered old bow, 123. Not from marine growths as you might have supposed, but because the *Golden Parrot* had, like many of the older craft, a sort of cross-tree at the bow to spread the bowsprit shrouds.

The stone trough of the holy Maël, 131. A trough of stone which floated like a boat upon the waters and in which, furnished with bread, a barrel of fresh water and the book of the Holy Gospels, Saint Maël, after much cruising, was finally brought to Penguin Island. Although Saint Maël was not, strictly speaking, a professional man of religion, he had rather a rough time of it. Nothing but a vessel of stone would have carried him through, according to Bill Ropes.

A fresh hand at the bellows, 137. Said of a freshening wind.

Bank-blink, 140. A whiteness about the horizon reflected up from the dazzling beaches of the Bahama Banks.

Pride-o'-th'-morning, 141. A misty dew at sunrise.

Harbor-gaskets, 149. The sailor's term for a starched collar.

Pongo, 155. A cross between a "land tiger and a sea shark."

One han' wash de odder, bofe han's wash face, 208. A native saying which means, "We'll keep mum and both work for the same end."

White mice, 215. A sea term for tale-bearers.

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
U . S . A