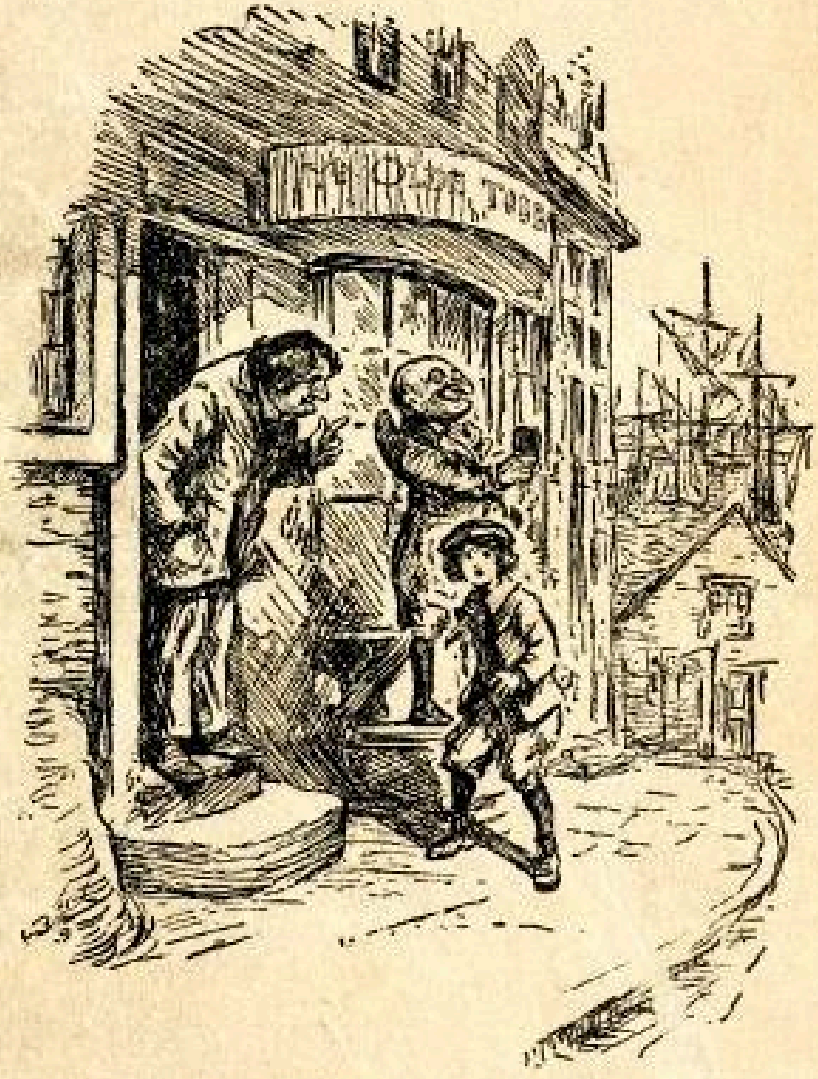
The Old Tobacco Shop



By William Bowen

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK
THE OLD TOBACCO SHOP ***

By
WILLIAM BOWEN
The Enchanted Forest
The Old Tobacco Shop



"Lord bless us!" cried the hunch back. "Look at that!"

The Old Tobacco Shop

A True Account of What Befell
a Little Boy in Search
of Adventure

By

WILLIAM BOWEN

Though you believe it not, I care not much: but an honest man, and of good judgment, believeth still what is told him, and that which he finds written.—RABELAIS.

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NEW YORK

To
BILLY AND JOHN
TWO LITTLE BOYS

PRINCIPAL PERSONS

Freddie
Mr. Toby
Aunt Amanda
Mr. Punch
The Churchwarden
Mr. Hanlon
The Sly Old Fox
The Old Codger with the Wooden Leg
Mr. Lemuel Mizzen
The Cabin-Boy
Marmaduke
Captain Lingo
Ketch the Practitioner
The Third Vice-President
Mr. Matthew Speak
Shiraz the Rug-Merchant
The King and Queen
Robert, Jenny, and James
Mr. Punch's Father

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THE OLD TOBACCO SHOP

CHAPTER I

MR. PUNCH AND THE CLOCK-TOWER

When the Little Boy first went to the Old Tobacco Shop, he stood a long while before going in, to look at the wooden figure which stood beside the door.

His father was sitting at home in his carpet-slippers, waiting for tobacco for his pipe, but when the Little Boy saw the wooden figure he forgot all about hurrying,—"Now don't be long," his mother had said, and his father had said "Hurry back,"—but he forgot all about hurrying, and stood and looked at the wooden figure a long time: a little hunchbacked man, not so very much taller than himself, on a low wooden box, holding out in one hand a packet of black wooden cigars. His back was terribly humped

up between his shoulders, his face was square and bony, if wood can be said to be bony, he was bareheaded and bald-headed, he had a wide mouth, and his high nose curved down over it and his pointed chin curved up under it; and his breast stuck out in front almost as much as his shoulders stuck out behind.

The Little Boy's name was Freddie; his mother called him that, and his father usually called him Fred; but sometimes his father called him Frederick, in fact whenever he didn't come back after he had been told to hurry, and then his father looked at him—you know that look—and said "Frederick!" just like that. But his mother never called him anything but Freddie, even when he was late.

He grasped his money tight in his hand, as he had been told to do, and stood and looked at the little hunchbacked wooden man holding out his packet of black wooden cigars. "I wonder," thought Freddie, "what makes him so crooked?" He walked around him and looked at his back. He walked around in front of him again and wondered if the black cigars in his hand would smoke; he decided he would ask about it. The little man wore blue knee breeches and black stockings and buckled shoes, and his coat was cut away in front over his stomach and had two tails behind, down to his knees. It was easy to see that he wasn't a boy, though, even if he did wear knee breeches; you only had to look at his face, for he had the kind of hard boniness in his face that grown-ups have. Freddie made up his mind that he liked him, anyway; and it must have been hard to have to stand out there all day without moving, rain or shine, and offer that bunch of cigars to all the people who went by, and never get a single soul to take them. Freddie

put out his other hand (not the one with the money in it) towards the cigars, but he quickly drew it back, for he looked at the little man's face at the same time, and there was something about his eyes—anyhow, he stood back a little.

"Better be careful o' Mr. Punch, young feller," said a deep voice from the shop door.

Freddie looked, and in the doorway, leaning against the doorpost, with his hands in his trousers' pockets, and one foot crossed over the other, stood a little man, not so very much taller than himself, and certainly no taller than the figure on the stand, who stared at Freddie as if he knew all about human boys and did not trust them out of his sight. Freddie looked at him and then at the wooden figure beside the door; they might have been brothers. The little man had a hump on his back, and his breast stuck out in front; his head was big and square, and he had high cheek-bones; his face was bony and his mouth wide, and his big nose curved down and his chin curved up; but he did not wear knee breeches; his trousers were the trousers of grown-ups, and his coat was a square coat, buttoned tight over his chest from top to bottom. He was bareheaded, and he had plenty of hair, brushed from the top of his head down towards his forehead. He looked as if he belonged to the tobacco shop; or perhaps the tobacco shop belonged to him.

He stared at Freddie without blinking, and there was something in his eyes—anyway, Freddie stepped back, and held his money tighter in his hand behind him.

"You'd *better* stand away from Mr. Punch," said the hunchbacked man, without moving.

"Yes, sir," said Freddie.

"Did you say 'why'? Because you know I'm terrible deef, and can't never hear boys when they talk down in their stomicks. I'll *tell* you why, as long as you ast me. Do you see that clock on the church-tower over there?" He nodded his big wooden head up the street, without taking his hands from his pockets. Freddie looked, and there the clock was, plain enough. "Well," said the hunchbacked man, "I'll tell you, seeing as you insist upon it, and won't take no for an answer: but you mustn't never tell it to no one. Do you promise me that? Cross your heart?"

"Yes, sir," said Freddie.

"Done," said the hunchback. "Mr. Punch's father lives up there behind that clock. And sometimes, just exactly when the two hands of that clock come together, one on top of the other, mind you, like you lay one stick along another, Mr. Punch's father comes out and stands on that there sill under the clock; he's a little old man with a long white beard; and he stands there and puts his hand to his mouth and calls down here to Mr. Punch, and Mr. Punch climbs down off his little perch and goes over to that church, and climbs up the inside of that tower to the very top and meets his father! And I've heard tell that they have regular high jinks up there all by theirselves, and vittles! more vittles and drink than you ever seen at one time; yes, sir; a regular feast, as sure as you're born; and they don't only eat vittles; no, sir; if they can only get hold of a nice plump little boy or two, with plenty o' meat to him, that's what they like best; and if it happens to be night-time, there's a lot of queer ones with 'em up there, and all sorts of queer noises—you ask the sextant over there about it—*he's*

heard 'em; and if you should just happen to be around when Mr. Punch climbs down off of this here perch, you'd better look out; for he's just as likely as not to snatch you up and carry you off with him up there into that church-tower to his father, and if he does *that*, that's the last of you; and your ma and your pa could cry their eyes out, and it wouldn't be no use; you'd be *gone*! And never come back no more. They say there's many a boy been took up into that tower by Mr. Punch here when his father comes out and calls him. But he don't *always* come out when the hands of the clock come together; nobody ever knows when he's going to do it, no sirree; Mr. Punch himself never knows when his father's going to call him. Lord bless us!" cried the little hunchback, looking up again in alarm at the clock in the church-tower. "Lord bless us, look at that!"

Freddie stared at the clock. It was twenty-five minutes past five. He knew how to tell twelve o'clock and ten minutes to ten, but he had never got as far as twenty-five minutes past five; he could easily see, however, that the big hand was almost on top of the little hand. He edged away further from the wooden figure on the box; he was almost sure that the hand which held the cigars moved a little.

The hunchbacked man in the doorway stood up straight on his two feet and took his hands out of his pockets.

"Look alive, young feller!" he said. "It's pretty near time! In another minute! I can't help it if Mr. Punch's father comes out and—Quick, boy! Come here to me, before it's too late! I'll see if I can save you!"

Freddie gave another look at the clock; the hands were surely almost together, and quick as a flash he

darted to the hunchback and hid behind him and held on to his coat, peeping around him through the doorway. The little man put his arm about Freddie and held him close; it was a strong muscular arm, and Freddie felt quite safe. The little man could not have been laughing, for his face was as solemn and wooden-looking as ever; but Freddie could feel his body shaking all over, he couldn't tell why.

"You'd better come in and see Aunt Amanda," he said, "before it's too late. You'll be safe in there."

He took Freddie by the hand and drew him into the shop.

The Old Tobacco Shop stands at the corner of two streets, as you surely must know if you have ever been in the city that lies on the river called Patapsco, which runs along ever so far out of a great bay where ships sail from all over the world, called Chesapeake Bay. It is an old brick house, and you go into the shop by the door that opens in the side just round the corner, not in the front, for there isn't any door at the front, but only a window with pipes and cigars and tobacco in it, and the stuffed head of a bull-dog with a pipe in his mouth. The house is only one story and a half high, and has a steep gabled roof, with two dormer windows in the slope of the roof above the side of the house, and one dormer window in the slope of the roof above the shop-window in front, where the bull-dog is. All the other houses fronting in the row are good high two-story houses; why this corner house never grew up like the others, no one knows.

When Freddie was standing at the corner of the street, before he had seen the wooden figure offering his bundle of wooden cigars there beside the door,

he looked down the street that runs along the side of the shop, across the street that crosses it, and saw the masts of tall ships in the harbor beside the wharves; some with their sails up, some with their sails hanging most untidily, and some with their sails neatly rolled up and tied; and he would certainly have gone down there, only his father had told him to hurry.

Freddie lived in a fine two-story brick house in a row like this one, a long, long way off; three squares off (they say "squares" in that city when they mean a straight line between two streets and not a square at all) down the same street on which the Old Tobacco Shop fronts; and it really takes a good while to go all that way, for there is a boy half-way down, a big boy, who belongs to a Gang, and likes to bully little boys, and you have to watch your chance to get out of his way, and there is a place with a knot-hole in the fence where you can see all kinds of rusty springs and bed-rails and birdcages and barrel hoops piled up inside the yard, and a tin-can factory where you can pick up little round pieces of tin just as good as dollars, and a church (where the clock is) with a fat old man sitting on the pavement in a chair tilted back against the church wall smoking a long pipe, who doesn't mind being stared at from the curbstone, and a street-car track where you have to look out for the horse-car, which is very dangerous when the horse begins to trot, and—but Freddie hadn't lived long in his fine two-story house in that street, and these things were new to him and took time. But the newest and biggest thing he had yet found (not that it was really big, you know) was the wooden hunchback outside the door of the Old Tobacco Shop; and you have seen how much time *that* took.

Freddie found himself inside the shop, and his hand grasped tight by the big strong hand of the hunchback, so tight that he wriggled a little to get loose; but the hunchback only held him tighter. "Come along," he said, "you'd better come in here and see my Aunt Amanda, or Mr. Punch may step out and get you; and *then* where would you be?"

Freddie looked back out of doors over his shoulder, but it did not seem as if Mr. Punch meant to step out that time. He breathed easier. The shop was a very little shop, with shelves on the wall behind the counter, and a window in front where he saw the back of the bull-dog's head. The two show-cases on the counter were full of pipes of all kinds, and cigars and tobacco and cigarettes, and piled on the shelves were boxes of cigars and jars and tins of tobacco, and on the wooden top of the counter between the two show-cases stood a tobacco-cutter and a little pair of scales with a scoop lying beside it and little iron weights in a box. The counter ran from the front window lengthwise to the back of the shop, and at the back, on your left as you went in, was a closed door. A wooden chair with arms stood beside the front window. You could get behind the counter only by a swinging gate at the back end. There was a delightful warm odour about the place, very much the same odour Freddie liked to smell when his father opened his old tobacco-box on the mantel-piece in the sitting-room upstairs and filled his pipe, when he came home in the evening and put on his carpet-slippers and spread out that everlasting newspaper that had no pictures in it. He never could understand why his mother opened all the windows the next morning.

"All right, young feller," said the hunchback, "we'll

get on the other side of that door, and then we'll be safe. Here we are."

They reached the door at the back of the shop, and the hunchback opened it and pulled Freddie into the back room and closed the door behind them. Freddie hung back a little, but his hand was gripped tight, and he couldn't have got away if he had tugged with all his might. He was not so much afraid now of Mr. Punch and his father, but he didn't know what this little man was going to do with him; and besides, his father had told him to hurry.

In this back room, near a window which looked out on the street, sat a lady. The hunchback marched Freddie up to her and stopped there before her, and wagged his head sidewise towards the Little Boy. The hunchback and the Little Boy stood hand in hand, and the lady looked at them steadily.

CHAPTER II

AUNT AMANDA AND THE TWO OLD CODGERS

"Here's Aunt Amanda," said the hunchback, standing before the lady who was sitting near the window, and letting go of Freddie's hand, "and here's a boy that Mr. Punch pretty near got hold of, if I hadn't come along just in time and hustled him in here. Just look out of that window, Aunt Amanda, and see if

Mr. Punch has moved yet."

The lady did not look out of the window, but stared at Freddie with her mouth shut tight. She had very thin lips and she pressed them tight together; and without opening them more than a wee mite she said to the hunchback, sternly:

"Obelilackyoomuptwonyerix."

Freddie could not understand this at all. He looked at her closely. She was very thin, and had a high beaked nose and reddish hair and a reddish skin, and on the left side of her chin was a mole, with three little reddish hairs sticking out of it; she wore a rusty black dress, very tight above the waist and very wide below, and in the bosom of this dress were sticking dozens, maybe hundreds, for all Freddie could tell, of pins and needles. She must have been very tall when she stood up. A cane leaned against the back of her chair; she was a little lame; not very lame, but enough to make her limp when she walked, and to make her cane useful in getting about. If she had had a stiff starched ruff about her neck and a lace thing on her head pointed in front, she would have done very well for Queen Elizabeth, the one you see the picture of in that history-book. There was a thimble on the second finger of her right hand, and a pair of scissors hung by a tape at her waist; and around her neck she wore a measuring tape. On the floor at her feet lay a pile of goods, and some of it was in her lap; the kind of goods that Mother has around her when she is turning and making over that old blue serge, and gathers up out of Father's way when she hears him coming in towards the sitting-room.

At Aunt Amanda's elbow stood an oval marble-topped table, and besides a work-basket there were

several fascinating things on it. In the center was a glass dome, and under the glass dome was the most beautiful basket of wax flowers—calla lilies mostly, with a wonderful yellow spike like a finger sticking up out of each one. On one side of the wax flowers was a thick book with blue plush covers, and the word "Album" across it in slanting gold letters. On the other side was a kind of a—well, it had a handle under a piece of wood to hold it up by, and a frame at one end to stick up a picture in, and two pieces of thick glass in a frame at the other end to look through at the picture and make the picture look all —*you* know!—as if the people in the back of it were a long way behind, and the people in front right close up in front, and all that; Freddie's father had one.

The chairs in the room had thin curved legs and those slippery horse-hair seats which Freddie hated to sit on. On the walls were portraits in oval frames of men with chin-whiskers and no mustaches, and ladies in shawls and bonnets; but there was one square frame, and it had no picture under its glass, but a sheaf of real wheat, standing up as natural as life, with some kind of curly writing over it; it was simply beautiful. There was a clock on the marble mantel-piece, tall and square-cornered, with a clear circle in the glass below where you could see the round weight of the pendulum go back and forth, and a picture of the sun on the face, very red, with a big nose and eyes, and stiff red hair floating off from it.

Aunt Amanda stuck a pin in the goods in her lap and folded her hands. Freddie, after glancing around the room, looked at her again and wondered who she was; plain sewing she was, that was sure, also an

aunt; and besides that, although Freddie did not know it, she was an old—I hate to say it, though it wasn't anything really against her, if you come to that,—an old—well, you know what you call them behind their backs, or shout after them as they go down the street and then whip around the corner when they turn, just simply because they haven't ever been married, like Mother,—well, then, an Old Maid.

Being an Old Maid, she of course wore no wedding ring; but on her wedding-finger, the third finger of her left hand, there was a mark at the place where a wedding ring would have been; a kind of birth-mark, ruby red, in shape and size like the ruby stone of a ring. Freddie looked at it often afterwards.

"Now you look here, Aunt Amanda," said her nephew, taking hold of Freddie's hand again, "you know well enough I can't understand you with all them pins—"

Aunt Amanda put a hand to her lips and drew out of her mouth a pin and stuck it in the bosom of her dress. She put her hand to her lips again and drew forth another pin and stuck it in the bosom of her dress. She drew forth another and another, and stuck each one in her dress. Freddie's eyes opened wide; did this lady eat pins? Her mouth seemed to be full of them; didn't they hurt? It didn't seem possible she could eat them, and yet there they were. No wonder she couldn't talk plainly. There seemed to be no end to the pins, but there was, and at last her mouth was clear of them so that she could talk.

"Toby Littleback," said she, "you're up to one o' your tricks again. Ain't you ashamed of yourself?" That was what she had meant by saying,

"Obelilackyoomuptwonyerix," with her mouth full of pins.

Toby was quite crestfallen. "Well," he said, "I guess it ain't no hangin' matter. All I done was to bring the boy in to see you. 'N' this is what I get fer it every time. I ain't a-going to bring 'em in any more, that's flat."

"Let go o' the child," said Aunt Amanda, sharply. "Can't you see you're hurting his hand? Come here, boy."

Mr. Littleback dropped Freddie's hand and walked over to the table beside his aunt. Freddie came forward timidly and stood at Aunt Amanda's knee. She examined him carefully.

"It's the best one yet," she said. "Boy, do you know you're as pretty as a—Well, anyway, what is your name?"

If there was one thing Freddie loathed, it was to be called pretty; he had heard it before, in the parlor at home, when he had been trotted out to be inspected by female visitors, and he had tried many a time to scrub off the rosy redness from his cheeks, but he had found it only made it worse. He hung his head a little, and could not find his voice. Aunt Amanda took his chin in her hand and gently held up his head.

"It's all right, my dear," said she. "What is your name, now?"

"Fweddie," said the Little Boy.

"It ain't neither!" cried Mr. Littleback. "There ain't no such name. It's Freddie! Come on, now, say Freddie!"

"Fweddie," said the Little Boy.

"No, no!" cried Toby. "Try it again, now. Say Freddie!"

"Toby," said Aunt Amanda, "shut up. Freddie, I haven't any little boy, and I don't get out very much, and I'd like you to come and see me sometimes. Would you like to do that?"

Freddie stared at her, and said, "Yes'm."

"I hope you will, often. Be sure you do. I suppose you don't like gingerbread? Toby."

The little hunchback went out briskly through a back door and returned with a slice of gingerbread. "Baked today," said his aunt. "But what time is it? Quarter to six. Too near suppertime. You mustn't eat it now, Freddie. Toby, wrap it up."

Toby went into the shop and returned with a paper sack, and putting the gingerbread into it gave it to Freddie.

"Now," said Aunt Amanda, "take it home with you and eat it after supper. Will you come to see me?"

"Yes'm," said Freddie as if he meant it. You couldn't get gingerbread at home between meals every day in the week.

"That's a good boy. Now run away home."

"Please, sir," said Freddie, holding out the money in his hand, "my farver wants half a pound of Cage-Roach Mitchner."

"What? Oh!" said Toby. "I see. Half a pound of Stage-Coach Mixture. All right, young feller, come along

into the shop."

"Good-bye, Freddie, and don't break the gingerbread before you get home," said Aunt Amanda, taking into her mouth a palmful of pins with a back toss of her head. Had she swallowed them? Freddie stared at her in alarm.

"Ain't you never comin' for the tobacco?" said Toby. "I can't keep all them customers in the shop waiting all day."

Freddie followed him into the shop.

"You'll have to wait your turn, young feller," said Toby. "I can't keep these customers waiting no longer. What'll you have, Mr. Applejohn?"

Freddie looked around for Mr. Applejohn, but so far as he could see there was no one in the shop but himself and Mr. Littleback. The hunchback went through the swinging gate and stood behind the counter, and looked over it (his head and shoulders just came over the top) at Mr. Applejohn.

"No," said Toby, "we're just out of it. Very sorry. But I have something just as good. No? Well, then, come around tomorrow; yes, sir; between ten and eleven. Now, then, Tom, it's your turn. You want what? No, sir, I won't sell no cigarettes to no boy, so you can clear out. You ought to be ashamed o' yourself, smoking cigarettes at your age. No use arguin', I won't do it. You can get right out o' here." The big wooden-looking head winked an eye at Freddie. "That's the way I treat 'em. Did you see how he skipped off in a hurry? You saw him go, didn't you?"

Freddie looked at the door. He hadn't seen anybody, but after all that talk there must have been

somebody there; he couldn't be sure; probably he had been mistaken about it; grown-up people ought to know what they were talking about; perhaps he *had* seen somebody. He hesitated.

"I—I think so; I believe so; yes, sir."

"Don't you fool yourself, young man. You can't smoke cigarettes if you ever want to grow up. Look at me. Do you see this?" He turned his back and reached over his shoulder to his hump. "Cigarettes. That's what done it. Cigarettes. I smoked 'em along with my bottle of milk, regular, when I was a kid, and look at me now, not much bigger than Mr. Punch out there. Cigarettes. Maybe you might think it was the bottle o' milk done it, instead of the cigarettes, being as they was at the same time; but don't you never believe it. Cigarettes! You keep off of 'em. Now pipe-tobacco! That's a different thing. If I'd only stuck to a pipe, along with that bottle o' milk, look how high I'd 'a' been now! What kind o' tobacco did you say your farver wanted? Housewife's Favorite?"

"No, sir," said Freddie. "My farver he wants half a pound of Cage-Roach Mitchner."

"That's it," said Toby. "I don't see how I come to forget that name. Your father's a man o' good common sense. Nothing like Cage-Roach. Here it is." He turned to the shelf behind him and mounted a little ladder and took down a large tin. While he was scooping out the tobacco at the counter and weighing it on the scales and doing it up, he was singing to himself, and Freddie stared at him with rapt attention.

"Some day," said Mr. Littleback, without pausing in his work or looking at Freddie, "them eyes of yourn

will pop right out of your head, if you ain't careful. Did you ever hear that song?"

"No, sir," said Freddie.

"Would you like to hear it?"

"Yes, sir," said Freddie.

"It's about two old codgers—friends of mine; they come in here regular. One of 'em's a good customer and pays spot cash; the other one never buys nothing; and I can't say which one of 'em I like worse. Anyway, here's how it goes:

"Oh-h-h! There was an old codger, and he
had a wooden leg,
And he never bought tobacco when
tobacco he could beg."

"Don't you never let yourself get into that habit, young man. Always buy your tobacco fair and square. I've known 'em—this feller and many another one—never have a grain o' tobacco left in their pouch—just used up the very last bit two minutes before, and always a-beggin' a pipeful, and right here in my own shop too, where I *sell* tobacco, mind you—I'd like 'em better if they sneaked in and *stole* it, I would, any day. But the other one! I don't know that I'd want to be him neither, if I had to choose between 'em,—however—

"Another old codger, as sly as a fox!
And he always had tobacco in his old
tobacco box.

"Count on him for that! *He* never begs no tobacco, nor gives away none either. However, he ain't such a

general nuisance as the other one, and he pays spot cash. I'll have to say that much for him. But in spite o' everything and all, I can't seem to make myself care for him, much. Anyway—

"Said the one old codger, Won't ye gimme
a chew?
Said the other old codger, I'll be hanged if
I do!

"They're a fine pair now, ain't they? One of 'em a nuisance and the other one a grouch. You'll see 'em here both in my shop one o' these days, when you're a-visitin' Aunt Amanda, and one of them times—you see the way I bounced that boy that wanted cigarettes, didn't you? Well, that's what I'm goin' to do to them two old codgers one of these days, you watch and see if I don't; yes, sir; both of 'em, as sure as I've got a hump on my back. But it's pretty good advice, after all, what the song says,—

"So save up your pennies and put away
your rocks,
And you'll always have tobacco in your
old tobacco box!

"Here's your Cage-Roach. Gimme your money. There's your change; five, ten, fifteen, seventeen. Now run along. Come back again; what did you say your name was?"

"Fweddie."

"You mean Freddie, don't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why don't you say what you mean? Well, Freddie,

there's plenty of tobacco left in this shop, so you can come in whenever the old tobacco box at home runs out. And don't forget to come in to see Aunt Amanda. Plenty of goods left in the shop whenever—you see all that?" He pointed up towards the shelves. "I'll tell you something I ain't told to but mighty few people before. There's a jar of smoking tobacco up there that's just plain magic. Magic! You know what that means?"

Freddie started, and looked up at the shelves in alarm. He nodded.

"It's that one, on the middle shelf; the Chinaman's head. Do you see it?"

He pointed to a white porcelain jar, shaped like a human head. Freddie could see that it was the head of some foreign kind of man, with a little round blue cap on top, which was probably the lid.

"That tobacco in that Chinaman's head is magic, as sure as you're alive. I wouldn't smoke it if you'd give me all the plum puddings in this city next Christmas; no, sir; and I wouldn't allow nobody else to smoke it, neither: I just naturally wouldn't dare to. Do you know where that tobacco come from? A sailor off of one them ships down there in the harbor, that come all the way from China—yes, sir, *China!*—give it to me once for a quid of plug-cut; what you might call broke, he was, and it wasn't any use to him because he didn't smoke, but he did chew; and he told me all about it; he stole it from an old sorcerer in China, where he'd just come from. Don't you never touch it! I wouldn't want to be in your boots if you ever smoked that tobacco in that there Chinaman's head! You can steal anything else in this shop, and it wouldn't do much harm to anybody; but you keep

your hands off of that Chinaman's tobacco, mind what I'm telling you!"

"Yes, sir," said Freddie. He had never thought about smoking before, in connection with himself, but now for the first time he began to wish that he knew how to smoke. It would be worth risking something to take a whiff or two of the magic tobacco in that Chinaman's head, just to see what would happen.

"Do you think you'd better go home now?" said Mr. Littleback.

"Yes, sir," said Freddie. "My farver told me to hurry."

"Oh, he did! Indeed!"

The hunchback followed Freddie to the door, and they looked up together at the clock in the church-tower.

"Ah!" said Toby. "You're safe. Just six o'clock. Mr. Punch's father can't come out for about half an hour yet."

Freddie looked back as he crossed the street, and saw the live hunchback leaning against the wooden hunchback, with one foot crossed over the other; he could hardly tell which was which, except for the coat and breeches. He went on up the street with his package of tobacco in one hand and his package of gingerbread in the other. As he passed the church, he lingered a moment to stare at the great fat man with spectacles, who was sitting on the pavement in a chair tilted back against the church-wall, smoking a long pipe and reading a newspaper; could this be the "sextant" of the church, whom Mr. Toby had mentioned, and who had heard the queer noises from the top of the tower when Mr. Punch and his father

were up there having their high jinks? He tried to get up his courage to ask the fat man about it, but he could not get the words out. He stared so long that the fat man finally put down his paper and took the pipe from his mouth and looked over his spectacles and said:

"If you're considerin' making a bid for the property, young man, I'll see what the senior Churchwarden has to say about it. How much do you offer?"

"No, sir," said Freddie, blushing in confusion, and went on up the street. He understood nothing of what the fat man had said, but he caught the word "churchwarden," and remembered it.

He did not walk very fast, for he had a good deal to think about; so many things had never happened to him in one day before. He dwelt especially, in his mind, on the two old codgers who were friends of Mr. Toby, and he supposed that his own father never saved up his pennies, otherwise his old tobacco box would not be empty every now and then. However, he was glad that his father was a spendthrift, because it would give him a chance to go to the Old Tobacco Shop sometimes for more tobacco for the box; and apart from Aunt Amanda and her gingerbread, he was very anxious to look again at the Chinaman's head in which lay the magic tobacco which he must not touch. One thing was sure; he would never go without looking carefully first at the hands of the clock. He wished he knew how to smoke; only not cigarettes; he shivered when he thought of the terrible consequences.

When he came to the street-car track, the horse-car was going past; at least, it was coming down the street, and he did not want to be run over by that

horse; he had better wait, for the horse was trotting; his mother had warned him about it; he sat down on the curb. He had quite a moment or two to wait, and there would be time to give a hasty glance at the gingerbread. He laid the tobacco-sack beside him on the curb, and opened the other package; the car-horse had dropped into a walk and his bell was hardly jingling; there was no hurry after all; it would never do to cross in front of that horse even though he was walking. He looked at the gingerbread; it was fresh and soft, and its smell, when held close to the nose, was nothing less than heavenly; it was a pity it had to be hidden away again in the sack, but the horse was going by and the danger would soon be past. He held the gingerbread under his nose, merely to smell it; the edge of it touched his upper lip by chance, and there was something peculiar about the feel of it, he couldn't tell exactly what; it was very interesting; he touched it with the tip of his tongue, to see if it felt the same to his tongue as to his lip; it was just the same; perhaps teeth would be different; his teeth sank into it, just for a trial. The horse was going by now, and the driver was looking at him. He forgot what he was about, in watching the horse and his driver, as they went on past him; the gingerbread completely slipped his mind, and when he turned his head back from the horse-car and came to himself he found, to his amazement, that his mouth was full of gingerbread. He wondered at first how it got there, but there was no use in wondering; there it was, and it had to be swallowed; his mother would never approve of his spitting it out; and so, to please his mother, he swallowed it. The horse-car was nearly a square away; he could cross the track at any time now; there was no hurry.

When he came into the fine two-story brick house

where he lived, with only one package in his hand, his mother threw up her hands and said:

"Why, Freddie! Where on earth have you been? Did you get lost? Are you hungry?"

"No'm. Yes'm," said Freddie.

"Frederick," said his father, looking at him with that look, "where have you been? Didn't I tell you to hurry?"

"Yes, sir, to Mr. Punch's, and I didn't see his farver at all, but the hands come'd right over on top of each other and he didn't get down off of his perch, he didn't, so Mr. Toby took me in to see Aunt Namanda and she eats pins, and it's cigarettes that gives you that hump on the back, only tobacco's all right 'cause you smoke it in a pipe and it doesn't do you any harm at all, and that's what Mr. Toby says and he ought to know 'cause he's got one on his back his own self, but you mustn't touch that tobacco in the head 'cause it's magic and the sailor said so, and here's the Cage-Roach Mitchner, and that's all."

You will notice that he said nothing about the gingerbread.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCING THE CHURCHWARDEN

Every time Freddie visited the Old Tobacco Shop

after that—and it was pretty often, whether the tobacco box at home needed tobacco or not, for there were a good many things that drew him there, and he hardly knew which was the most fascinating: there was always a chance of gingerbread, and you could usually depend on seeing Aunt Amanda eat pins, and you could look through the two pieces of glass at the double picture and make it all one picture with the people in it standing out as if they were real, and Mr. Toby would often sing about his friends the two old Codgers and talk about their mean ways, and Mr. Punch was always waiting for his father outside the door, so that you had to keep your eyes on the time, or at least the clock (which is different), and sometimes Mr. Toby would let you in behind the counter and let you scoop tobacco into a paper sack, and when his back was turned you could stand under the Chinaman's head with the magic tobacco in it, and look up at it and wonder what would happen if you took just one or two little teeny whiffs—But I forget what I started to tell you. Oh, yes. Every time Freddie visited the Old Tobacco Shop, Mr. Toby would ask him his name, in order to see if he was grown up yet.

"What's your name today?" Mr. Toby would say.

"Fweddie," would be the Little Boy's answer.

"Not yet," Mr. Toby would say, shaking his head sadly. "You ain't grown up yet. I'm very sorry to have to tell you, son, but you've got to wait a while before you're grown up. I'll tell you what; I'll give you six months more," said Mr. Toby on one occasion. "If you ain't grown up by that time, there's no hope for you; I hate to have to say it, but you might as well know it one time as another." And the very next time the

Little Boy came he said his name was "Fweddie," and Mr. Toby said, "Well, never mind, you've got five months and twenty-eight days left, and there's hope yet. I suppose you wouldn't want to be a Little Boy *all* the time, and never grow up at all, would you?" Freddie looked up at him in alarm and said, "No, sir." "Then," said Mr. Toby, "you'd better mind your P's and Q's."

Freddie wanted to ask about these P's and Q's, but you may have noticed that he was shy, and he could not make up his mind to do so. He knew all about P's and Q's in the Alphabet Book at home, but he did not know how to mind them; he knew how to mind his mother,—sometimes, but how could you mind letters in a book, that couldn't ever say "Don't do that," like mother? He was very anxious on this point, for he knew that his time was growing short, and the idea of never growing up was simply terrifying; he might as well smoke cigarettes and be done with it. In point of fact, he now had only about a week left, and he wasn't grown up yet.

But one morning, when the hands of the church clock were wide apart, and all was safe, he passed by Mr. Punch and opened the shop door. Mr. Toby was standing behind the counter, tying up a parcel. He went on tying it up, and said:

"All right, young feller, it's your turn next. This here package is for the Sly Old Codger, and he'll be back for it pretty soon, and if it ain't ready,—whew! won't we get blown up, though? Now then, what'll you have? Pound o' Maiden's Prayer?"

"No, sir," said the Little Boy. "I don't want anything. I just came."

"Oh; you just came. By the way, young man, what is your name today?"

"Freddie!" said the Little Boy.

Mr. Toby dropped his package and leaned across the counter in amazement.

"What's that you say?"

"Freddie!" cried the Little Boy, bursting with pride.

"Well! Bless my soul! If I ever in my life! As sure as the world! Strike me dead if he didn't say it as plain as—! Young man," said Mr. Toby, solemnly, and he walked to the end of the counter, opened the swinging gate, came through, stood in front of Freddie, and shook him by the hand. "Young man, I congratulate you. It's all right now. But you had an almighty close shave, I can tell you that. Allow me to congratulate you, and accept the best wishes of your kind friend, Toby Littleback."

"Please, sir," said Freddie, opening his eyes wide, "am I grown up now?"

Mr. Toby stared without speaking, and then threw out both his arms, and for a moment it looked as if he were going to hug the Little Boy, but he evidently thought better of it.

"Are you—? Why, of course you are! Ain't I been telling you? But don't you go and presume on it too much, young feller! You don't think you can go and smoke cigarettes now, just because you're grown up, do you?"

"Oh no, sir," said Freddie, earnestly.

"I should hope not. And that there Chinaman's head

up there—you don't think you can go and smoke that magic tobacco now, do you? Because if you do!"

"No, sir," said Freddie; but he said this a little doubtfully, and he looked at the Chinaman's head with more interest than ever. What was the use of being grown up if you couldn't take a little risk now and then?

"All right, then!" cried Mr. Toby. "We've got to have a little celebration over this here event, and we'd better go in and see Aunt Amanda about it, right now!"

He grasped Freddie's hand again, and pulled him to the back door, and through into the back room where Aunt Amanda was sitting by the table with the wax flowers, sewing.

"Quick! quick! Tell Aunt Amanda your name now, quick! What's your name?" cried Mr. Toby.

"Freddie!" said the Little Boy, very distinctly, but looking down at the carpet, for fear he should seem proud.

"We're grown up today," cried Mr. Toby, "and we've got to celebrate!"

Aunt Amanda raised her eyebrows in astonishment, and said:

"Esheeraybysart!"

She put her hand to her mouth and somehow got out into her hand a good mouthful of pins. She laid them down on the table at her elbow, and said:

"Bless the dear baby's heart! And are you grown up now?"

"Yes'm," said Freddie, looking up and then down again, for he did not wish to seem too proud.

Aunt Amanda looked at him for a moment, and took out her handkerchief and blew her nose very loud.

"Toby," she said, "what did you mean by a celebration?"

"Tomorrow's Saturday," said he.

"Well, what of it?"

Freddie could not understand very well what they were saying after that, except that he was concerned in it somehow, until he heard Aunt Amanda say:

"You'd better ask his mother, then."

"Young man," said Mr. Toby, "if I write a letter to your ma, will you give it to her?"

"Yes, sir," said Freddie, whereupon Mr. Toby sat down at the other side of the table, with pen and paper and ink, and commenced to write.

"First," said Aunt Amanda, "there's some of that fruit-cake from last Christmas still in the—"

"Right you are!" cried Toby, jumping up and going out into the kitchen.

Freddie ate the fruit-cake, sitting on a hassock at Aunt Amanda's feet, while Toby went on with his letter, but in the midst of it Toby went out again, and finally came back with a tall glass of ice-cold lemonade.

"Don't you go and spill it on the carpet," said he, as he sat down to his writing.

"No, sir," said Freddie.

Aunt Amanda looked at him, as he sat so seriously on his hassock at her feet, munching his fruit-cake and sipping his lemonade; and she pulled out her pocket-handkerchief and blew her nose again, very loud. She appeared to have a cold. Toby paid no attention to her; his head was lying sidewise on his left arm on the table, and he was squinting at the sheet of paper, and every time his pen came down he closed his mouth tight, and every time his pen went up he opened his mouth wide. Freddie and Aunt Amanda had plenty of time to talk. Under the softening influence of fruit-cake and lemonade Freddie found his tongue.

"What's a Churchwarden?" he said suddenly into the lemonade-glass, which was just under his nose.

"Bless the baby!" said Aunt Amanda.

"It's a long clay pipe, young man," said Toby, chewing the end of his pen-holder, "like you've seen in the case out there in the shop."

"That ain't what he means," said Aunt Amanda. "You mean a man, don't you, Freddie?"

"Yes'm," said Freddie, looking at the cake just going into his mouth.

"It's a man," said Aunt Amanda, "it's a man that belongs to a church, and he stands guard over the church property, and sees to the repairs, and beats little boys with a cane when they make a noise during service, and takes care nobody don't run away with the collection money, and——"

"How do you spell 'respectfully'?" said Toby,

scratching his head with the pen. "Yours respectfully."

"R-e—" began Aunt Amanda, "s-p-e-c-k—no, that ain't right,—r-e-s—"

"There's one over at that church," said Freddie, pointing towards the window, "and he smokes one, too."

"One what, Freddie?" said Aunt Amanda.

"A Churchwarden. There's a Churchwarden sits out on the pavement and he smokes a Churchwarden, he does." Freddie was rather proud that he had mastered that difficult word, and he liked to hear himself say it.

"Oh," said Toby, "I reckon he means the sextant over there. Well, 'Yours respectfully.' I don't give a—hum! —how you spell it. There she goes. Done. 'Yours respectfully, Toby Littleback.' It's blotted up some, by crackey, that's a fact; but I ain't a-goin' to write all that over again, not by a jugful." And he took out his handkerchief and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"He's a Churchwarden," insisted Freddie, swallowing the last of the lemonade after the last of the cake.

"All right," said Toby, "have it your own way. But a sextant's as good as a Churchwarden, in *my* opinion, any day of the week,—except Sunday, of course."

Aunt Amanda inspected the letter, and declared herself horrified by the blots; but Toby positively refused to go through that exhausting labor again, so she passed it grudgingly, and handed it to Freddie in an envelope, and told him to give it to his mother as

soon as he got home.

"Do you want some more cake and lemonade?" said she.

"Yes'm," said he.

"Well, you won't get it, so trot along home."

In the shop Mr. Toby showed him the churchwarden pipes in the show-case. Freddie wondered how it would taste to smoke some of that magic tobacco in the Chinaman's head in a churchwarden pipe.

As he passed the church on his way home, he looked for the fat old man who usually sat in his chair tilted back against the wall, but he was not there. Freddie wished to ask him about those noises up in the tower when Mr. Punch and his father were having their high jinks; he had never been able to screw up his courage to the point of asking about this, but now that he was grown up he thought he might be able.

He gave the letter to his mother, and she read it; but she said nothing to him about it. When his father came home in the evening, she showed the letter to him, and they talked about it, and Freddie could not understand very well what they were saying. Finally his father said:

"Well, I don't think there would be any harm in it."

"I suppose not," said his mother. "I'll see them in the morning. He had better wear his Sunday suit and his new shoes."

This was bad, because it sounded like Sunday-school, and the shoes squeaked. Freddie thought he had better change the subject, so he said:

"I'm grown up. I can say Freddie. Mr. Toby says so."

His father laughed, but his mother took him up in her arms and hugged him close to her breast.

The next day was in fact Saturday, and after lunch Freddie's mother helped him, or rather forced him, into his Sunday suit and his new shoes, after a really outrageous piece of washing, which went not only behind the ears but actually into them. She put his cap on his head—he always had to move it a trifle afterwards,—looked at his finger-nails again, pulled down his jacket in front and buttoned every button, straightened out each of the four wings of his bow tie, took off his cap to see if his hair was mussed and put it on again, pulled down his jacket in front, straightened his tie, altered the position of his cap, put both her arms around him and kissed him, and told him it was nearly two o'clock and he had better hurry. As soon as she had gone in, after watching him go off down the street, he unbuttoned every button of his jacket, put his cap on the back of his head, and in crossing the street-car track deliberately walked his shiny squeaking shoes into a pile of street-sweepings; he then felt better, and went on towards the Old Tobacco Shop.

As he came to the church, he stopped to look at the hands of the clock; he was in luck; the hands would not be together for ever so long, for it was ten minutes to two. The Churchwarden was sitting in his chair tilted back against the wall, keeping guard over his church; and he was smoking his churchwarden pipe. Freddie walked by very slowly, and his shoes squeaked aloud on the brick pavement. The fat old man gazed at him solemnly, and Freddie looked at the fat old man. The Churchwarden's chair came

down on the pavement with a thump.

"Look here!" he said. "This ain't Sunday! What's the meaning of all this? It's against the rules to wear them squeaking shoes of a Saturday! The Dean and Chapter has made that rule, by and with the advice and consent of the City Council, don't you know that? And all that big red necktie, too! Did you think it was Sunday?"

"No, sir," said Freddie, for he was always honest, even in the face of danger. "I couldn't help it. I didn't want to, but mother made me——"

"Ah! that's it. I thought maybe you'd made a mistake in the day; then it wouldn't 'a' been so bad. Look here; it's my duty to report this here violation of the Sunday law, but as long as—you're sure you ain't *particeps criminis*?"

"No, sir," said the Little Boy earnestly. "My name's Freddie."

"Well, that makes it different. I though you was another party; young party-ceps; but if you ain't, why —Here; you'll need something to show, in case you should meet the Archdeacon, and he'd want to know why I hadn't reported you—Show him this, and he'll know it's all right."

The fat Churchwarden fished in his vest pocket and drew out, between a fat thumb and a fat forefinger, a round shining piece of metal, and put it in Freddie's hand. Freddie saw that it was a bright new five-cent piece, commonly called a nickel. He felt better.

"If you don't meet the Archdeacon between here and Littleback's Tobacco Shop," went on the Churchwarden, "you don't need to keep it any longer;

I don't care what you do with it then; only not pickles, mind you!"

"No sir," said Freddie.

This was his chance to inquire about Mr. Punch's father and the noises in the tower, but it was out of his power to stay longer; he was too glad to escape without being reported; and he accordingly went off down the street, squeaking worse than ever, and positively hurrying.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH MR. HANLON MAKES A GREAT IMPRESSION

Freddie found no one in the Tobacco Shop, so he knocked on the door of the back room, and it was instantly opened by Mr. Littleback himself; but a Mr. Littleback so resplendent that Freddie hardly knew him.

The suit of clothes which Mr. Littleback wore was beyond any doubt a brand new suit. The ground color of it was a rich mauve, if you know what that is; not exactly purple, nor violet, but somewhere in between; and up and down and across were stripes of brown, making good-sized squares all over him; it was extremely beautiful. His collar was a high white collar, very stiff, and it held up his chin in front like a whitewashed fence. His necktie was of a pale-blue

satin, with little pink roses painted on it, yes sir, painted! mind you, by hand! It was not one of those troublesome things that come in a single long piece and take you hours before the glass to twist and turn over and under before you can get them to look like a necktie; no indeed; it was far better than that; it was tied already, by somebody who could do it better than you ever could, and when you bought it, all you had to do was to put it on; fasten those two rubber bands behind with a hook, and there you were; perfect. As to hair, the hand of the barber was yet upon him; his hair, parted on one side, was of a slickness which his own soap never could have accomplished; on the wide side, it lay flat down over his forehead, and there gave a sudden curl backward, like the curve of a hairpin, but much more graceful; it is only the most studious barbers who ever learn to do it just right. There were creases down the arms of Mr. Toby's coat and down the front of his trouser-legs. A yellow silk handkerchief showed itself, not boldly, but quietly, from his breast pocket.

As he let Freddie in, and in doing so turned his back to Aunt Amanda, she screamed and cried out:

"Toby! Look behind you! Merciful heavens!"

Freddie, in the midst of his admiration of the magnificent creature, saw him whirl about and look behind himself in alarm. His aunt pointed at his coat and said sternly, "Come here."

Freddie saw on the back of Mr. Toby's coat, near the bottom, as he whirled about, a little square white tag.

Mr. Toby backed up to his aunt, and stood before her, trying to look at his back over his shoulder,

while she took her scissors and clipped the threads by which the white tag was sewed to the back of his coat. She held up the tag; it had numbers printed and written on it.

"Now ain't that just like you, Toby Littleback," she said, "going out with your tag on your back, with your size on it and your height and age, too, for all I know, for anybody to see that you've got on a splittin' brand new suit right out o' the shop. If you'd 'a' gone out with that on your back, I'd 'a' died with shame right here in this chair. Ain't you even able to dress yourself?"

"By crickets, that *would* 'a' been bad," said Toby, considerably upset. "However, you caught it in time, so there ain't no use cryin' over it. Good-bye, Aunt; come along, Freddie, or we'll be late."

"Ain't you goin' to wear a hat?" said Aunt Amanda. "I declare the man's so excited he don't know what he's doing."

"Blamed if I didn't come near going without a hat," said Toby. "Here she is."

He produced his hat from a cupboard in the room, and put it on. It would have been a pity indeed for him to have gone without it. It was a white derby; yes, a *white* derby. It was the kind of a hat which was known in that city as a "pinochle"; pronounced "pea-knuckle" by all well-informed boys. With the mauve suit and the hand-painted necktie and the whitewashed fence, the white derby set him off to perfection, especially as he wore it a little towards the back of his head, so as to show the loveliest part of the plastered curl of his hair on the forehead. Aunt Amanda could not restrain her admiration.

"You'll do now," she said. "I don't know that I ever seen you look so genteel before."

Toby, in the embarrassment of being considered genteel, put his hands in his trousers pockets.

"Take them hands out of your pockets," said Aunt Amanda sharply, and he took them out in a hurry.

"Now, Freddie," she said, "come here a minute, and I'll set you to rights."

Freddie stood before her knee, not very willingly, and she buttoned his jacket from top to bottom, and put his cap squarely on his head.

"Now you'd better be off," she said.

"Good-bye, Aunt, and I wish you were going too," said Toby, his hand on the door-knob.

"Good-bye, Freddie," said she.

"Good-bye," said Freddie.

"Good-bye what?" said she.

"Aunt Amanda," said he.

When they were out in the street, and she heard Toby lock the shop door behind him, she took out her handkerchief and blew her nose; her cold was evidently worse, because she blew her nose several times; and then, tucking her handkerchief away in her dress, she put her head down on her arm on the table, and cried.

The first thing Freddie did, as they went up the street, was to put his cap back again on the back of his head, and the next thing he did was to unbutton every button of his jacket, from top to bottom.

The little hunchback was in a great hurry, and he dragged the Little Boy along by the hand so fast that he could hardly keep up. As they hurried along, several naughty boys, observing Mr. Toby's white derby hat, called after him, very rudely, "Pea-knuckle! pea-knuckle!" But Mr. Toby paid no attention, and dragged Freddie along faster than ever.

"We don't want to miss any of it," said Mr. Toby. "Hurry up, boy."

They did not have far to go; only four or five "squares." They stopped before a great grimy brick building with a great wide entrance-way.

"Here we are," said Toby.

"What does that say up there?" said Freddie.

"Gaunt Street Theatre," said Toby. "Hurry up."

Freddie hung back before a signboard on which was a picture of a slender man dressed up in white clothing, very tight, with red and black squares on it; he was leaning against a table; his head and face were a dead white, except for red eyebrows, and a red spot in each cheek, and he had no hair, but a smooth dead-white skin from his forehead to the back of his neck. The peculiar thing was, that his head was on the table beside him, and not on his neck. Freddie pointed to the writing underneath the picture, and said:

"What does that say?"

"Hanlon's Superba," said Toby, pulling him along. "Hurry up! We'll be late."

Mr. Littleback went to a little window in the wall,

inside the entrance-way, and spoke to a man in there, and evidently asked permission to go in, and evidently got it; and they did go in, up a flight of stairs, and found themselves suddenly among thousands and thousands of people, as it seemed, all sitting in chairs facing the same way, in a vast house lit up by gas light so that it was almost as bright as day; and Toby and Freddie sat down in the very front row of these people, and looked down over a railing in front of them on the heads of thousands and thousands, as it seemed, of other people, all sitting in chairs facing the same way. Everybody was facing towards a straight wall at the other side of the house, which had pictures painted on it. At the foot of this wall, in a kind of trench, there was a man at a piano, and there were other men with fiddles big and little, and still others with brass things, and they were all playing a tremendous tune together, but just after Toby and Freddie had sat down, they stopped playing and Toby nudged Freddie with his elbow, and said:

"Now, then, young feller, what do you think of this, eh? Just you wait! Keep your eye on that curtain!"

He had no sooner said this than somewhere in the house somebody gave a piercing whistle between his fingers, and in a minute there was such a racket that it was impossible to talk. There must have been people above them, and they must certainly have all been boys; for from up there Freddie heard a clapping of hands and a stamping of feet, all in a regular time, which spread to the whole house, and in the midst of it the boys up there began to shout and call and whistle, and in a few minutes there was such a hubbub as only boys could make, with whistling between the fingers leading the riot. Toby

nudged Freddie again with his elbow, and to Freddie's surprise began to clap his hands and stamp his feet with the rest; and as Freddie thought he ought to be polite, he clapped his hands, too, though he did not know very well what it was all about.

Suddenly the men in the trench at the foot of the painted wall struck up again, and that quieted the other noise for a moment; but only for a moment; someone whistled through his fingers, and in an instant those fiddlers might as well have been sawing away at their fiddles out at the Park, for all you could hear them; and right in the midst of it all, while Freddie was trying to shout the word "Peanuts" into Toby's ear, suddenly the lights went out and you could have heard a pin drop.

"Now then! now then!" whispered Mr. Toby, in great excitement. "Now you'll see! Watch the curtain! It's going up!"

From down there in that dark trench came the sound of a soft twittery kind of music, and at the same time the painted wall that Freddie had been looking at was rising! going up! And it went on up and up out of sight into the ceiling, and there behind it, in a dim light, there behind it, mysterious and fearsome and delicious,—Well, there behind it was Fairyland. Just Fairyland.

I can't describe it to you. Freddie never forgot it. If you haven't seen Hanlon's Superba, in some old Gaunt Street Theatre or other, on a Saturday afternoon, with the galleries wild with boys, you have not lived. When Freddie tried to tell his mother and his father about it that night, it was such a whirling mass of wonders and glories that they could not make head nor tail of it. It is useless to speak of

the Fairy Queen in her glittering white, coming to the rescue in the nick of time with her diamond sceptre, or of the horrible demons, or the trouble and excitement they made for everybody, or of the beautiful young lady who—and such leapings and twistings and climbings and tumblings as no mere human beings with bones in them could ever have performed—it is no use; it is best not to try to describe it. But there was one part which, although it may seem to you the most unlikely thing in the world, really had a good deal to do with Freddie afterwards. There was the same man whose picture he had seen outside on the signboard; and he could climb straight walls and leap through high windows and tumble across floors in a way which passed belief; but there was one thing he could not do; he could not talk; he never spoke a word from beginning to end. Once, after having escaped from a parcel of wicked red imps, he sat down, tired out and starved to death, before a table loaded with food, and he commenced to make a hearty meal; but just as he was about to sample each plate it disappeared, vanished, completely out of sight, right under his nose. His distress was pitiable, and Freddie thought it cruel of everybody to laugh, as everybody did. On his plate were sausages, and he nearly got them; but just as he thought he had them, they actually jumped off the table and ran along the floor and up the wall; and the poor man had to climb the wall after them, which he did like a cat, and even then he never came up with them; he was terribly disappointed; and to finish off his miseries, at last a wicked creature with a sword came up behind him, as he was leaning his head down on the table in despair, and cut off his head before your very eyes; really and truly cut it off; there was no doubt about it; the head was on the

table and the poor man was in the chair; Freddie was terrified, and clutched Mr. Toby's arm. But when the wicked murderer had gone away, back popped the head onto the dead man's neck, his eyes opened, he grinned from ear to ear, and there he was on his feet, skipping and tumbling, as lively as ever; and at that Freddie and all the others in the house roared and shouted and clapped their hands.

"Is that Mr. Hanlon?" whispered Freddie into Mr. Toby's ear.

"Reckon it is," said Toby, too excited himself to pay much attention to Freddie.

But it could not last forever. Even the peanuts, which Toby bought for Freddie between the first and second acts, were all gone, and the curtain was down for the last time, and the crowd crushed through the doors, and Mr. Toby put on his white derby hat.

They were in the street, and the speechless Mr. Hanlon was a thing of the past. Freddie did not believe that he would ever see that dumb and loose-headed man again; but in that he was mistaken, as you shall see.

Toby left him at the corner near his father's house.

"What I say is," said Toby, "three cheers for our growing-up party!"

"Yes," said Freddie, "and three cheers for Mr. Hanlon!"

CHAPTER V

THE CHINAMAN'S HEAD

For a long time afterwards, Freddie dreamed at night of a hunchbacked man whose head came off and popped on again, and wicked red demons who chased a poor man with a white face who tried to cry for help and could not speak a word, and of a Chinaman's head without a body, smoking a long clay pipe. In the daytime, he thought a good deal about the people he was now acquainted with: Mr. Toby with his white derby hat, Aunt Amanda swallowing pins, the sailorman from China, Mr. Punch and his father, Mr. Hanlon with his head on the table, the Churchwarden smoking his churchwarden pipe, and the two old Codgers, one so sly and the other so beggarly; but that which occupied his mind more than anything else was the Chinaman's head on Mr. Toby's shelf.

Freddie was older now, and as time went on it might be thought that he would have grown accustomed to all these strange things; but he had not; far from it; he thought about them more and more, and most of all about the Chinaman's head and the magic tobacco. He really could not get that Chinaman's head out of his mind. Here was magic just within reach of your hand, and you were told that you mustn't touch it. You might as well have Aladdin's lamp in your bureau drawer, and be told to keep away from the bureau; even parents ought to know better than to expect such a thing. Anyway, what harm could just one or two little whiffs do? You needn't smoke a whole pipeful, if you didn't want to. However, Mr. Toby would not be pleased, and

Freddie did not intend to do anything to displease Mr. Toby. Still, it did seem a pity, with such a chance right over your head—Oh, well, he would think no more about it; he fixed his mind on other things; he thought especially about a hymn they sang nearly every Sunday in Sunday-school; it was a great help; he knew it by heart, and it went like this:

"Yield not to temptation,
For yielding is sin,
Each vict'ry will help you
Some other to win."

He resolved he would never think about the magic tobacco again; he went to sleep saying over to himself, "Yield not to temptation," and dreamed all night about the Chinaman's head, and thought about it all the next day.

In order to get it out of his mind, he called on Aunt Amanda. It was late in the afternoon; he sat on his hassock and watched Aunt Amanda sewing. Mr. Toby was in the shop, waiting on customers. Freddie watched for a long time, and then said:

"What are you doing?"

"Basting," said Aunt Amanda.

"I thought that was what you did to a turkey," said Freddie.

"So it is," said Aunt Amanda.

"That isn't a turkey," said Freddie.

"No," said Aunt Amanda, "you baste a turkey with gravy."

"That isn't gravy," said Freddie.

"It's different," said Aunt Amanda. "You see, I have to sew this up with needle and thread, and——"

"You sew up a turkey with needle and thread, too," said Freddie.

"But that's different," said Aunt Amanda. "You couldn't baste a turkey with needle and thread, and you couldn't baste dress-goods with gravy——"

"Why not?" said Freddie.

"Well," said Aunt Amanda, "well, you see, they don't do it that way; it's *different*; it ain't the same thing at all; it's like this; when you baste a turkey——"

"Have you ever had any children?" said Freddie.

Aunt Amanda put her hand to her heart suddenly, as if she had received a shot there, and caught her breath; then she looked out of the window, and then round at the wax flowers on the table, and then at the door, and she really seemed to be thinking of running away. But she was too lame to do that, and she at last clasped her fingers together tight in her lap, and looked hard at Freddie. He was gazing at her calmly, waiting for information.

"No," said Aunt Amanda, "I have never—had—any—children."

"Why not?" said Freddie.

"I have—never—been married," said Aunt Amanda.

Freddie thought about this for a moment.

"Didn't anybody ever want you?" said he.

"No," said she, "nobody—ever—wanted—me."

Freddie was puzzled.

"But you're nice," said he.

"That ain't enough," said Aunt Amanda.

"What else do you have to be?"

"You have to be pretty."

"Weren't you ever pretty?"

"I thought—so—once, but—but—I must have been mistaken. I guess I never was."

Freddie thought it over, and announced his decision seriously.

"*I* would want you, anyway."

Aunt Amanda stretched out a trembling hand to him and ran her fingers through his hair; then she threw both her arms around him and pressed him against her knee. He was much annoyed. He was afraid she might be going to kiss him; but she did not; instead, she pulled out her handkerchief and blew her nose.

"How many children were there that you didn't have?" said Freddie, to change the subject. Aunt Amanda did not understand this at first, but she finally saw what he meant. What *did* he mean? you may say. What he meant was—well, it is perfectly clear, but it is hard to explain. Anyway, Aunt Amanda understood him. "Three," said she. "Bobby was the oldest, and Jenny next, and James was the littlest one."

"Did they all go to school?"

"Oh dear no. Only Bobby. And once he played hookey, and was gone all day, and didn't come home

until after dark, all muddy. I was terribly worried. He was a very mischievous boy, but he was his—mother's—own——"

"Did he play marbles for keeps?"

"Yes, but he went to Sunday-school just as regular, and liked it, and——"

"He *liked* it?"

"Yes, of course, and he always took good care of Jenny——. She had little yellow curls. They went to Sunday-school together hand in hand, and he didn't even mind her carrying her dolly with her; she wouldn't go without it. He was so careful of her at street-crossings. She loved her dollies. She used to pretend that James was one of them."

"Did James like that?"

"Not very well, but he put up with it for quite a few minutes at a time. He couldn't be still very long. But he was pretty lonesome when Jenny had the measles."

"I've had the chicken-pox. Did Bobby know how to mind his P's and Q's?"

"He didn't mind anybody very well. Once I had a note from his teacher, and it said——"

But Freddie never learned what sin Bobby had committed in school; for at that moment the shop door opened, and Mr. Toby thrust in his head and said:

"Just got to get around to the barber-shop right away this minute; can't put it off no longer. Won't be gone twenty minutes. Freddie!"

"Yes, sir," said Freddie, standing up.

"Do you think you could look after the shop for twenty minutes, while I'm gone?"

Now Freddie did not know it, but this was in fact the most important question that had ever been put to him in his life. Everything depended on his answer; if he said no, we might as well stop this story right here; if he said yes——

"Yes, sir," said Freddie.

"All right. If anybody comes in, just tell 'em to wait."

Freddie left Aunt Amanda, sitting very still, and gazing out of the window, with her hands folded in her lap, and followed Mr. Toby into the shop.

"All right, sonny," said Mr. Toby, "make yourself comfortable. I'll be back in a jiffy. If anybody comes in, you tell 'em to wait." And with that he went out of the door and up the street. Freddie was left alone in the shop.

Everything was very quiet now, for it was beginning to be twilight, and all the people seemed to be indoors. He knew he ought to be going home, but he had promised to mind the shop, and it would never do to leave before Mr. Toby came back. The street door and the door to Aunt Amanda's room were both closed. He sat down on the chair by the front window and looked out across the bull-dog's head. He thought of Bobby and his little sister in Sunday-school, and that led him to think of the hymn that did him so much good:

"Yield not to temptation,
For yielding is sin."

He sang that tune to himself for a while, and he found himself singing other tunes, and finally one which began:

"There was an old codger, and he had a
wooden leg,
And he never bought tobacco when
tobacco he could beg."

Tobacco! There was a world of tobacco on those shelves. Smoking tobacco, and churchwarden pipes. He strolled around behind the counter, and let down the back of the show-case. There were the churchwarden pipes; he selected one and took it out. It tasted cold and clammy when he put it in his mouth, and he wondered what it would taste like with tobacco in it. He brought the little ladder and got up on it, facing the shelves, and to his surprise he found himself looking directly into the slanting eyes of the porcelain Chinaman's head. He stood there gazing thoughtfully into those eyes, and singing to himself the verse which was always such a help to him:

"Yield not to temptation,
For yielding is sin,
Each vict'ry will help you
Some other to win."

It was growing a little darker now, and he could not examine the Chinaman's head very well without bringing it closer. He took the head in his hands, lifted it from the shelf, got down off the ladder, and sat down on the floor with his back against the counter; and while he was doing this he hummed to himself the next part of his tune:

"Fight manfully onward,
Dark passions subdue."

He put the head on his knees, and took off the Chinaman's little round cap, which proved to be in fact a lid. He put his hand inside and drew out a good fistful of absolutely black tobacco, fine and powdery like coal-dust; he held it to his nose, and it smelt very sweet, in fact much like brown sugar. He wondered if it would taste like brown sugar through the pipe-stem; and humming quietly to himself, "Each vict'ry will help you," he poured the tobacco into the bowl of the pipe. He was disappointed, on sucking in through the pipe-stem, to find that there was no brown-sugar taste at all. Of course, the only way to give tobacco any taste was to light it; he reached up and got a match off the counter behind him, and sitting down again struck the match on the floor. It made a very pretty glow in the twilight, and he watched it as it burned away in his fingers; it would be burnt out in another second, so, humming to himself those ever-helpful words, "Yield not to temptation," he put the pipe in his mouth and touched the lighted match to the tobacco.

It is painful to have to tell these things, but it can't be helped; for the consequences were so strange, and so important to Freddie and his friends, that——

Anyway, he lit the pipe and drew in a long breath through the stem. He nearly choked to death. Smoke got into his nose and his eyes and his throat, and he coughed and coughed; but he remembered the words, "Fight manfully onward," and he determined that he would not give up so soon. He stopped coughing and pulled again at the pipe; this time he did not swallow the smoke, but blew it out of his

mouth as he had seen it done a thousand times. He gave another pull, and blew the smoke out again; it did indeed taste like brown sugar; it was extremely pleasant; he puffed again and again. He was astonished that he could have produced so much smoke in a few whiffs; there was quite a cloud over his head. He gave another puff, and when he blew out the smoke the white cloud above him was so thick that he could not see through it. It began to settle down on him. He put the Chinaman's head on the floor, and looked up into this cloud.

It was growing thicker and thicker, and it was beginning to churn about as if in a whirlwind; it turned all sorts of colours, mostly yellow and green, and parts of it looked like barber's poles revolving at a terrific speed. He became dizzy as he gazed at it; his head began to swim; the cloud was coming down closer and closer upon him, and whirling about more and more wildly; he crouched down lower, and became dizzier and dizzier. The counter and the shelves began to go round and round, so that he had to put his hand on the floor to steady himself; in another moment the shop disappeared altogether, and there was nothing under him but a little square of floor, and nothing over him but the wild, churning cloud, now sparkling with jets of fire. He felt himself falling, falling, and as he came to the bottom with a crash, he heard the shop door open and close, and found himself sitting on the floor with his back to the counter as before, with no smoke anywhere to be seen; and he was aware that a hoarse voice was speaking on the other side of the counter, and it was saying these words, very loud and brisk:

"Avast, there! Belay that piping! All snug, sir, hatches battened down, makin' way under skysails and

royals, hands piped to quarters, and here's your humble servant ready for orders! Shiver my timbers, where's the skipper? Piped me up with a 'baccy pipe, he did, and where's he gone? Skipper ahoy! Come for orders, I be, and ever yours to command, Lemuel Mizzen! That's me!"

Freddie put the pipe down on the floor, rose to his feet, and looked over the counter.

Leaning on his elbow on the other side of the counter was a Sailorman, with a wide blue collar open at the throat, a flat blue cap with a black ribbon on the back of his head, and a green patch over his right eye.

CHAPTER VI

LEMUEL MIZZEN, A.B.

Freddie looked at the Sailorman, and the Sailorman straightened up and touched his cap. His face was brown as weathered oak, and creased like bark; his one eye was black and glittering; the hand which he raised to his cap was of the shape and nearly the size of a ham; and the chest and throat which emerged from his wide-open shirt-collar was as brown as his face, and big with muscles. There was a delicious odour of tar about him; you positively could not look at him without hearing wind whistling through ropes. He hitched up his trousers with his other hand and said:

"Ay, ay, skipper! Here I be as big as life, all ready fer orders!"

As Freddie gazed at him, the Little Boy slowly collected his wits, and a light began to dawn upon him.

"Have you been to China?" said he.

"Right-o!" cried the Sailorman. "To China I have been ——" in a queer sing-song, as if he might have been marching in time to it round a capstan, hauling in an anchor: "To China I have been, and a many ports I've seen, near and far; I can sail before the mast or behind it just as fast, I'm a tar, I'm a tar, I'm a tar!"

Freddie continued to stare at him with increasing astonishment.

"Are you a sailor, sir?" said he.

"Wot, me? I'm Lemuel Mizzen, A.B., that's me, and I sail the deep blue sea from Maine to Afrikee, and round again on an even keel to Cochin China for cochineal, and back to Chili for Chili sauce, and home again to Banbury Cross—that's me! Lemuel Mizzen, able seaman! Fed on hard tack or soft tack, or a starboard tack or a port tack, it's all the same to me! Now then, skipper, you piped me up, wot's the orders?"

"Please, sir," said Freddie, "would you mind telling me what it is you would like to have?"

"*Me?* Douse my binnacle light, wot I want is a chew o' terbacker; but the question before the chart-house is, wot do *you* want, skipper?"

"I don't want anything," said Freddie.

"Wot? You piped me up, didn't you? Piped me up with a pipe?"

"No, sir," said Freddie.

"Sorry to entertain a different opinion from the skipper! Didn't you smoke the Chinaman's 'baccy, *in* a pipe?"

"Yes, sir," said Freddie, hanging his head.

"Then you did pipe me up with a pipe, and I hope I knows better than to come aft without bein' piped. Didn't you know I've got to come when you smoke the pipe with the Chinaman's 'baccy in it?"

"No, sir," said Freddie.

The Able Seaman fixed his black eye on Freddie in amazement.

"Well, bust my locker if this ain't the—Beggin' your pardon, skipper, and no offense meant! Called me off from the China Sea, and don't want me after all! Didn't go fer to do it, not him! And me off in the China Sea amongst the Boxers, a-v'yaging hither and thither to pick up a cargo o' boxes to box compasses with! Ye've brought me a fair long journey fer nothin', skipper!"



"I'm Lemuel Mizzen, A.B., that's me!"

"I'm very sorry, sir," said Freddie, "I didn't know you had to come when the Chinaman's tobacco was smoked. Are you the one that brought that tobacco here?"

"Ay, ay! That's me! Lemuel Mizzen, A.B.! And a fine long trip from the China Sea, to come to a lad in Amerikee when I hears in my ears the skipper's call,

and all fer nothin' at all, at all! Ain't you got nothin' to offer in extenuation?"

Freddie did not know what "extenuation" meant, but he could see by the Sailorman's face that that gentleman was a good deal put out. He remembered that Mr. Mizzen wanted a chew of tobacco.

"Would a little tobacco make you feel better?" said he.

"Now you've got yer hand on the right rope!" said the Able Seaman, his face brightening. "I don't smoke. I chew. If you're goin' to offer a bit of a chew, why then, says I, I don't care if I do."

Freddie took a long plug of chewing tobacco from the shelf behind him. He knew that Mr. Toby would not mind making a little gift to the sailorman after his long journey. He put the plug under the cutter on the counter, and was about to press down the handle, to cut off a portion, when the Able Seaman hitched up his trousers and said:

"Belay there, skipper! Put the whole cargo aboard! This here craft needs ballast; hoist her over the side!" And he reached out his hand for the whole plug of tobacco and took it from Freddie, and gnawed off a corner with his teeth.

"Ah!" said he, his right cheek bulging out. "Too much ballast to starboard." And he gnawed off another corner, so that his left cheek bulged out like his right.

"All snug!" said he. "I'll just pay fer my cargo before I set sail, with a bit of a draft on the owners, in a manner of speakin'. Here y'are, sir. Stow that bit o' paper in yer sea-chest, and it'll come in handy one o'

these days. Pay as you go, says I."

He placed in Freddie's hand a folded sheet of soiled paper. It was greasy with handling, and was evidently very old; it was folded small and tight, and was beginning to break with age at the creases. On the outside, it was blank; but there might have been writing inside.

"Got it in the Caribbean off a runaway sailor, fer a set of false whiskers and a tattoo needle. Will it do to pay fer the cargo with?"

"Yes, sir; thank you," said Freddie, holding the paper in his hand without unfolding it.

"Then all I got to say is, before I weighs anchor,—take good keer o' that there bit o' paper. Aloft and alow, don't ye never let go; round the yard take a bight and hold on to it tight; let the harricane blow till yer fingers is blue, but wotever you do, don't ye never let go. And skipper, mind wot I'm a-tellin' you; if you ever needs Lemuel Mizzen, A.B., fer to give him his orders, all you got to do is to smoke a couple o' whiffs of the Chinaman's 'baccy, and Lemuel Mizzen, A.B., he'll be on deck before the smoke's cleared away. That's clear?"

"Yes, sir," said Freddie, with eyes wide open.

"And now as I see there's no orders to give, I'm off to my tight little bark called The Sieve, and when I'm aboard I'll close all the shutters, and lock up the parrot that sneezes and stutters, and wake all the skippers, and put on my slippers, and get into bed while the mates overhead are swabbing the decks and heaving the lead and baling the bilge-water up with their dippers; and when they have gotten the

vessel to going, and settled all down to their knitting and sewing, and the twenty-third mate, who is always so late, has learned what is meant by a third and last warning, I'll turn up the gas, take a look at the glass, and read me the Life of Old Chew until morning!—And so, sir," continued Mr. Mizzen, walking towards the street door, "I must give you a view of my little stern-light, and bid you, dear sir, a very good night."

So saying, he turned squarely towards Freddie, with one hand on the door-knob, and with the other hand touched his cap respectfully. Freddie saw that his trousers were very wide at the ankles and very tight at the hips, and that he rolled a little when he walked. Having touched his cap respectfully, he opened the door and went out, and disappeared in the darkness outside.

Freddie stood looking after him with his mouth wide open.

CHAPTER VII

THE HANDS OF THE CLOCK COME TOGETHER

It was some minutes before Freddie recovered from his astonishment. Certainly this was a strange Sailorman. And he had come all the way from the China Sea at a puff of the Chinaman's tobacco!

Certainly magic tobacco, that! But it was a pity that Mr. Mizzen had been called away from the China Sea, all for nothing, while he was so busy gathering boxes to box compasses with! No wonder he had felt put out about it. And it must have been a queer sort of ship, with its shutters, and all those skippers and mates—did they really like to knit and sew after they had got the ship to going? It would be a wonderful thing to sail in a ship like that; he wished he had thought to ask Mr. Mizzen more about it. He must tell Aunt Amanda at once.

He ran to the back door and burst into the back room, crying out "Aunt Amanda!"

Aunt Amanda was sound asleep in her chair, with her head back and her mouth open; the gas was burning brightly overhead, and the clock was ticking away distinctly on the mantel-piece.

"Aunt Amanda!" cried Freddie.

She awoke with a jump, blinked her eyes, and said:

"Hah! Where's the—what's the—who said—Where's Toby? What's the matter?"

"It's me, Aunt Amanda," cried Freddie, breathlessly, "and the Sailorman's just been here and gone, and I called him with the pipe, and I can call him whenever I want him, and he gave me a piece of paper, and he talks like a singing-book, and there's a parrot that stutters, and they have to bale out the water with dippers because the ship's named The Sieve, and we mustn't lose the paper because the runaway sailor wore false whiskers, and he feeds on tacks instead of pins, and we have to hold on tight to the paper, and one of the men on the ship is always

late, and we mustn't lose the paper, because——"

"Stop! Stop!" said Aunt Amanda. "What on earth is the child talking about? What's all this about a Sailorman and a paper?"

"He's the one that brought the Chinaman's tobacco from China, and he gave me a piece of paper, and here it is, and we mustn't lose it, because——"

"One minute, Freddie! Now you just stand right there, perfectly still, and tell me about it slowly. Now, then; what about this Sailorman? Slow, slow."

It was a long time before Freddie made her understand exactly what had happened, but at last she did understand, from beginning to end. She was grieved and horrified that he had smoked the tobacco, but there was no help for it now, and she was too much excited by his tale to scold him very long.

"What's the paper he give you?" said she, when he had told her everything.

Freddie put the paper in her hand, and she unfolded it carefully.

"Why," said she, "it's a map!"

"What kind of a map?" said Freddie.

"It's a map of an Island," said Aunt Amanda. "Where's Toby? I wish he would come home. It looks like an Island, and there's writing here on it. Looks like some sailorman might have drawn it, maybe; it's certainly pretty old. I wish Toby would come."

"What's the writing on it, Aunt Amanda?" said Freddie.

"Well, here at the top it says, 'Correction Island,' and under that it says, 'Spanish Main.' Bless me; that's where the pirates used to——"

"Pirates?" said Freddie, his eyes sparkling.

"Yes, pirates, of course. You've heard of the Spanish Main, haven't you?"

"Yes'm. It's a long way off. You have to go there in a ship. Have you ever been there?"

"Me? Me been to the Spanish Main? Mercy sakes, no, child! What would I be doing on the Spanish Main? I ain't been outside of this town since I was born."

"Wouldn't I like to go there! Pirates!" said Freddie. "Oh jiminy!"

"You mustn't use such dreadful language," said Aunt Amanda. "I wonder where Toby is? Just look at that clock! Why, bless me, it's twenty-seven minutes to seven."

Freddie looked, and saw that the hands of the clock were together, one on top of the other. It was the hour for Mr. Punch's father to call Mr. Punch from the church-tower.

"Toby's got to talkin' with that barber again, as sure as you live; when they once begin, they never know when to leave off. I wish he'd——"

As she said this, the door opened, and in walked Mr. Toby himself.

"Sorry I'm so late," he cried, "but the barber got to talking about—What, young feller, are you still here?" He turned and called through the open door to someone behind him in the shop. "Come in! Make

you acquainted with my aunt and a young chap here —Don't be bashful, come right in! Nobody's goin' to eat you!"

Mr. Toby held the door wide open, and made way for a little gentleman who now advanced into the room. He was a hunchbacked man, of the same height as Toby, and he was holding out in one hand a bunch of black cigars; he was bareheaded and bald-headed; he had high cheek-bones and a big chin and a hooked nose; he wore blue knee breeches and black stockings and buckled shoes, and his coat was cut away in front over his stomach and had two tails behind, down to his knees. His joints creaked a little as he walked. He made a stiff bow to Aunt Amanda, and another one to Freddie.

"Come in, Mr. Punch," said Toby, "you don't need to hold them cigars any longer. Give 'em to me." And he took them from Mr. Punch and laid them on the table. He then went to Mr. Punch and linked his arm in his, and the two hunchbacks stepped forward together and stood before Aunt Amanda.

"Allow me to present my friend Mr. Punch," said Toby. "Just as I was coming in, I heard a voice sing out 'Punch!' from the church-tower, and Mr. Punch stepped down from his perch, and I invited him to come in, and here we are."

"Good hevening, marm," said Mr. Punch. His voice sounded harsh, as if his throat were rusty. "Good hevening, young sir. Hit's wery pleasant within-doors, wery pleasant indeed; Hi carn't s'y it's so blooming agreeable hout there on my box, hall d'y and hall night; the gaslight is wery welcome to me poor heyes, I assure you, marm. Hi trust I see you well, marm."

"Mercy on us!" said Aunt Amanda, who had been speechless with astonishment. "Freddie, it's Mr. Punch himself, bless me if it ain't!"

Freddie edged a little closer to Aunt Amanda, for he was afraid Mr. Punch might snatch him up and carry him off to his father in the tower. Mr. Punch noticed this.

"'Ave no fear, me good sir," said Mr. Punch, his wide mouth expanding in a smile, almost to his ears. "Hi sharn't see me father this night, hif me kind friends will permit me to enjoy their society for a brief period, together with their charmin' gaslight, which it is wery dim hall night in the street and quite hunsatisfactory, accordingly most pleased to haccept me friend Toby's kind 'ospitality, Hi assure you. One grows quite cramped in one's legs and one's harms when one 'as to remain in one position on one's box hall night, unless one's father should tyke hit into 'is 'ead to call one hup for a bit of a lark, and one can never be sure of one's father's 'aving it in 'is 'ead to call one hup, to s'y nothing of one's fingers coming stiffer and stiffer with one's parcel of cigars 'eld out in one's 'and, and no 'at on one's 'ead, and no 'air on one's 'ead to defend one against the hevening hair, with one's nose dropping hicicles in winter, so that one never knows when one will lose one's nose off of one's fyce——"

"Excuse me," said Aunt Amanda. It was evident that Mr. Punch was a talkative person. "Are you an Englishman?"

"Ho lor' miss, indeed!" said Mr. Punch. "A Henglishman as ever was, Hi assure you. But I 'opes I give myself no hairs."

Freddie gave up trying to understand the difference between air and hair; it was plain enough that the bald-headed man had never given himself any hair, so it couldn't be that. Anyway, this was an Englishman, and Freddie was glad that he would now probably have a chance to hear English spoken, which he had never heard before.

"Toby," said Aunt Amanda, "Freddie has seen the Sailorman from China, and he has a map. I'll tell you about it."

Thereupon she related the story of Mr. Lemuel Mizzen, as she had got it from Freddie. Mr. Toby and Mr. Punch were both tremendously impressed.

"It's too bad," said Mr. Toby, "this young feller here had to go and smoke the Chinaman's tobacco after I told him not to; it's too bad, that's what it is. What did you mean by it, sir?"

"Hit's a wery naughty haction indeed," said Mr. Punch. "Wery reprehensible. Wery. Hi carn't s'y as I ever 'eard of a thing so hextremely reprehensible. Now when Hi was a lad——"

"You don't say so!" said Mr. Toby. "Well, I don't see anything so very bad about it. I'd a' done it myself if I'd been in his place. What do you mean by saying that my Freddie's reprehensible? I won't have nobody callin' him names, I won't, and what's more——"

"No offense, Toby! No offense!" cried Mr. Punch. "Sorry, Hi assure you. Wery reprehensible of me to s'y such a thing. Wery. Pray be calm; be calm."

"Well, then," grumbled Toby, "don't you go and say nothing about Freddie, because—Anyway, let's have a look at the map."

At that moment there came a timid knock upon the door.

"Who next?" said Toby. "Come in!"

CHAPTER VIII

CELLULOID CUFFS AND A SILK HAT

The door opened, and there entered a poor-looking elderly man, bowing and scraping as he came, and saluting the company with an old rusty dented tall hat which he carried in his hand. The most striking thing about him was that he had a wooden leg. His hair was grey and thin, and his face was not very clean; there were signs of tobacco at the corners of his mouth. His clothes were frayed and patched, and there was a good deal of grease on his vest; he wore a celluloid collar without any necktie, and round celluloid cuffs; his coat-sleeves were much too short, and his cuffs hung out certainly three inches. Strange to say, his collar and cuffs were spotlessly clean, and presented quite a contrast to his very untidy face and clothes; but then, celluloid is easy to clean; much less trouble than washing the face. As he stumped into the room, he kept bowing humbly from one to another, and bobbing his old hat up and down in his hand.

"Ahem!" he said, making another bow. "I was just going by, and I thought I would drop in to—er—ahem!—I hope I am not in the way?"

"Oh, come in," said Toby, not very graciously. "As long as you are here, you might as well stay. This is Mr. Punch, and this is Freddie."

The elderly man bowed to Freddie, and went up to Mr. Punch and shook him cordially by the hand. He put his mouth quite close to Mr. Punch's ear, and lowered his voice, and said:

"Ahem! I'm delighted to know you, sir. I trust you are well. I have seen you often, but not to speak to. Ahem!" He lowered his voice again, and spoke very confidentially into Mr. Punch's ear. "The fact is, sir, that as I was going by, I suddenly found that I had left my tobacco pouch at home; most unfortunate; and I came in with the hope that perhaps—er—ahem! Very seldom forget my tobacco; very seldom indeed; perfectly lost without it; do you—er, ahem! —do you happen to have such a thing about you as a —er—ahem!—a small portion of—er—smoking tobacco? I should be very much obliged!"

"Sorry," said Mr. Punch, stiffly, backing away. "Hi never use tobacco in any way, shape or form."

The elderly man looked much disappointed, and sighed. He turned to Toby, and bowed and smiled hopefully.

"Perhaps Mr. Littleback—" he began.

"Not on your life," said Toby. "You don't get no tobacco out of me, and that's flat."

The elderly man sighed again, and looked steadily at Freddie; but he evidently thought there was no hope in that quarter, and he said nothing.

Freddie now realized who the elderly gentleman was.

He had a wooden leg, and he never bought tobacco when tobacco he could beg—It was the Old Codger whom Mr. Toby had now and then sung a song about; one of his two friends, the one who was always begging tobacco, and never had any of his own. Freddie looked at him, and felt rather sorry for him.

"Ahem!" said the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg. "Very sorry to intrude, Miss Amanda. I hope I'm not in the way. It's very mild weather we're having."

"Now, then," said Toby, briskly, "let's look at this map."

As he said this, another knock was heard at the door; a firm and confident knock this time.

"Confound it!" said Toby. "Who next? Come in!"

The door opened, and another elderly man stepped in; a tall slim man, with very white hair and a long narrow face; he carried a tall shiny black silk hat in his hand; he wore a black suit, all of broadcloth, and his coat hung to his knees and was buttoned to the top; his cuffs and collar and shirt were of beautiful white linen with a gloss, and his tie was a little white linen bow. He came forward with an air of warm benevolence.

"My dear, *dear* friends!" he said, and stretched out both hands towards the company, as if to clasp them all to his heart. "What a beautiful, beautiful scene! So homelike, so cosy, so sociable, so—so—What can be so beautiful as the gathering together of friends about the family hearth! *So* beautiful!" There was a Latrobe stove in the room, but no hearth; however, that made no difference; he went, with his hands

outstretched, to Aunt Amanda, and pressed one of hers in both of his.

The Old Codger with the Wooden Leg immediately sidled up to him, and while he was still pressing Aunt Amanda's hand, said, in a confidential tone:

"Ahem! I'm delighted to see you again. I trust you are well. The fact is, I find that I have—er—left my tobacco pouch at home,—most unfortunate; very seldom forget it; completely lost without it; I was wondering—er—ahem!—if you happened to have such a thing about you as a—"

"No!" said the other old man, changing at once from beaming benevolence to stern severity. "I'll be hanged if I do!" And he released Aunt Amanda's hand, and turned his back on the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg.

"Now," said Toby, "let's look at the map. This here is Mr. Punch, and this is Freddie."

The newcomer took Mr. Punch's hand in both of his and squeezed it softly; he then took Freddie's hand in both of his and pressed it tenderly. Freddie knew him. He was the "other Old Codger, as sly as a fox, who always had tobacco in his old tobacco-box." Freddie could hardly believe that that white-haired old gentleman could be as sly as a fox.

"My dear, *dear* friends!" said the Sly Old Fox. "What is so beautiful as the love of friends?" He stopped to glare at the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg, who looked away nervously. "The love of friends! Gathered together around the family hearth! How beautiful! It touches me, my friends, it touches me ——"

"That's all right about that," said Toby. "For heaven's *sake*, let's look at the map!"

Aunt Amanda spread out the map on the table beside her, and the others gathered round.

"It's an island!" cried Toby.

"On the Spanish Main," said Aunt Amanda.

"The Spanish Main!" said the Sly Old Fox. "A beautiful country! Full of palms,—and grape-nuts,—What you might call a real work of nature! Full of parrots, and monkeys, and lagoons, and other wild creatures; a work of nature, my dear friends, a real work of nature."

"And pirates," said Freddie, earnestly.

"I *said* parrots," said the Sly Old Fox.

"*I* said pirates," said Freddie.

"Just what I said," said the Sly Old Fox. "That live in trees, my little friend, in trees; and have red and blue feathers, and——"

"Pirates don't have feathers," said Freddie.

"Dear, dear!" said the Sly Old Fox. "How *can* you say such a thing? How *can* you——?"

"Did you ever see a pirate in a tree?"

"In cages, my dear little friend! Hundreds of them!"

"That's enough!" said Mr. Toby. "Quit wrangling for a minute, will you? What about this here map? I tell you what, though. I'd like the Churchwarden to see this map. Freddie, will you run down the street and get the Churchwarden?"

"Yes, sir," said Freddie, moving towards the door.

"And tell him to bring along his Odour of Sanctity with him. He always carries a bottle of it in his pocket, and we may need it. Don't forget it."

"No, sir," said Freddie.

"Hold on a minute," said Mr. Toby, snatching up his hat. "I'll go for him myself. I can do it quicker." And in a moment he was out of the door.

CHAPTER IX

THE ODOUR OF SANCTITY

While Toby was gone, Aunt Amanda explained to the two old men about the Sailorman from China, and about his gift of the map which was lying on the table. They were just at the end of their discussion when Toby returned, bringing with him the Churchwarden, puffing and blowing with the unusual exertion of walking, and without his pipe. Toby introduced him to Mr. Punch and the two old Codgers, and drew him up to the table and showed him the map, explaining at the same time how it came there.

The Churchwarden examined the map carefully, while the others all looked at him. He finally put down the map, settled himself in a chair, folded his hands across his fat stomach, blew out his cheeks,

and said:

"My opinion is, that what we ought to do is to—I've considered the matter carefully, from all sides, and I think we ought to—Of course you may not agree with me, but I think the best thing to do would be to —Unless, of course, some of you may think of something better, but if you don't, then I can't say as there's anything better to do than to——"

At this moment there came a sound from the street outside which made everyone but Aunt Amanda jump to his feet. It was the sound of running feet, mixed with strange cries, not very loud, but somehow blood-curdling. It was evident that someone was in trouble. Freddie and the five men rushed from the room and through the shop and into the street.

The street was very dark, except for a gas-lamp at the opposite corner. A white figure was running down the pavement towards the shop-door, with frantic speed; and behind him, evidently chasing him, came a crowd of little dark creatures, hard to make out in the dim light. It was these creatures who were making the little blood-curdling cries. In a moment they had come so near that the party about the shop-door could see what they were. In front, running desperately with leaps and bounds, and panting for breath, came a tall slim man all in tight-fitting white clothes, with a dead white face and a white hairless head; and after him, tumbling on pell-mell, was a perfect riot of little red imps, with little horns on their foreheads, and little tails behind them, all trying to spear the white man with the wicked little pitchforks which they carried, and to seize him with their claws. Freddie thought they were precisely

like the imps he had seen at Hanlon's Superba. When the white man reached the shop-door they had nearly caught him. He paused at that moment, looked wildly about him, saw the open door of the shop, and dashed in and banged the door to behind him. The imps came tumbling up and hesitated an instant before the men at the door; and in that instant the Churchwarden showed the most unexpected presence of mind. He quickly reached behind him and drew a small bottle out of his pocket and pulled out the cork and sprinkled a few drops of its contents on the ground before him. A sharp penetrating odour immediately filled the air; it was so intense that it made the tears come into Freddie's eyes; but what it did to the wild mob of imps was almost beyond belief. As they got their first whiff of it, they tumbled back over one another in a mad effort to get away; but they could not get away from the odour quick enough; it caught them and held them, so that in a moment they could not move; they stood fixed and fast and silent; in another moment they began to melt away, and in two minutes they had vanished; actually vanished where they stood, each and every one, before the very eyes of the astonished party before the door.

"Blimy hif I ever see the like!" said Mr. Punch.

"Never knew my Odour of Sanctity to fail once," said the Churchwarden, coolly. "Hardly ever go out without it. There ain't a witch or an imp or a bad spirit of any kind whatever can stand up against my Odour of Sanctity, if he once gets a couple of good whiffs of it out of this little bottle. Just a few drops from the bottle, and a few sniffs, and whoof! they're done for! No, sir! there ain't no perfumery in the world like Odour of Sanctity!"

On the floor of the shop they found the poor white man lying completely exhausted. They asked him to explain, but he could not speak. Mr. Toby and Mr. Punch, one on each side, supported him into the back room, and sat him down in a chair before Aunt Amanda. She held up her hands in astonishment. The man was certainly a strange-looking man. They plied him with questions, but he touched his tongue with his finger and shook his head. He could not speak; he was dumb. Freddie, after one long look at him under the gaslight, knew who he was.

"It's Mr. Hanlon!" he cried, in great excitement. "It's Mr. Hanlon!"

The dumb man looked at Freddie and smiled, and nodded his head. He rose to his feet, shook Freddie's hand, and made a graceful bow to the whole company.

"It's Mr. Hanlon sure enough," said Toby, "still being chased by the imps. Pretty near got him that time, too! But he got away safe and sound after all, didn't he, eh?" And all the party, including Mr. Hanlon himself, laughed with delight. And when the Churchwarden pulled out his little perfume bottle and showed it around, and explained to Mr. Hanlon what it had done, the poor man was so overcome that he put his head down on the Churchwarden's shoulder and wept.

"This'll never do!" cried Toby. "Ain't we never, *never*, going to get down to this here map? I never *see* such a time as I've had, trying to examine this here map! One thing right after another! Mr. Hanlon, I'll tell you what it's about, and then you can see it for yourself. Would you like to stay here with our little party? It's a good deal safer than out-of-doors."

Mr. Hanlon nodded eagerly and smiled, and Toby explained everything to him and showed him the map.

"Now," said Toby, when that was done, "speak up, Warden, and finish what you was a-saying!"

CHAPTER X

CAPTAIN HIGGINSON AND THE SPANISH MAIN

The Churchwarden, having put back into his pocket the bottle of Odour of Sanctity, folded his hands across his fat stomach and began again:

"As I was saying——"

"Never mind that," said Toby. "Tell us what we had better do."

"Well, as I was saying," went on the Churchwarden, paying no attention to Toby, "the best idea that occurs to me, after thinking it over considerable, is that—But I ain't saying there's none better, and I don't lay claim to being any wiser than—Anyway, it seems to me we ought to——"

"Just listen to this!" broke in Aunt Amanda. She had been studying the map all this time, and she was holding it in her hands. She was much excited. "I've just made out all this handwriting at the bottom of the map, and I'll read it to you. Do you want to hear

it?" Her voice shook and her hands trembled. Everybody except the Churchwarden begged her to go on. "Oh! do you think it could be true? If it only could! Oh, if it *could* only be true!"

"Maybe if you'd read it, Aunt Amanda——" said Toby.

"Yes, yes, I will," said she, all of a twitter. "I'll read it. Don't hurry me. This is what it says. If it could only be true! 'Correction Island: By dead Reckoning, latitude 12° 32' 14" N., longitude 61° 45' 13" W.,' whatever that means. But I'll read it to you just as it's written. It's a queer kind of language—Anyway, this is what it says:

"'Lately discovered by me, Reuben Higginson, Master Mariner, Brig Cotton Mather: New Bedford.

"'Notify Elizabeth Higginson, Spinster: or Else the acknowledged Elder of the Society of Friends: New Bedford.

"'Now off course in heavy gale on return Voyage to fetch my Sister aforesaid to Correction Island with as Many others as are Minded to come.

"'Leaking badly below line: pumps Given over: Water mounting in hold: decks Awash: Both masts gone By the board: whale-oil, no use: Down with all hands in another Hour.

"'This Map shall be cast Overboard in a stout Bottel as we go down, with a Paper of directions how to Gain correction in the Island.'"

"Where's the paper of directions?" said Toby.

"It ain't here," said Aunt Amanda. "I suppose Captain Higginson lost it, or else he didn't have time to put it

in the bottle. Anyway, this is what the writing on the map says:

"'Let him that Finds the Bottel remember these Mariners: Also, let him take heed to Search out the Island diligently.

"'For this Island'—Listen to what it says now," said Aunt Amanda, trembling with excitement. "Oh, do you suppose it could really be true? And yet this Reuben Higginson was a good Quaker captain, I'm sure, and I don't believe he would say what wasn't true, and especially when he was on his way home to get his own sister——"

"Why don't you read it, instead of talking about it?" said Toby.

"I would, if you'd let me," said Aunt Amanda. "Here's what it says:

"'For this Island is Refuge to such as be afflicted: And in this Island shall be Corrected'—oh! listen to this! I wouldn't believe it from anybody but Reuben Higginson—'shall be Corrected whatever Errors, Disappointments, Miscarriages, Faylures, Preventions, and the like, this mortal Life may have afflicted Any withal: Wherefore I have called it Correction Island.

"'There be Perils enough in coming at Compleat Correction: But let Courage halt not By the way, so shall he Arrive presently.

"'If any be Crooked'—this is the part! it's too wonderful! but Captain Higginson wouldn't have said it, when he was so near going down with his ship, and especially on his way home to get his own sister ——"

"Me dear lydy," said Mr. Punch, "*hif* you would be so wery kind as to——"

"Yes, yes; give me time. I declare you make me so nervous—Now just listen to this, every one of you, and don't speak:

"'If any be Crooked, he shall there be made Straight.'"

She paused, and looked hard at Toby. Mr. Punch started at the same time, and he and Toby looked hard at each other.

"'If any be Blind, he shall see: If any Dumb, he shall speak.'"

At the word "dumb," Mr. Hanlon, whose elbow was resting on the table, jumped so violently that he knocked the Album onto the floor. Aunt Amanda nodded her head to him, and all the others stared at him.

"'If any be Old, he shall be Young again: If any Fat, he shall be as Lean as he will.'"

At the word "fat", the Churchwarden gave a questioning grunt, and settled down deeper in his chair.

"'If any be Poor, whether in Purse or in Mind, he shall seek Alms no longer.'"

The Old Codger with the Wooden Leg, who had been resting his wooden leg on the chair opposite, dropped it to the floor and sat up very straight. Toby, who was standing beside him, clapped him heartily on the shoulder.

"'If any be Mean, or Cunning, or Despiteful, he shall be given a new heart.'"

Aunt Amanda looked directly at the Sly Old Codger, who was sitting smiling, with his tall silk hat on his knees; and everyone else in the room, except Mr. Hanlon, looked very intently at him. He noticed it, and glanced around inquiringly, smiling more benevolently than ever.

"How beautiful that would be," he said. "How beautiful! If some of my dear, dear friends could only have a new heart,—how beautiful!"

"Don't interrupt," said Aunt Amanda. "Freddie, listen to this:

"'If any be Little in stature, against his desire, he shall be Great.'"

Freddie opened his eyes very wide. Would it be possible to be big at once, without waiting all that long dreary time? How glorious that would be!

"But this," said Aunt Amanda, "this is the last and the best. I don't know—whether I can—read it right—" her voice broke, and she blew her nose and cleared her throat—"but I will try. Oh! do you suppose it *could* be true? Would a good Quaker captain, with a sister in New Bedford, say it if it wasn't true? With the sea raging and both masts gone, and the ship filling up with water, and——"

"Aunt Amanda," said Toby, "if you don't read the rest of it this minute——"

"Ah, yes, Toby, I will," said Aunt Amanda. "It must be true, or a good man like that wouldn't have said it. This is the last part, and the best:

"'If any be Prevented unjustly of Beauty or of Children or of Love or of Other like desires, there

shall be found for him of these a great Store: So that there shall be an End of repining, and none in that Place shall say, Thus and thus might I have been also, had I been but justly entreated.

"'And so I commit my Body to the sea, and my soul to ____'"

"Go on! go on!" cried the company—excepting, of course, Mr. Hanlon.

Aunt Amanda blew her nose again, and laid down the map on the table. "That's all," she said. "I suppose he didn't have time to finish it."

CHAPTER XI

A MIXED COMPANY IN SEARCH OF ADVENTURE

After Aunt Amanda had stopped reading, it was a moment or two before anyone spoke. "If all those things," said Mr. Toby thoughtfully, "could be done in that Island, I'd be in favor of going there."

There was a general murmur of assent, and Mr. Hanlon nodded his head.

"Well," went on Mr. Toby, "we'd better make up our minds what we want to do about it. The Churchwarden ain't had his say yet, what with all these interruptions, and I move we give him a chance to have his say, right now. Speak up, Warden;

what do you think we ought to do?"

"As I was saying," said the Churchwarden, looking around solemnly, "while I don't hold to my own opinion if anybody else can think up something better, still it seems to me—But maybe you'd ruther hear from the others first."

"No, no!" cried the whole company,—except Mr. Hanlon, who shook his head vigorously.

"Well, then, being as you've asked me so particular, and having thought about it considerable,—as I was saying, it appears to me that the best thing to do would be to—This is only the way it looks to me, you understand, and I ain't speaking for nobody but myself, and I don't pretend that my opinion is worth ——"

"By crackey!" cried Mr. Toby, very rudely. "Ain't you the most maddening old feller that ever was in the world? Come on, now, tell us what to do, and be quick about it!"

"Call up the Able Seaman!"

This was so unexpected that nobody spoke for a moment.

"Hurrah!" cried Toby. "Now you've said it. We'll call up Mr. Lemuel Mizzen—is that his name? That's the thing to do! Do you all agree to that?" Everybody approved, and Mr. Toby turned to Freddie. "He's your man, Freddie, and if you've done it once, I reckon it won't be any harm for you to do it again. Wait a minute." And he ran into the shop, and immediately returned with the Chinaman's head and a churchwarden pipe.

"Now, then, Freddie," he said. "Will you do it again?"

"No, sir," said Freddie. "I'd rather not."

"You shouldn't make him do it," said Aunt Amanda.

"Nonsense, Aunt Amanda!" cried Toby. "He's as bad now as he'll ever be, and it ain't a-going to do him no harm. I'll fill the pipe."

"Hit's quite a lark," said Mr. Punch, laughing heartily. "Fancy the little beggar's smoking a pipe!"

"My dear little friend," began the Sly Old Fox, beaming upon Freddie. "You must always remember that your elders know best——"

"Here, Freddie," said Mr. Toby, having filled the pipe, "sit down here." And he pushed Freddie gently down upon his accustomed hassock at Aunt Amanda's feet.

Freddie shook his head, but Mr. Toby put the pipe into his mouth and lit a match. All the others sat in silence, watching Freddie intently.

"Now, then!" said Toby. "Pull away!" And he touched the lighted match to the pipeful of black tobacco.

Freddie gave a pull, and blew out a cloud of smoke. He did not choke this time. He gave another pull, and blew out another cloud. The white smoke lay above the heads of the company in a thick mass; it grew thicker, so that he could not see through it; it began to move, as if in a high wind. He drew on the pipe once more, and blew out another cloud of smoke. He knew what was coming, and in fact the same thing happened that had happened to him before. The white cloud churned about, with its barber-poles and jets of fire, coming down closer and closer upon him, and in a jiffy he was sitting in

midair on his hassock, and then he felt himself falling, falling; and as he struck the bottom with a jar, he heard, very distinctly, a knock on the door; and he was sitting again on his hassock at Aunt Amanda's feet in the quiet room, with no sign of a cloud anywhere to be seen.

"Come in!" he heard Mr. Toby cry.

The door opened, and in walked Mr. Lemuel Mizzen, A.B., as cool as a cucumber.

He took off his flat blue cap with the black ribbon, and made a bow to the company.

"Piped me aft again, and good evening to you all!" said he, in his hoarse voice. "Lemuel Mizzen, A.B.! That's me! What'll it be? All ready for orders, skipper! It was just half past by the starboard watch, and the skippers their apples were quietly peeling, when I locked up the last of the lemons and Scotch, and lay on my bed looking up at the ceiling, to snatch forty winks, as I foolishly reckoned; but just as I thinks, 'Thirty-first, thirty-second,' there's a ring at the bell of the big front-door, and the mates come and yell that I'm wanted ashore; so I tucks in my cap the eight points of my nap, and just before stopping to turn down the lights, I runs to the dresser and puts it to rights, and then before giving a last look behind, I goes to the bed and takes off the spread, and lays out to air the three sheets in the wind! And here I be," concluded the Able Seaman, "all ready for orders." And he looked very hard at Freddie.

"Well!" said Aunt Amanda, gasping. "I never in my life heard such a——"

"I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Mizzen," said Toby. "It's

about Correction Island, on the Spanish Main."

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Mr. Mizzen. "Would you like to go there?"

"Ah!" said everyone at once, except Mr. Hanlon, who nodded his head.

"No trouble at all," said Mr. Mizzen. "Just step into The Sieve, and we'll be off. A sweet little bark is The Sieve, provided there's plenty of dippers; but we always go well provided. Is the whole party going?"

"One moment, if you please," said the Sly Old Codger. "There is one little point on which I—that is to say—Will there be any expense?"

"Not a penny," said Mr. Mizzen. "Everything's found. Orders from the skipper. What he says goes."

"Ah!" said the Sly Old Fox. "The Spanish Main! With all the little parrots and monkeys flitting about in the branches of the upas trees!—I think I will join."

"I reckon we're all going," said Mr. Toby. "Is everybody agreed? All right. It's settled. And my vote is, to go right now, while we've got hold of our Able Seaman here."

"Shouldn't I tell mother first?" asked Freddie.

"I'll write her a note in the morning," said Toby. "I'll fix it; you leave it to me."

"I suppose I really ought to finish this sewing," said Aunt Amanda.

"No time," said Toby, who seemed to be managing everything. "Where's the ship, Mr. Mizzen?"

"Made fast to the wharf at the foot of this street," said

Mr. Mizzen.

"Then let's go," said Toby.

He ran out of the room, and returned with his white derby hat on his head, and his hand-painted necktie neatly in its place. He helped Aunt Amanda to get up, and brought her her little black bonnet, which she put on and tied under her chin, and her cashmere shawl, which she put around her shoulders.

"All right!" cried Toby. "We're off! Come along!"

"We're off to the Spanish Main," said Mr. Mizzen, in his curious sing-song, "to the wet Antipodee; but dry or wet we need not fret, for we are bold as bold can be; and on the way at Botany Bay we'll probably stay a week or two, to gather ferns as the Botanists do, and then we'll stop at the door of Spain, to ask the way to the Spanish Main, and so without any more delay, on the Spanish Main we'll all alight, where the star-fish shines in the sea all night, and the dog-star barks in the sky all day—Here, skipper, put this in your pocket, and hold fast to it." He handed Freddie the map, and Freddie put it away safely in his pocket.

"Have you got the Odour of Sanctity?" said Mr. Toby to the Churchwarden.

"Right here," said the fat man, tapping his back pocket.

"I'll carry the Chinaman's tobacco," said Toby. "We may need it." And he tucked the Chinaman's head under his arm.

In a few moments the whole party were standing on

the pavement outside, and Toby locked the shop-door behind them. They crossed the street, and as they did so they heard a faint voice halloing from the top of the church tower, and they could make out that it said, "Punch! Punch!" But Mr. Punch only sniffed and shrugged his shoulders, and made no answer.

It was very dark. The gas-lamps at the corners only made the darkness gloomier. The only sound they heard, after Mr. Punch's father's voice had died away behind them, was the stump-stump of the Old Codger's wooden leg on the brick pavement. All the dwelling-houses were closed, and as they came nearer to the wharves all the warehouses were dark and awful. Not a soul was to be seen, except that once they saw the back of a policeman as he disappeared around a dark corner in advance. At the sight of this policeman's back, and in the shadow of a great gloomy building alongside an alley, Freddie slipped his hand into the Able Seaman's big paw. He wondered if he were doing quite right in leaving home without saying a word to his mother, but Mr. Toby had promised to do whatever was necessary, and anyway, he was going aboard a ship! If he should stop to speak to his mother about going away on a voyage in a ship, he felt somehow that he might never go. He could already smell the delicious odour of tarred ropes.

Their progress was very slow, on account of Aunt Amanda's lameness. First came Mr. Mizzen, leading the way with Freddie by his side. Next came Aunt Amanda, limping with her cane, and supported on one side by Mr. Toby and on the other by Mr. Punch. Behind them walked the Churchwarden and the Sly Old Fox, and last of all Mr. Hanlon and the Old

Codger with the Wooden Leg.

They could see not far before them the ghost-like masts and shrouds of ships, looking as if they were growing up from the street among the buildings; and in another moment they found themselves standing in a group on a wide wharf, piled up with bales and boxes, and before them, against the edge of the wharf, where the black water was lapping the piles, stood a tall ship with most of her sails set. Freddie thrilled in every vein of his body. At that moment he did not think of his father or mother; he thought of nothing but the smell of brackish water and tarred ropes, and the deck of a ship on the open sea under a cloud of canvas, and the far-away Spanish Main.

The Able Seaman led the company of adventurers forward between the bales and boxes, until they stood beside the dark hull of the ship. He turned round and faced them and touched his cap respectfully.

"Come aboard," said he.

CHAPTER XII

THE VOYAGE OF THE SIEVE

When Freddie awoke the next morning, he leaned up on his elbow, rubbing his eyes, and was surprised to see the floor of the little room in which he found himself settling slowly down at one side. In a

moment the floor rose again on that side, and the other side settled down. Then the whole room tilted sideways and back again. It made him dizzy, and he closed his eyes, wondering what kind of a house he had gotten into. He decided he would get up and find out about it.

He carefully rose, and tried to walk across the floor to the window. As he stepped out, the floor seemed to go down under him, and he quickly grasped the bed; he put out his foot again, and the floor rose up; he was dizzier than before, and he had a queer sinking feeling in his stomach. As the floor tilted down sideways again, he made a dash to the opposite wall, and held on there by the window; but the floor sank again, and he made another dash, back to bed. He was cold and hot, and his head ached, and there was a feeling in his stomach as if—oh dear! He decided he would lie in bed for a few moments until he felt better.

He remained there for two days.

What occurred during those two days he could not remember very well afterwards. He slept a great deal, and it seemed that some one with a green patch over his eye came in now and then; but he paid very little attention. All he wanted was to go to sleep and stay asleep.

On the morning after his third night he sat up wide awake. He was hungry. He jumped up and dressed in a hurry. As the floor tilted and sank and rose with him he thought he had never felt so delicious a sensation. He wondered if there would be bacon and eggs for breakfast.

In a moment he had thrown open the door and he

was running up a short flight of steps. He was weak and tottery, but he paid no attention to that. He was at the top of the steps, and he drew in a deep breath of the cool morning air.

He was standing on the deck of a great ship. Over his head clouds and clouds of beautiful white canvas swelled out to the breeze. The sun was sparkling merrily on the water, and there was no land to be seen anywhere. Up forward, the bow of the ship was dipping and rising regularly. There were three tall masts, and on the first two the sails were set square to the masts, and on the third lengthwise; every sail seemed to be up. It was glorious.

He walked forward up the deck. Here and there were men in blue overalls, cleaning the deck, coiling ropes, and polishing metal; and in a little house with windows a man was standing beside an upright wheel. Near the first mast, in a group, were Aunt Amanda, Mr. Toby, the Churchwarden, and the two old Codgers. Freddie hailed them with a shout.

"All right, young feller," cried Mr. Toby, as Freddie came up, "here we are! How is this for a corking spree? Beats all the Tolchester excursions you ever see, that's what I say! Blamed if it don't. I ain't been out of bed for two days."

"No more has any of us," said Aunt Amanda. "Do you feel well, Freddie? I declare I'm quite excited. Isn't the air invigorating?"

"Yes'm," said Freddie. "What did you say in your note, Mr. Toby?"

"What note?" said Toby.

"Why, your note to my mother, explaining about me

and——"

"By crackey!" cried Toby. "Blamed if I didn't clean forget all about it! Now ain't that too bad! What on earth are we going to do about it?"

"Well!" said Aunt Amanda. "Now ain't that just like you, Toby Littleback? I declare if your head wasn't fastened on you'd——"

"Wery reprehensible," said Mr. Punch. "Wery."

"My dear friends," said the Sly Old Codger, "let us not be disquieted on such a morning as this. Everything is so beautiful. *So* beautiful! And without any expense whatever. It is a precious thought. How pleasant it is to hear the breeze blowing so gently among all the little capstans up there!"

He took off his high silk hat and looked up among the sails with a rapt expression on his face, and all the others looked up too, trying to see the capstans fluttering in the breeze.

"Look!" cried Aunt Amanda. "Why, there's Mr. Hanlon!"

Far, far up, near the top of the second mast, was a white figure, standing on a rope under the topmost sail, and holding on with one hand and waving the other down at the passengers. Mr. Toby waved his white derby, and Mr. Hanlon began to come down. Freddie trembled with alarm, but Mr. Hanlon was obviously having the time of his life. He skipped swiftly along his dangerous perch, and sliding down and along the spars of wood that held the sails, and actually leaping from one to another, and tripping lightly down ladders of rope, while the whole top swayed dizzily from side to side, he at length came

down on the deck with a bounce, and bowing to everybody shook Freddie by the hand.

"Here comes the Able Seaman!" cried Toby. "And see what he's got on his wrist!"

Mr. Lemuel Mizzen came rolling down the deck, and as he approached he took off his cap with his left hand and made a bow. On his right wrist was a blue and red parrot, who cocked his head sideways at the strangers, and then looked up inquiringly at the Able Seaman.

"Good morning, all!" said Mr. Mizzen. "Glad to see the passengers come to life again! Nothing like the open sea, lady and gentlemen!"

"Are you sure it's perfectly safe?" said Aunt Amanda.

"Perfectly safe, ma'am. A tight little bark is The Sieve, provided the dippers hold out. Most of the men is below now, baling out the water with their dippers, and the ship ain't leaking more than ordinary—yet. Of course you never can tell what may happen, but there's plenty of dippers, unless we should founder in a storm, or split up on the rocks, or——"

"Mercy on us!" cried Aunt Amanda. "I wish we hadn't come. If I only had some sewing with me."

"Would you mend socks, ma'am?"

"Oh, that would be lovely! And I could look after the men's shirts, too, and count the laundry when it comes home, and—I'm sure we are going to have a delightful voyage! I feel better already. I don't believe there's any danger after all. It's all nonsense about the ship's leaking."

"Who's your f-f-f-friends, L-l-lem?" shrieked a voice from Mr. Mizzen's wrist.

Everyone started, and looked in amazement at the parrot, whose head was perked sideways up at Mr. Mizzen's face.

"L-l-lem!" shrieked the parrot, stuttering terribly. "Who's your f-f-f-friends?"

"Never you mind," said Lemuel, "you'll find out soon enough. Breakfast's ready. Anybody want breakfast?"

Before anyone had a chance to reply, the parrot opened his mouth wide and gave a loud laugh, and cried out:

"Th-th-three ch-cheers! Th-th-there's ch-ch-chops, s-s-steak, b-b-bacon and eggs! I'll have l-l-l-liver and onions! Ha! ha! ha! Th-th-three ch-cheers for l-l-l-liver and onions!"

"Be quiet, Marmaduke," said the Able Seaman. "I'll lock you up again, if you ain't careful."

"K-k-k-ker-*choo*!" said Marmaduke, giving a loud sneeze; and rubbed his beak with his foot and fluttered his feathers. "L-l-l-lock me up in the a-a-after hold, till I g-g-g-get all over this d-d-d-dreadful cold! Th-th-three ch-cheers for hay f-f-f-fever! K-k-k-ker-*choo*!"

"I'll lock you up in the after hold, if you don't quit being so fresh and bold; I'll learn you manners before I'm through, and if ever I hear one little—"

"Ker-*choo*!" said Marmaduke, finishing Mr. Mizzen's sentence for him very neatly.

Everyone laughed, except the Able Seaman.

"All right," said he, "just wait till I've had my chow, I'll attend to you proper; now off with you—now!" And he tossed Master Marmaduke off his wrist up into the air. The parrot lit on a spar overhead, just under a sail, and peered down at the company without the least appearance of embarrassment.

"If there's b-b-b-bacon and eggs," he cried, "I'll take l-l-l-liver! Th-th-three ch-ch-cheers for l-l-l-liver!"



"L-l-lem!" shrieked the parrot. "Who's your f-f-f-friends?"

Freddie burst into a merry laugh, and all his friends joined; all except Mr. Punch, who looked puzzled.

"'Ow could 'e 'ave liver," said he, "hif there was only bycon an' heggs?"

At this everyone laughed louder than before, and Mr.

Punch was completely perplexed.

"I'll explain that to you some day," said Toby. "Didn't you never hear a joke?"

"Ho, yes," said Mr. Punch. "Hi 'eard a wery good joke once; a wery good one indeed. Hi'll relate it to you. When I was a lad—"

"There's the breakfast bell," said Mr. Mizzen. "Sorry to interrupt, but we mustn't let it get cold. We'll hold the election afterwards."

No one waited to hear Mr. Punch's joke. The Able Seaman led the way, and all the others followed him down the deck, towards a kind of three-sided box which opened on a stairway below.

In a moment or two they found themselves in the dining-saloon, and in another moment they were seated about a round table, set for breakfast. The passengers insisted on the Able Seaman's sitting down with them, and he consented to do so.

A lad of about eighteen entered, to wait on the table. He had a shock of bright red hair, and a kind of frightened look in his eyes, as if he were afraid he would do everything wrong, and would always be in hot water about it. He stood behind the Able Seaman's chair, and began to make a queer contortion of the face, in an effort to speak.

"Th-th-th-there's—" he began.

"Skipper first," interrupted Mr. Mizzen, nodding towards Freddie.

The Cabin-boy (for that was what he was) went to Freddie's chair, and began to speak again, with the same contortion of the face.

"Th-th-th-there's ch-ch-chops, s-s-s-steak, b-b-b-bacon and eggs," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Freddie.

The Cabin-boy stared in bewilderment, and began again.

"Th-th-th-there's ch-ch-chops, s-s-s-steak, b-b-b-bacon and eggs," said he.

"Yes, sir," said Freddie, much embarrassed.

"I don't blame you, skipper," said the Able Seaman. "I would too, if I hadn't eaten for two days. Next!"

The Cabin-boy stood behind Aunt Amanda's chair, and began:

"Th-th-th-there's ch-ch-chops, s-s-s-steak, b-b-b-bacon and—Ker-*choo*!" He gave a hearty sneeze, and pulled out his pocket-handkerchief; so he had to begin all over again:

"Th-th-th-there's ch-ch-chops, s-s-s-s-s—"

"Chops, thank you," said Aunt Amanda.

The Cabin-boy took his stand behind Toby's chair, and began:

"There's—there's—th-th-th-th—Ker-*choo*! Th-th-there's ch-ch-ch-chops, s-s-s-s-s—"

"Chops and steak," said Toby.

The Cabin-boy stood behind each of the other chairs in turn, and repeated each time his entire list. Everybody gave a different order, and the boy became so bewildered at last that he wiped his forehead with his pocket-handkerchief, brushed a

tear from his eye, and when he had taken the last order dashed out of the door with a kind of sob.

As soon as he was gone, sounds came through the door by which he had left, as if a dreadful row was going on in the next room.

"Frightful temper, that cook," said the Able Seaman, "but the boy certainly does get on his nerves."

In a short time the Cabin-boy came in with four plates at once, and as he reached Freddie's chair the ship gave a deep lurch downward, and the four plates shot out of his arms across the room, showering the floor with chops, steak, bacon and eggs.

The boy gave a wild cry and burst into tears, and fled through the door. From the next room came the sound of a row more violent than before.

"Never mind," said Mr. Mizzen, "he'll be back."

He came back presently, his eyes very red, and stumbling in and out managed to put down before each one a plate. Every plate contained chops, steak, bacon and eggs.

"Now," said Mr. Mizzen, when the breakfast was over, "we'll go up and hold the election."

When they came on deck, they were astonished to see a considerable number of men in blue overalls, who were sitting on the deck in a group. As the passengers approached, they stood up respectfully, and one of them said something privately to Mr. Mizzen.

"They've held the election already," said the Able Seaman, turning to the passengers. "There's three

dozen of 'em, and they've elected the captains and mates for the voyage; thirteen captains and twenty-three mates. They went right ahead without waiting for me, so I'm the only Able Seaman left on the ship."

"What!" said Aunt Amanda. "Do you mean to tell me —?"

"It's all right, madam," said Mr. Mizzen in an undertone. "You see, they're all free and equal, and everything goes by voting. They won't have it any other way. It's lucky they didn't all want to be captains. It's all right, anyway, because there's none of 'em knows anything about navigation, and I'm the only one on board that *does* know; so it comes to the same thing as if they had elected *me* captain. But of course *they* don't think of that. Not a word. I'll send 'em about their business now, as soon as they've put on their uniforms."

"Well!" said Aunt Amanda, gasping. "I never in my life—!"

The thirteen captains and the twenty-three mates disappeared from the deck in a hurry, and in a very few minutes reappeared. Each one of them wore, in place of his blue overalls, a smart blue suit with brass buttons and gold braid, and a jaunty blue cap with gold braid around it; the mates having only nine instead of ten rows of braid around their sleeves.

The Able Seaman led them aside, and after a few words with them returned to his passengers.

"Everything's settled," said he. "Some of them are going below with their dippers, and the rest of them are to look after handling the ship. The navigation is

left to me. We'll get along fine now, provided the leaks don't get any worse."

Freddie wandered off by himself, to inspect the ship. He could walk very well now, in spite of the roll of the ship, and he went everywhere. He found himself finally on the after deck, leaning over the rail and watching the wake of the ship boiling away so white and beautiful behind. He was more and more delighted with this strange adventure. It was too bad that Mr. Toby had forgotten to write the note to his mother, but it couldn't be helped now, and they would sometime find a place somewhere or other where they could post a letter. It was so entrancing to be actually at sea on a ship, with the deck rising and falling, and the wake boiling away behind, and land nowhere in sight, that it would seem a pity ever to arrive at the Spanish Main; but the thought of adventures there—! However, he was in no hurry to have the voyage over.

Aunt Amanda was sitting somewhere with a pile of sailors' socks in her lap, perfectly contented. Mr. Hanlon was swinging his feet away up yonder from the topmost yard of the second mast. The Churchwarden, Mr. Punch, Toby, and the Sly Old Fox were engaged in an earnest discussion in chairs beside the deck-house. The Old Codger with the Wooden Leg was speaking confidentially in the ear of the twenty-first mate, in an effort to borrow a pipeful of tobacco.

Suddenly Freddie heard behind him the loud harsh laughter of Marmaduke the parrot. Turning round, he saw the parrot perched on the ship's rail, and before him was the Cabin-boy, shaking his finger in the parrot's face, and storming away at him angrily.

Freddie immediately went over to them.

"I w-w-w-won't s-s-s-s-stand it no l-l-l-l-longer!" the Cabin-boy was bawling, his face nearly as red as his hair. "I w-w-w-won't! W-w-w-what do you m-m-m-mean by m-m-m-mocking me all the t-t-t-ime?"

"Who? M-m-m-m-m-me?" said the parrot.

"Y-y-y-yaas, y-y-y-you!" cried the Cabin-boy. "Just because I s-s-s-s-s-stutter, do you—do you—do you have to—have to—s-s-s-s-stut-stutter too?"

"M-m-m-m-me? You're entirely m-m-m-m-mistaken. You're the one that s-s-s-stut-s-s-s-stutters."

"Ain't you always s-s-saying—saying—ch-ch-chops, s-s-s-steak, b-b-b-b-bacon and eggs? Ain't you? You've got to k-k-k-k-quit—r-r-right *now*, d'you *hear*? I w-w-w-won't s-s-s-stand it no l-l-l-l-longer, and you b-b-b-better b-b-b-believe it!"

"Highty-tighty! Sixty, ninety! Uncle Sam! Pop pop! Th-th-there's ch-ch-chops, s-s-s-steak, b-b-b-bacon and eggs! Th-th-three ch-ch-cheers for l-l-l-liver and onions!"

The poor Cabin-boy burst out crying.

"All ri-i-i-ight," he sobbed, stamping his foot. "All ri-i-i-ight. I c-c-can't help it—if—I do s-s-stutter. But there ain't no p-p-p-p-parrot going to m-m-m-m-mock me, M-m-m-m-mizzen nor no M-m-m-m-mizzen. I'll wring—your—bla-a-a-asted—neck first, you ornery—l-l-l-little—varmint, you s-s-s-see if I—see if I—d-d-d-don't!"

"Marmaduke's my name!" shrieked the parrot. "Please to note the same! Pop, pop, pop! I'll have l-l-l-liver and onions, l-l-l-l-liver and onions, l-l-l-l-liver and

onions, pop, pop, pop!"

The Cabin-boy, shaking with sobs, raised his hand threateningly.

"D-d-d-d-don't you d-d-d-dare t-t-t-to—Ker-*choo*!" He sneezed, and out came his handkerchief.

"Ker-*choo*!" sneezed the parrot, and rubbed his beak with his foot.

This was the last straw. The Cabin-boy reached for Marmaduke's neck, and would surely have choked him then and there, if Freddie had not caught his arm and pulled him away.

The Cabin-boy allowed himself to be led off, and Freddie drew him along towards the companion-way.

"Come along down to my room," said Freddie.

"All r-r-right," said the Cabin-boy, wiping his eyes and sniffling. "I'll c-c-c-come, b-b-b-but there's going to be trouble—trouble—on this sh-sh-sh-ship along o' that p-p-p-parrot before this—before this v-v-v-voyage—is over, you m-m-m-mark m-m-m-m-my w-w-w-w-words!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE CABIN-BOY'S REVENGE

It was a soft moonlight night in southern seas. Our

party of adventurers, with Mr. Mizzen in their midst, were sitting quietly on the after part of the deck, enjoying the balmy air and watching the bright track which the full moon made on the water. The sea was very calm. There was only a light breeze, and The Sieve was hardly moving.

Mr. Mizzen was scratching the head of Marmaduke the parrot, who was perched on the Able Seaman's wrist. From the forward part of the deck, where the skippers and mates were sitting in a party of their own, could be heard the tinkle of a guitar and the sound of a voice singing.

"One always enjoys," said Mr. Punch, "a bit of singing by moonlight on the water. Hi remember when I was a lad—"

"Why don't you sing for us yourself?" said Toby.

"Oh, do!" cried several of the others.

Mr. Punch looked down at the deck bashfully. "Hi should be wery glad to oblige," said he, "but I 'ave a slight cold, and besides, Hi only know one song."

"What is the name of it?" said Aunt Amanda.

"Kathleen Mavourneen," said Mr. Punch.

"That's a very good song," said Aunt Amanda. "Sing it."

"Wait a minute," said Mr. Mizzen, "and I'll get the guitar. I can play it."

While he was gone, and while the others were talking, Freddie felt a hand on his arm, and looking down saw the Cabin-boy sitting on the deck beside his chair, and winking up at him with a strange

excited look on his face. The Cabin-boy pulled Freddie's head down, and whispered in his ear.

"S-s-s-sh! K-k-keep your eyes o-o-ope-open! Something's going to happen to-to-tonight! You'll see! Down with M-m-mizzen and M-m-marmaduke!"

Freddie gazed at the Cabin-boy in some alarm, and was about to ask a question, when Mr. Mizzen returned with the guitar.

"Now we're ready," said he, taking his seat and putting Marmaduke on the rail of the ship. "Here's the chord. All right, Mr. Punch."

"Hi really 'ave such a cold—" said Mr. Punch.

"That's understood," said Toby. "Now then, strike up."

Mr. Punch cleared his throat very loud, and coughed once or twice, and began to sing:

"Kathleen Mavourneen, the gr'y dorn is
bryking,
The 'orn of the 'unter is 'eard on the 'ill."

"Ha! ha! ha! ha!" roared Toby. "The 'orn of the 'unter! Blamed if I ever hear the like of that before! My stars! What's the matter, Mr. Punch, can't you put in a little 'h' now and then? The 'orn of the 'unter! Oh my stars! Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

Mr. Punch was deeply offended. "Hit is quite sufficient," said he. "Hi shall sing no more." And nothing that anybody could say could induce him to go on.

"Toby Littleback," said Aunt Amanda, "it's just like you, all over. Now you ask Mr. Punch's pardon, right this minute."

Toby apologized, and Mr. Punch said that it was of no consequence whatever; but he would not sing.

"Then I guess you'll have to sing for us yourself, Mizzen," said Toby.

"Right-o," said Mr. Mizzen, thrumming on his guitar. "What'll it be?"

The Cabin-boy sniffed and spoke in an undertone close to Freddie's ear.

"He'll be s-s-singing on the other s-s-side of his f-f-face before this night's o-o-over, you mark m-m-my wo-wo-words!"

"Lady and gentlemen"—began Mr. Mizzen.

"Ker-choo!" sneezed the parrot. "A wet sh-sh-sheet and a f-f-flowing s-s-s-sea! Three cheers f-f-for the—Ker-choo! Three cheers f-f-for hay f-f-fe-fever!"

"Down with b-b-b-both of 'em!" whispered the Cabin-boy fiercely in Freddie's ear.

"Suppose you sing us something about yourself," said Aunt Amanda.

"Ay, ay, ma'am," said Mr. Mizzen; and after playing a few chords and quivers on the guitar, he began to sing, in a voice like a fog-horn muffled by a heavy fog, the following song concerning the

LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF L. MIZZEN

"When I was a lad I was bad as I could be,
Wouldn't say 'Thank you' nor 'Please,' not
me,
And at church I wouldn't kneel but only

on one knee,
And at school I wouldn't study my A B C,
And I couldn't conscientious with the
Golden Rule agree,
Nor understand the secret of its
popularitee,
Nor get a ounce of pleasure from the Rule
of Three,—
I was bad right through; sweared 'hully
gee,'
And worse sometimes, like 'jiminee;'
Scrawled with a pencil on my jographee,

Stole birds' eggs in the huckleberry tree,—
Oh, I was bad; tried to learn a flea
How to keep his balance on a rolling pea,
—
Oh, regular bad; and my ma, said she,
'If you don't be better than what you be,
I'll put you in the cupboard and turn the
key.'
But I wouldn't and I wouldn't, no sirree,

So I ran away to sea;
Yes, I ran away to sea;

With a little gingham, bottle of cambric
tea,
And a penny wrapped up in my
hankerchee,

For I wanted to be free,
So I ran away to sea."

Mr. Mizzen stopped, and looked towards the stern of the ship. "I thought," said he, "I kind of noticed something queer about the stern rail; looked as if it

was lower. But I guess I'm mistaken."

Everyone looked, but saw nothing amiss. The Cabin-boy tittered into Freddie's ear.

"Would you like to hear the second verse?" said the Able Seaman.

"Yes, yes! Go on!" said several voices at once.

"Here goes, then," said Mr. Mizzen, thrumming on the guitar. "After I ran away to sea, I had a good many adventures, and some of 'em—anyway—

"When I was young I followed the Equator
From Pole to Pole in the ship
Perambulator,
A four-wheeled schooner, a smoky old
freighter,
Loaded with sulphur for an old dead
crater
In the Andes Mountains, and a night or
two later
With a three-knot gale blowing loud
and rude
As the dark grows darker and the
gale increases

Of a sudden we strike and we
goes all to pieces
On the forty-seventh parallel of
latitude.
And then and there we formed a
committee
And went in a body up to London City
And walked up the steps and pulled
the little bell,
And spoke out bold to the Lords of

Creation
Where they sat in their wigs making rules
of navigation,
And explained to 'em the dangers of
the Deadly Parallel.
'Take 'em down and pull 'em in,'
That's the way we did begin:
"Tisn't leaks nor 'tisn't whiskey
Makes the sailor's life so risky,
It's the parallel as lies acrost our track.
It's the Deadly Parallel, lying there so long
and black,
Is the subject of our moderate
petition;
'Tisn't much that we are wishin',
But we humbly beg permission
To
implore,
—
Coil 'em up, we implore, where they won't
be in the way,
Out of sight, safe ashore, we humbly pray;
For there's many a tidy bark
Strikes against 'em in the dark
And is never never heard of any more.
So we'll thank you heartilee
If so very kind you'll be
And remove this awful danger from the
sea.'
But we couldn't make 'em do it;
No, they simply wouldn't do it;
And the bailiff shoved us gently from the
door.
And we wept uncommon salty,

For their reason did seem faulty,

Any way that we could view it:
And the reason which they gave us
Why they really couldn't save us
Was because the thing had ne'er been done before;
No, such a thing had ne'er been done before."

Mr. Mizzen stopped again, and looked along the deck and up at the masts, and said, "I can't get it out of my head that the deck is slanting a little more than usual; the ship doesn't seem to come up well at the stern. However,—would you like to hear any more of this song?"

Everybody begged him to go on.

The Cabin-boy plucked Freddie's sleeve. "I've done it. You'll s-s-s-see! Won't that M-m-marmaduke and that M-m-m-mizzen sing another tune when they f-f-f-find out?" Freddie looked at him in amazement; but the Able Seaman was commencing the third verse of his song:

"When I was older, and bold as you please,
I shipped on the good ship Firkin of Cheese,
For a v'yage of discovery in the far South Seas,
To gather up a cargo of ambergris
That grows in a cave on the amber trees
Where the medicine men, all fine M.D.'s,
For the sake of the usual medical fees,
Crawl in by night on their hands and knees
In a strictly ethical manner to seize

The amber fruit that is used to grease
The itching palm in Shekel's Disease,—
On a long long v'yage, as busy as bees,
Never stopping for a moment to take our ease,
Never changing our course, except when the breeze
Took to blowing to windward,—we had slipped by degrees

Down the oozy slopes of the Hebrides,
And passed through the locks of the Florida Keys,
Which in getting through was a rather tight squeeze,
But danger is nothing to men like these,
When suddenly the lookout, a Portuguese
Who had better been below a-shelling peas,
Shrieked out, 'They are coming! By twos and threes!
On the starboard bow! We are lost!—"

"We're lost! we're lost! we're lost!" came a terrible cry from the forward part of the ship, as if in echo of Mr. Mizzen's song. "We're lost! The dippers! The dippers!"

Everyone jumped up, even Aunt Amanda. The Cabin-boy whispered in Freddie's ear, in great excitement, "N-n-n-now you'll s-see!"

A man came running down the deck, followed by all the skippers and mates. As he halted before Mr. Mizzen, he was evidently the Cook, by the white cook's cap he wore on his head. He took off his cap and wiped his forehead with his hand. He was in a state of mixed alarm and anger.

"We're lost!" he cried, and actually tore his hair with his hands. "It's that rascally Cabin-boy! The dippers is gone! Every last one of them! And the ship leakin' by the barrelful! Let me get at that boy once, and I'll learn him! Fryin' on a slow fire would be too good for him! Swore he'd get even, he did, and now he's gone and done it! Stole all the dippers—he's the one that done it, you can bet your last biscuit! There ain't a dipper left in the ship, and the water pourin' in by the barrelful! I just found it out, while them lazy skippers and mates was lying around doing nothing! Gimme one sea-cook for all the skippers on the ocean, that's what I say! Every last dipper gone! gone! We're lost!"

Everyone looked around for the Cabin-boy. He was nowhere to be seen, but his laugh was heard overhead, and his face was then seen looking down from the rigging just above.

"I've d-d-d-done it," he cried, shrieking with laughter. "I'm even with you n-n-n-n-now! M-m-m-m-mizzen he l-l-l-learned the parrot to m-m-m-mock me, he did, and Cook he b-b-b-basted me in the g-g-g-galley all the t-t-t-t-time, and now I'm e-e-e-even with all of 'em. They ain't g-g-g-going to t-t-t-torment me no m-m-m-m-more! I stole the dippers and th-th-th-threw 'em overboard, every last one of 'em, and n-n-n-now you're g-g-g-going to s-s-sink, sink, si-i-*ink*, d-d-d-down, down, d-d-d-*down*, to the bottom of the—bottom of the s-s-s-*sea*!"

He laughed louder than before, and the angry Cook sprang forward to climb up after him, but just then the ship gave a violent lurch backwards, nearly upsetting everyone, and settled down by the stern, so that that end of the boat was completely under

water.

Aunt Amanda screamed. Toby and Mr. Punch came to her at once and supported her on each side. There was a great hubbub. Everyone tried to speak at once. Freddie felt his hand grasped in the strong hand of Mr. Toby, and he began to feel somewhat less afraid. Over the hubbub could be heard the Cabin-boy's wild laugh.

"Everybody quiet!" shouted Mr. Mizzen. "We must think what we had better do."

"Yes, yes," cried a number of voices. "What are we going to do?"

"I wish," said Mr. Mizzen, thoughtfully, "I wish we had thought to bring a rowboat with us."

"What!" cried Aunt Amanda. "Do you mean to tell me that you came away on this long journey without an extra boat?"

"We didn't think of it," said Mr. Mizzen. "We had plenty of dippers, and we never thought of anybody's throwing them overboard."

"No! no!" cried all the skippers and mates together. "We never thought of that!"

"Then bring out the life-preservers at once!" said Aunt Amanda. "And be quick about it!"

"We haven't any," said Mr. Mizzen. "What would have been the use of life-preservers if the dippers were all on board? We never thought we would need them."

"No! no!" cried all the skippers and mates together. "We never thought of that!"

"Then think of something now," said Aunt Amanda. "Don't you see the ship's settling deeper in the water?"

The ship was in fact deeper in the water. It was sinking rapidly. The deck began to list so much towards the stern that it was difficult to stand on it. The ship was making no headway whatever. The breeze was even lighter than before, and the sails were hanging limp. It would have taken a stiff wind indeed to have moved that water-logged boat; and it lay as if moored to a float, going up and down heavily in the long swell.

"Do you—er—think," said the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg, "that we are in—er—danger?"

"Danger!" cried Aunt Amanda. "Something must be done! Are you going to let us drown without turning a hand?"

"There's only one thing to do," said Mr. Mizzen, "and I don't know whether it will work or not; but we can try it. Boys, bring up all the mattresses from the cabins, and a coil of rope! Look alive, now!"

The skippers and mates ran off in great haste and disappeared down the hatchways. In a few minutes they had laid on the deck a great pile of mattresses. While this was being done, Aunt Amanda, whose bonnet and shawl had been brought to her by one of the men, tied her bonnet-strings under her chin and put her shawl about her shoulders, in readiness for departure.

"Now then," said Mr. Mizzen, "lash the mattresses together."

The men proved themselves very handy with ropes.

With Mr. Mizzen's help, they lashed together securely a good number of the mattresses, and the first result of their work was a mattress raft some fifteen feet square, and some four or five feet thick. A supply of oil-cloth was found in the store-room, and this was bound by ropes all over and under and around the raft.

"I don't know whether it will do," said Mr. Mizzen, "but anyway there's nothing else that *will* do. Now, lads, over the side with her!"

All the men lent a hand, and the mattress raft was hoisted over the side and on to the water. To the satisfaction of everyone, it floated there quietly and easily, with its top well above the surface of the sea.

"Lucky it's a smooth sea," said Mr. Mizzen. "We ought to be pleased with the state of the weather; couldn't be better; I feel quite joyful about it."

"Oh, you do," said Aunt Amanda. "Well, I don't feel joyful about it. What next?"

"Put the provisions aboard," said the Able Seaman; whereupon some of the men placed on the raft a small barrel of water and some tins of meat, soup, biscuit, and other things.

"If you please," said Mr. Mizzen, when this had been done, "I think the passengers had better get aboard. When you're aboard, we'll make another raft for ourselves. Are you ready?"

The passengers were helped aboard the raft, one after another. Although the raft bobbed up and down on the swell, it was not a difficult matter for the men and the boy to get on, for it was held fast against the side of the ship at a point where it was about even

with the deck-rail. Freddie gave a good spring, and was on in no time; Mr. Hanlon, who did not seem in the least uneasy, got aboard with the agility of a cat; there was no trouble with anyone except Aunt Amanda, whose lameness impeded her movements a good deal.

As the Sly Old Fox, with his high silk hat on his head, was about to step over the side, he turned and said:

"I feel it my duty, Mr. Mizzen, to register a complaint against the outrageous treatment to which we are being subjected. I submit under protest, sir; under protest. If I had for one moment imagined—"

"Oh bosh," said Toby. "Push him over, Mizzen." And the Sly Old Fox was in fact somewhat rudely pushed over on to the raft.

None of the others made any objection. Mr. Punch, who usually talked a good deal, was noticeably silent; and when Toby offered him a hand to help him over, he said stiffly:

"Hi thank you sir, but I do not require any hassistance."

When the Churchwarden took his seat in the middle of the raft, it went down alarmingly; but nothing happened, and when the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg was aboard, the party was complete. All the others sat around the Churchwarden, as close as they could huddle. It was evident that the raft would float them, at least until it should become water-logged, or a gale of wind should blow. The men on the ship now let go of the raft, and proceeded to lash together the remaining mattresses for themselves.

The raft floated quietly away from the ship.

Aunt Amanda's arm was about Freddie. He did not feel, however, that he needed her protection. He had already forgotten his first alarm, and he was feeling most of all what an extraordinary adventure it was that had befallen him; the men from the ship would be nearby on the other rafts, the sea was calm, the air was warm, and they would probably be picked up by some vessel before the food gave out. He supposed there were very few boys who had ever sailed the open sea on a mattress.

"Well, Freddie," said Mr. Toby, as the raft continued to float slowly away from the ship, "what do you think of this, eh? Have you got the map of Correction Island with you?"

"Yes, sir, I have. It's in my pocket."

"Good! Don't lose it. We may get to the Island after all, some day; you never can tell. By the way, Warden, have you got your Odour of Sanctity?"

"Safe in my pocket," said the Churchwarden. "What about you? Have you got the Chinaman's head?"

"What? Me? The Chinaman's head? Oh merciful fathers! I clean forgot it!" cried Toby. "Blamed if I didn't leave it in my room on the ship! Never thought about it once! If that don't beat all! What'll we do? We can't get back! We're floating away! Great jumping Joan! What'll we do?"

"Well!" gasped Aunt Amanda. "Won't you never get a head on your shoulders, you Toby Littleback? Can't you never remember anything? I declare, Toby Littleback, you are the most addlepated, exasperating,—Oh dear, we'd better hail the ship,

quick!"

The party on the raft set up a loud cry, which was answered from the ship.

"The Chinaman's head!" shouted Toby. "On the dresser in my cabin! I forgot it! Run and get it! Quick! We're floating away!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" came a voice from the ship.

The company on the raft waited anxiously. In a very few moments, which seemed like a great many, a hail came from the side of the ship, and they could see the Cabin-boy standing at a point of the deck where it was now sloped high out of the water, and he was holding the Chinaman's head aloft in both hands, as if about to throw it towards the raft.

"Don't throw it!" shouted Toby. "Tie a rope to it first!"

But he was too late. The Cabin-boy raised the Chinaman's head higher, swinging his body sideways, and as a dark figure came up behind him and tried to seize his arm, he gave a mighty heave and toss, and sent the Chinaman's head flying through the air in the direction of the raft.

For a second it glistened in the moonlight. In another second it descended towards the raft, and almost reached it; but not quite; it came down within five feet of it, and fell like a shot plump into the ocean. It splashed, and that was all. The Chinaman's head was gone.

A wail went up from the company on the raft at this terrible disaster. How terrible it really was they did not even yet understand, but they were soon to learn. Freddie was almost ready to burst into tears.

Aunt Amanda was so exasperated that she could scarcely speak. The others seemed to be stupefied.

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried Aunt Amanda. "You Toby, you! Now you've done it for good. Why, why, *why* can't you never remember anything? It's your fault, and don't you never try to lay it to that Cabin-boy! And now what'll we do if we ever get separated from Mr. Mizzen? How'll we ever call him up to help us out of trouble if we get into it? Here's a pretty kettle of fish, now ain't it? I hope and pray we can stick close to Mr. Mizzen until we're all safe and—"

"Look there!" cried Mr. Punch. "Bless me heyes, what do I see? Look at the ship!"

It was high time to look at the ship. No sooner had the Chinaman's head disappeared into the depths of the ocean, than a change began to come over the ship. It grew paler and thinner in the moonlight. The green shutters along the side faded away one by one. The dark hull became lighter; the sails grew so thin that at last the watchers could see the stars shining through them. The whole ship seemed to waver and dissolve into a pale mist. It did not sink; no, the bow was still high out of the water, and all the masts and sails were visible. It simply faded away where it stood.

As it was becoming more and more vague, the voice of Marmaduke the parrot came across the water out of the rigging; a far-away voice, which grew fainter and fainter as the ship grew dimmer, until it died away as if in the distance.

"Th-th-th-three ch-ch-cheers!" it said. "Th-th-th-three ch-ch-cheers for l-l-l-l-liver and onions—th-th-three ch-ch-cheers—l-l-l-liver—and—"

As Marmaduke's voice died away, the ship dissolved like a pale ghost and vanished. The Sieve was gone.

The party of adventurers sat on their mattress raft in the midst of the wide ocean, with never a ship to be seen; the long sea-swell rolled placidly over the place where their ship had been. They sat huddled together in silence around the Churchwarden, too horrified to speak a word.

The moon glistened on the Sly Old Codger's high silk hat.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CRUISE OF THE MATTRESSES

"I wish," said Aunt Amanda, "that I had brought some sewing with me. I don't suppose I could sew very well by moonlight on a mattress in the middle of the ocean, but I don't believe this would have happened if I'd had my sewing with me."

"Hi carn't see 'ow that would 'ave—" began Mr. Punch.

"Now look here," said Toby. "We've got to sit in the middle of this here raft, or else she'll tilt over. Why don't you sit in the middle, Warden?"

"I *am* sitting in the middle," said the Churchwarden. "I wonder what the Vestry would say if they could—"

"I wish it distinctly understood," said the Sly Old Fox, "that I am here under protest. If I had for one moment imagined—"

"Now listen to me," said Aunt Amanda. "There's got to be a captain of this expedition, and as there's nobody here but a lot of helpless men-creatures, I suppose I've got to be the captain myself. All those in favor say aye. I'm elected. That's done. Warden, sit a little bit over to the right."

"Ay, ay, sir; ay, ay, ma'am; certainly," said the Warden.

"Now everybody sit up close to the Warden," said Aunt Amanda. "There. Is the raft balanced now?"

"Ay, ay, sir," said the Churchwarden. "I mean, ay, ay, ma'am."

"Then my orders as captain is, to sit still and see what's going to happen."

Nothing happened. Freddie grew sleepy, and leaned his head against Aunt Amanda's shoulder. As he was falling off to sleep, a slim dark object rose from the sea near by and whirred across the ocean and plopped into the water.

"Bless me heyes," said Mr. Punch, "hit's a flying-fish, as ever was."

"Is it, really?" said Freddie. "Did he really fly?"

"How wonderful is nature!" said the Sly Old Codger. "Such an opportunity to improve the mind! My little friend, I trust you will profit by what you have seen. It is very educational; very educational indeed."

"Ahem!" said the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg.

"What do you suppose—er—ahem!—if you will pardon me—what are those little things sparkling out there on the surface of the water?"

"Hit's a school of sardines!" said Mr. Punch. "Hi know them wery well; when I was a lad—"

"There must be millions of them," said Freddie. "Just look!"

The tiny fish were leaping by thousands on the surface of the water, immediately in the path of moonlight; and they flashed and sparkled as they leaped.

"Hi believe there's a great fish arfter them," said Mr. Punch.

"Maybe a whole regiment of big fish," said Toby. "By crackey, there's one now!"

As he spoke, a black fin cut the water near the sardines, and they became more agitated than ever; from the size of the fin, it must have been a very great fish indeed; and along the upper edge of the fin was a row of long sharp saw-teeth, looking big and strong enough to have sawed through a wooden plank.

"There's another one!" cried Freddie.

"And another! and another!" cried Aunt Amanda.

There must have been five or six of the great fish.

"I hope they won't come near this boat," said Toby. "One of 'em would just about turn us upside down if he struck us."

"Mercy!" said Aunt Amanda. "Don't say such a

terrible thing."

At that moment a great round black back appeared above the surface of the water, some hundred yards or so away, and in another moment a great black blunt head joined itself to the back, and a spout of white vapor rose from the head.

"A whale!" cried several voices at once.

"Oh!" said Aunt Amanda. "Suppose he should come this way?"

The five or six fins of the great fish near the sardines now disappeared. The whale threw up his enormous tail, and went down head first beneath the water. Almost immediately, one of the saw-toothed fins reappeared, much nearer the raft than before.

"Merciful heavens!" cried Aunt Amanda. "He's coming towards us! Oh dear!"

The great fish was in fact evidently making straight towards the raft. Freddie clutched Aunt Amanda's arm. The fin cut the water at a high speed; it disappeared at times, but on each reappearance it was still pointed towards the raft.

"He's nearly on us!" cried Aunt Amanda. "Hold on tight, Freddie!"

The great fish came on with a rush, and as he reached the raft struck it with his back and slid under it. There was a tremendous bump, which nearly sent the company flat; then there was a rubbing under the raft, and everything was quiet again.

"He's gone," said Toby.

"No, 'e isn't," said Mr. Punch. "Look at 'is tail!"

A great tail could be seen beyond the edge of the raft, just below the surface of the water. It thrashed about and churned up the water violently for a few seconds, and then waved back and forth quietly; but it did not disappear.

"By crackey," said Toby, "he's stuck! His fin has got stuck into the bottom of the raft! He's got the whole kit and bilin' of us on his back!"

"Mercy on us!" said Aunt Amanda.

"Is it really true?" said Freddie.

"On due consideration," said the Churchwarden, "I think Toby's right."

"Hi believe 'e is!" said Mr. Punch. "Blimy if I ever rode on the back of a fish before! Now 'e's got us on 'is back, what's 'e going to do with us?"

"We're moving!" cried Freddie.

"So we are!" said Aunt Amanda.

"Blamed if we ain't," said Toby.

The mattress craft was in fact moving; very slowly, indeed, but still moving; and it was moving in the opposite direction to the fish's tail, which could be seen now and then under the water, waving back and forth like the tail of a swimming fish.

"If this don't beat all," said Toby. "That fish down there has certainly got his fin hooked into our mattress, and he's swimming along with us on top of him. I've seen a snail crawlin' with his shell on top of him, but a fish with a load of mattresses and live-

stock is a new thing to me!"

"I'm the captain," said Aunt Amanda, "and my orders is to sit as still as you can and see where he's taking us to."

"Ay, ay, sir," said the Churchwarden. "I mean, ay, ay, ma'am."

The party huddled on top of the mattresses sat as still as mice, hardly daring to breathe. Their little craft continued to move gently through the water. They expected each moment that the fish would free himself, but evidently his fin had embedded itself so firmly in one of the bottom mattresses that he could not get loose; he went on swimming with his load on his back.

Hour after hour they waited to feel their craft stop; but hour after hour it moved gently and slowly across the surface of the sea. They settled themselves more comfortably against each other, and spoke very little. No one noticed that their raft was now much lower in the water.

The air was warm, the moonlight and the silence were extremely soothing, and the motion of the raft was gentle and languorous. Freddie's head sank against Aunt Amanda's shoulder, and his eyes closed; and in another moment he was asleep. Aunt Amanda herself nodded, and her eyes closed; she was asleep too. Toby yawned, and leaned heavily against the Sly Old Codger; his eyes closed, and—in short, every eye closed, and every frame relaxed heavily against its neighbor, and at last, doubled over in a closely huddled group in the exact center of their mattresses, the whole party slept; each and every one.

The raft went on steadily and quietly through the water, the moon glittered on the sea, the raft settled deeper and deeper, and there was absolute silence on the ocean, except for a slight groan which came regularly and gently from the nose of the Churchwarden.

CHAPTER XV

A FALL IN THE DARK

Freddie was the first to be awake in the morning. He was cramped and stiff. He sat up straight, rubbed his eyes, and stretched his arms. He looked abroad, and the sight which met him caused him to grasp Aunt Amanda's hand in excitement.

"Land!" he cried, so loud that everyone awoke.

"Blamed if it ain't," said Toby, and put on his white derby hat, considering that he had thereby dressed himself for the day.

All the others sat bolt upright, and stared across the smooth blue sea, sparkling in the sunlight.

Not more than a quarter of a mile away rose a tall black cliff straight up out of the water. It stretched away on either hand for miles and miles, and came to an end in the ocean at the right hand and the left, so that it was probably the side of an island. The sea rolled up and down at the foot of the cliff, making a

beautiful white splash against the rocks.

"But how on earth," said Aunt Amanda, "are we ever to get ashore on such a place as that?"

"We're moving towards it," said Freddie.

"Blamed if we ain't," said Toby. "We'll soon know whether we can get ashore or not."

They moved very slowly, and it was a long time before they came close enough to the cliff to see what their chances of a landing might be. They floated at last within two or three hundred yards of the cliff. It was very dangerous looking; the waves rolled over huge black rocks at its foot and broke in white foam against its side; it seemed the last place in the world for a landing.

A great swell rolled in from the sea and brought them nearer the breakers.

"My word!" cried Mr. Punch, excitedly. "There's a harch!"

"A what?" said Toby.

"See!" said Aunt Amanda. "There's a little archway in the rock, like the mouth of a cave, over there to the right! Don't you see? With the water pouring in! Over there!"

It was true. There was an archway, like the mouth of a cave; and into this the water was streaming in a strong current, making a kind of passage-way, more or less smooth, through the breakers.

"Yes!" said Freddie. "And I believe we're headed towards it!"

Their course changed a little to the right, as if the fish who was piloting them had now taken a correct bearing. They found themselves in a passage through the breakers where the water swirled in towards the arch. They were caught in this current and were swept to a point close under the towering black rocks, and in another moment they were directly before the opening. The current seized the raft as if with strong hands and drew it in.

They were in a cavern, narrow and high, whose interior was lost in darkness. The current carried them onward into the dark. The roar of the breakers suddenly ceased, and as they looked behind them the archway was no more than a speck of light. Their raft turned slightly to the left, and at that moment the speck of light disappeared, as if they had turned a corner; and the darkness became so black that no one could see even the person sitting next to him.

"I wonder," said Toby, "if there are any matches and candles on board this boat. I'm going to see."

He was silent for a while, and it was evident from the tilting of the raft that he had moved his position. Finally he said "Ah!" and a match spluttered and went out in the breeze which was blowing past them; but after it went out there remained a glimmer, and Toby was holding up a lighted candle, and shielding it from the draught with his hand.

"Found 'em in the tin with the biscuits," said Toby.

He held the candle on high so that its little beam searched out the darkness in front and on both sides.

They were in a narrow passage-way. On each side was a wall of solid rock, not ten feet beyond the edge

of the raft. How high the wall was they could not tell, for it was lost in the darkness overhead. They were slipping along a narrow alley-way of water. Toby held the candle higher, and everyone peered into the darkness ahead; but it was impossible to see more than a few yards.

"I wish it distinctly understood," said the Sly Old Codger, "that I am here under—"

"Never mind," said Aunt Amanda, "my orders as captain is, to say nothing and wait and see what will happen."

The raft turned a corner to the right, and slipped on silently in that direction for a long distance, probably for more than a mile. Then the raft turned again, this time to the left; and after about ten minutes longer Toby suddenly said, "S-sh! What's that?" They all listened, and heard afar off a sound as of rushing water, very faint, but unmistakable.

"Er—excuse me," said the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg. "Do you think—ahem!—there is any—er—*danger*?"

"I don't like it," said Aunt Amanda. "I don't think it's safe in here."

"I think we are lower in the water," said Freddie.

"So we are," said Toby. "The water's coming up over the top now, and if we don't get on dry land soon, we'll all be sitting in a puddle."

In spite of its being water-logged and lower in the water, the raft was beginning to go faster, for the current had suddenly become swifter. The wind blew stronger; it swept through the narrow passage-way so

briskly that Toby put his hat over the candle; but he was too late; the light wavered and went out. A groan went up from the company.

"I can hear that rushing sound plainer," said Aunt Amanda.

"Hit's wery like a water-fall," said Mr. Punch.

"I wish it understood," said the Sly Old Fox, "distinctly understood, that I am here under protest. If I had ever for one moment imagined—"

"O-o-oh!" screamed Aunt Amanda. "We're going—faster—o-o-oh!"

She threw her arm around Freddie and held him tight. The current suddenly became swifter; the raft, almost under water, was leaping forward at a frightful speed. Directly ahead of them, growing louder and louder, was the roar of rushing water.

"Hold—on—tight, Freddie!" cried Aunt Amanda.

"We'll all be done for," shouted Toby, "in another—minute, I reckon,—hold—on—tight!"

As Toby said this, the raft almost galloped. The roar of falling water burst on them from close ahead. The raft seemed to rise up and then to sink down. Its nose slanted downward. The roar of falling water was all about them. Aunt Amanda screamed, but no one could hear her. The raft paused and teetered for an instant; then it pointed downward, almost straight, and the whole party, the raft, and the fish under the raft, plunged downward through the darkness on a cascade of tumbling water; down, down, down; the raft shot from under and the passengers shot off; in a twinkling they were going down the water-fall on

their backs. Would they never reach the bottom? There did not seem to be any bottom; but—

In another moment, there were Aunt Amanda and Freddie (her arm still about him) standing on their feet in about twenty-four inches of quiet water on a solid bottom. Dark forms appeared, one after another, beside them, and almost at once all the party were standing together in a group, in about two feet of quiet water, on a solid bottom.

"I fear," said the voice of the Sly Old Codger, "that I have lost my hat."

They could see that they were in a great chamber, whose walls they could make out dimly on each side. They could not see the top of the water-fall, but they could see its lower part very plainly. Through the tumbling water of the fall, near the bottom, sunlight was shining. Behind the water was an opening some six feet high, and as the water fell across this opening the sunlight from without shone through it, making it glow with green and sparkle with white. The water-fall hung over this opening like a curtain.

"Well," said Aunt Amanda, "I'm pretty near drowned, and my clothes are a sight to behold. But I'm the captain of this expedition, and my orders is, that we go ashore."

The water proved to be shallow all about them, and they waded to a strip of dry ground beside the wall which rose at their left as they faced the fall. Aunt Amanda, whose cane was gone, was assisted by Mr. Toby and Mr. Punch.

"Blamed if my hat ain't gone too," said Toby. "She was a good hat, I'll have to say that for her."

The party walked along the edge of the water, and came to the end wall of the chamber, opposite the fall. There lay the wreck of the raft, with the tail of the great fish sticking out from beneath.

"I fear," said the Sly Old Codger, "that the faithful creature has departed this life."

"He's dead as a doornail," said Toby.

"Poor thing," said Aunt Amanda. "Anyway, my orders is to explore this cavern, and see what we can find."

At this end of the cavern the water was slipping away under the wall, and this outlet explained why the water inside remained so shallow. The party commented on it, and then walked along the side wall towards the other end where the fall was. When they were midway along this wall, a cry from Toby, who had left Aunt Amanda to the care of Mr. Punch, startled the others.

"What's this?" he cried. "Look here!"

He was stooping over something, and as the others gathered round, they saw that he was stooping over a pile of small square boxes, standing in several long rows along the wall.

Mr. Hanlon lifted one of the boxes, with a great effort, and shook it. A jingling sound came from within.

"Aha!" said the Sly Old Fox. "That beautiful music! It is the sound, dear friends, the sound of—of Money!"

"Bless my soul!" cried Aunt Amanda. "Is it?"

"My opinion is," said the Churchwarden, "that there is gold in that box."

"Then open it!" said Aunt Amanda.

Mr. Hanlon shook his head. The box was locked tight, and it was bound with iron bands. All the boxes were locked, and they were all bound with iron bands.

"Come along this way," said Toby. "There's something more here."

Further along the wall, leaning against it, was a row of large coffee-sacks, each bound around the mouth by strong twine. One of these sacks Mr. Hanlon quickly opened. He tilted it over and poured out its contents on the ground. The party of onlookers gasped with astonishment.

From the mouth of the bag fell pearl necklaces; diamond rings; ruby rings; emerald rings; all kinds of rings; gold bracelets and chains; silver forks and spoons; gold toothpicks; gold cups; silver vases; and a great variety of other things of the same sort.

It was a moment or two before anyone spoke. Then the Churchwarden said, "It's my opinion that this is pirates' treasure."

"Mercy on us!" said Aunt Amanda. "And they may be in here on us any minute!"

Mr. Hanlon opened others of the bags. Each was filled with rare and costly articles of gold, silver, and precious stones.

"Do you think it's really pirates?" said Freddie, in an awed whisper.

"Not a doubt of it!" said Toby, in a voice much lower than before. "Look at this!"

He pointed to a placard on the wall above the sacks. The light was almost too dim for reading, but the writing on the placard was very large, and Toby, by standing on one of the bags, was able to make it out. He read it aloud.

"Beware! Hands Off! Whoever Shall Touch
it He Shall Die by the Hand of Lingo!
With a Knife in the Throat! Long Live
King James and the Jolly Roger!"

"There a skull and cross-bones under it," said Toby. "Pirates, as sure as you're born."

"We'd better be getting away from here," said Aunt Amanda.

"Better not speak so loud," said Toby. "How are we to ——?"

"S-sh!" said the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg, in a frightened whisper. "Excuse me—look—I saw something under the water-fall. What's that?"

"Stand close back against the wall," whispered Toby, "and don't speak a word."

They crowded back against the wall, alongside of the treasure, and looked towards the water-fall.

A dark object was rising from the shallow water at the foot of the fall. As they watched, another dark object appeared to come through from under the fall and apparently from behind it; and this object rose also from the shallow water near the foot of the fall, and took its place beside the other. One after another, five more of these dark objects came from under the fall and apparently from behind it, and stood upright in the shallow water.

There were now seven in all. They moved in a group towards the shore. Each of them had two legs, and each was muffled from top to toe in a single loose garment with baggy legs; they walked somewhat like a company of bears. They stood on the dry ground, and one of them proceeded to take off the loose garment with which he was muffled, while the others assisted him with evident deference.

First came off a close hood which covered his head, cheeks, and neck. As the watchers by the wall saw his head, they held their breath in terror, and Aunt Amanda clutched Freddie's arm. Around the head was a tight-fitting kerchief, knotted behind; in his ears were great round ear-rings; and gripped between his teeth was a long pointed knife.

Aunt Amanda gave a sign as if she was about to scream, but Toby quickly put his hand over her mouth.

As the man with the ear-rings got himself out of the legs of his loose garment, the party by the wall saw that he was a short and burly man, of a ferocious aspect. In a sash which he wore was stuck on one side a cutlass, and on the other a long pistol. He wore no coat, and his shirt was open at the throat. His arms showed from the elbows down, and they were thick with muscles. His trousers were knee breeches, buckled just below the knee, and he was very bow-legged; his calves were big and knotted.

When his outer covering had been removed, it was plain that he was perfectly dry from head to foot, except for water on his face and hands; and while the others were taking off their coverings, he withdrew with one hand the knife from between his teeth, and with the other hand wiped the water from his eyes

and face. He then stuck the knife in his sash, waved his hands somewhat daintily in the air as if to dry them, took from his breeches pocket a large white handkerchief, completed with this handkerchief the drying of his face and hands, examined his finger-nails carefully, blew on them, and proceeded to polish them delicately with his pocket-handkerchief, at the same time swearing two dreadful oaths, in a low tone of voice, at the six men who were struggling with their coverings. When these had been removed, the six appeared in much the same style of dress as the first, and each bore a cutlass and a pistol; but their clothing was much ruder than his, and they had no ear-rings; instead of sashes they wore leather belts.

"Kerchoo!" rang out a sneeze as sharp as a pistol-shot, from the party by the wall.

"Dear me," said the Sly Old Codger, out loud, "I do believe I'm catching cold."

At the sudden discharge of the sneeze, the seven men jumped as if they had in fact been shot. Each one snatched out his cutlass with his right hand and his pistol with his left, and faced in the direction of the sneeze.

"Confound your cold," whispered Toby fiercely to the Sly Old Codger, "now we're done for."

The seven men with their cutlasses and pistols, with the ear-ringed man in the lead, tiptoed stealthily in the direction of the sneeze.

As they came closer to the party who were crouched against the wall, Aunt Amanda slipped down quietly to the ground at Toby's feet. The captain of the

expedition had fainted.

CHAPTER XVI

CAPTAIN LINGO AND A FINE PIECE OF HEAD-WORK

The man with the ear-rings muttered something in a fierce undertone to his six followers. They spread out behind him in a wide line. With a stealthy step they came forward noiselessly. The party by the wall held their breath in terror. Nearer and nearer came the seven men, still in perfect silence. They reached the cowering company by the wall, leveled their pistols at their breasts, held up their cutlasses ready to strike, and looked at their leader for the command to kill.

At this moment the man with the ear-rings observed the form of Aunt Amanda on the ground. He stooped down and examined her, and stood up again. Then he eyed the company of travellers with a hard cold eye, and spoke deliberately and in a low voice. His manner of speech was somewhat stilted and precise, and scarcely what might have been expected of a pirate.

"The ceremony," said he, "will be deferred for the moment. I commend you meanwhile to perfect quietness; one movement, and the consequences may be fatal. A hint is sufficient. I perceive here a lady in

distress. 'Tis a monstrous pity, indeed. I regret that we were unaware of the presence of a lady; had we known, we should certainly have taken our measures more fittingly. I crave your pardon. No one has yet accused Captain Lingo of rudeness to a lady. Ketch, put up thy cutlass and go straightway to the pool and wet this pocket-handkerchief. Be brisk, thou muddle-pated son of a sea-cook! Haste!"

The man called Ketch jumped as though he had been stung, and took from Captain Lingo's hand a fine white cambric handkerchief which the captain had produced from his breeches pocket, and running to the water moistened it and returned in great haste.

While this was going on, the poor captives were able to examine their chief captor more carefully. They remarked with surprise the fine quality of the handkerchief which he had handed to his man, and they were even more surprised to note the whiteness and fineness of the linen of his shirt. His breeches were of blue velvet, and his sash and the kerchief which bound his head were of crimson silk. On the fingers of each hand he wore three or four diamond rings, which sparkled brilliantly in the half-darkness. His stockings were plainly of silk, and the buckles at his knees and on his shoes were of polished silver, outlined in diamonds. His face was hard and cruel, but its unpleasantness may have been due to a long scar which crossed his mouth from his right cheek to his chin. When he smiled, as he did in referring to the lady in distress, the scar gave to his face a singularly evil expression.

Taking the wet handkerchief from Ketch's hand, he knelt beside Aunt Amanda and bathed her face and wrists, slapping her cheeks and temples smartly now

and then with the handkerchief, and changing her position so that her head lay lower than her body. After he had worked over her with much care for a few moments, Aunt Amanda opened her eyes. She was staring at the frightful crooked smile of a strange man with rings in his ears and a kerchief on his head. She started up, bewildered.

"Where's Toby? Where am I? Who are you?"

"Captain Lingo, ma'am," said the strange man, "at your service."

"Let me up," said Aunt Amanda. She struggled to her feet, rejecting the assistance offered by the ear-ring'd man, and stood facing him, her bedraggled bonnet very much over her right ear. "Who are you?" she said again.

"Your humble servant, ma'am," said the strange man, smiling his crooked smile. "Captain Lingo, by name. A gentleman adventurer of the high seas. Owner of the treasure which you have discovered here in our little retreat. Known here on the Spanish Main as the Scourge of Ships, and loyal servant of his blessed Majesty King James, whom the saints defend. Your obedient humble servant to command." He made the lady a very courtly bow.

Toby whispered into Freddie's ear. "He can't be so terrible bad, not with all that polite way of talking. Don't be afraid. We'll be all right with this pirate. Who on earth is King James?"

Aunt Amanda was also much relieved by the pirate's polite address.

"As long as you are my obedient servant," said she, "I'll thank you to help us to get out of here as soon as

possible. We didn't want to come in the first place, and we are in a hurry to get out."

Captain Lingo laughed heartily. "They are in a hurry to get out, lads," he said to his companions; and at this they all laughed uproariously.

"I don't see anything to laugh at," said Aunt Amanda. "If we don't get out of here soon, we'll catch our death of cold."

This made Captain Lingo laugh more heartily than before. "Ha! ha! ha! Their death of cold! That would be a rare fine thing, but a bit too slow, lads, eh?" And the other six laughed again, so that the walls of the chamber echoed with their mirth.

"What do you mean by too slow?" said Aunt Amanda.

"Madam," said Captain Lingo, "we are a little pressed for time. We really could not wait for you to die of colds."

"What?" said Aunt Amanda faintly, her feeling of confidence beginning to ooze away. "Do you mean to say——?"

"Madam," said the pirate, seriously, "I will put it to you plainly. Our treasure, which you have discovered, has taken a great deal of hard work to accumulate. We really couldn't bear to lose it. The people of this island, and a great many other people besides, have been trying for many years to find it. You have not only found it, but you have even gone so far as to open certain of our bags, in spite of the warning posted above your heads. Now picture to yourselves, dear madam and gentlemen, what consequences would certainly ensue if you were to leave—here—ahem!—alive."

"Oh!" gasped Aunt Amanda. "Leave—here—alive!"

"All the fruits of our industry would be lost, and our own safety would be imperilled. You will readily see that, of course. 'Tis a pity so many will have to die at once, for it will mess up the place very badly, and I always endeavor to be neat. But why, *why* did so many of you come at once? Couldn't you have come, say two at a time? It would have made so much less trouble."

"Ho!" said Mr. Punch. "Hif we 'ad only stopped at 'ome, hall of us!"

"However, I do not wish you to feel too keenly the trouble you are putting us to; my brave lads will cheerfully put up with the inconvenience, though I must confess the amount of blood will be quite unusual, and so many bodies will be troublesome to bury. I wish it were possible to have you walk the plank. However, pray do not bother too much on our account."

"We weren't thinking about you at all," said Toby. "We were thinking about ourselves."

"Oh," said Captain Lingo, in a tone of disappointment. "I beg your pardon; I misunderstood. At any rate, we will now prepare for our little ceremony. If there are any trifling articles of jewelry and the like, I will be pleased to——"

"But this boy!" cried Toby. "And this lady! You don't mean to—you can't mean——"

"Not for worlds," said Captain Lingo, "would I be rude to a lady. I trust you will find my conduct towards the lady beyond reproach. There shall be no rudeness of any kind. Merely a quick stroke, and all

will be over. No violence, no roughness of any kind; not a word to offend the most sensitive ears. A single stroke, and the affair is done. And let me tell you, I have here with me a Practitioner who is very expert in this sort of business: our friend Ketch, in fact, who was so kind as to wet the handkerchief for the lady. I assure you that you are in great luck to fall into the hands of such a Practitioner; he will make it as pleasant for you as possible; one stroke only, I promise you. With one stroke of a cutlass, he is able to slice off a head as neatly as you could do it with a broadaxe; there are very few who can do it with a cutlass, let me tell you that. Many men have become famous by being operated on by Ketch. I remember a case—However," he said, looking about him as if considering something, and speaking rather to himself than to the others, "it would be difficult to bury the bodies here, and the light is not very good. I think, yes, I think it had better be done outside. You are already wet, and I trust that another immersion will not inconvenience you too much. Lads," he said to his six men, "put on the rubber suits, and help our friends under the fall. Look alive, now."

The six men immediately ran to their rubber suits and began to put them on. While they were doing this, Toby put one arm about Freddie and the other about Aunt Amanda. She lowered her head to his shoulder for a moment, but she soon raised it, and standing very erect she said, "Very well, if it must be, it must. It's easy to see that this bloodthirsty villain means every word he says; but I ain't going to whimper; I'm the captain, and I order that everybody keep up his courage, and wait and see what will happen."

"Ay, ay, ma'am," said the Churchwarden.

"Do you know," whispered the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg, "I believe that we are in a good deal of —er—danger."

Freddie put his hand in Toby's, and held it tight. "You keep close to me if you can," said Toby, squeezing his hand. "We may be rescued at the last minute; you never can tell. Don't lose your nerve."

Freddie was trembling with fear, and the hand which held Toby's was as cold as ice; but he said nothing; the others were being brave, and he resolved that he would be as brave as the rest, up to the very last. He began to think of his mother and his father, and to wonder what would become of them if he should be —but he forced himself not to think of that; he pressed his lips tight together, and commanded himself to be brave.

The six pirates returned, clad in their baggy rubber suits, and looking very much like bears walking on their hind legs. They brought with them Captain Lingo's suit, and helped him to get into it. When he was encased like the others, with only his hands and face showing, he said:

"Now, madam, I will assist you to the fall."

"We'll attend to that," put in Toby, quickly. "Come on, Mr. Punch."

Aunt Amanda's cane having been lost, she found more difficulty in walking than formerly, but Toby and Mr. Punch supported her to such good effect that she kept up with the others very well on their march into the water towards the fall. All, except the pirates, shivered as the cold water came again around their knees, and they looked with fear upon

the tumbling cataract which they were required to go under. There was no help for it, however; the seven pirates surrounded them and persuaded them to go on. They stood in a forlorn group in the quiet water near the foot of the fall.

"Now, madam," said Captain Lingo, "I will help you under."

Toby and Mr. Punch, feeling that the pirate knew the way better than they did, resigned Aunt Amanda to his care, not without some fear that the villain might deliberately drown her on the way through. He made her kneel in the water, and then lie flat; and with a strong arm he pulled her under the water-fall and out of sight.

"You're next," said a deep voice to Freddie, and Ketch the Practitioner seized him and plunged with him under the water; and in an instant they had disappeared beyond the fall.

One after another the miserable, shivering victims were assisted by the pirates under the water, and one by one disappeared. The Old Codger with the Wooden Leg was the last, and one of the pirates returned for him. When he had followed the others, the great half-dark chamber remained as it had been before, in its empty solitude and gloom, without an ear to hear the steady rush of water pouring incessantly down its fall.

On the outer side of that rushing fall was a scene very different indeed. The pirates and their captives stood under a blazing sun, looking across a wide and beautiful landscape. Behind them, in the side of a high hill overgrown with bushes, was the hole by which they had come forth, and across the inside of

this hole was the curtain of falling water. Freddie wondered how anyone had ever had the courage to plunge for the first time through that curtain into the unknown dark. The heat of the sun was very grateful, and the clothing of the soaked travellers began to dry perceptibly at once. The pirates took off their rubber suits.

Beneath the observers the ground sloped down into a broad valley, chequered with grass meadows and dotted with trees. To their left, as they gazed out across the landscape, the ground rose from the valley by easy stages to a great height, no doubt forming the landward side of the black cliff which bordered the ocean.

To the right, the country rolled gently away from the valley in a vast unbroken forest, a shimmering green ocean of tree-tops as far as the eye could see. Far, far off where the forest rose in a kind of mound, Freddie thought he could see what looked like the top of a round tower, just emerging above the haze of trees.

The pirates and their captives were standing on a little grassy plateau, on which were great boulders here and there, and a few wide leafy trees. Two or three fallen logs were lying near the edge of the plateau, where it began to slope downward.

Captain Lingo stepped out of his rubber suit, spread out his fine white handkerchief on a boulder to dry, and twiddled his moist fingers daintily in the air, after which he blew on his finger-nails and polished them on his shirt-sleeves.

"We are now ready," said he, "for the ceremony. Ketch, thy cutlass."

Ketch drew his cutlass from his belt and handed it to the captain. It glittered wickedly in the sunlight. The captain ran his thumb along its edge, and nodded his head with satisfaction.

"It will do," said he. "One stroke for each will be quite sufficient. We will now proceed with the ceremony."

He restored the cutlass to the Practitioner, who raised it high and gave a swinging slash downward with it, as if to test his eye and arm. The Practitioner then rolled his right shirt-sleeve up to his shoulder; he was the largest man in the party, and his arm was the arm of a blacksmith.

"Stop!" cried Mr. Punch. "One moment! Captain Lingo! You are a Henglishman, aren't you?"

"I am an Englishman," said the Captain, swelling out his chest. "Long live King James!"

"Hi am a Henglishman also," said Mr. Punch, swelling out *his* chest. "You carn't murder a fellow-countryman in cold blood, now can you? Hi s'y, you couldn't do that, you know. We're both subjects of her gracious Majesty, we are. Long live Queen Victoria!"

"Who?" said Captain Lingo.

"Queen Victoria!" cried Mr. Punch. "She'd never, never forgive you hif——"

"Never heard of her," said Captain Lingo calmly. "I'm a loyal subject of his Catholic Majesty King James the Second,—may all the saints defend him!"

"King James the Second!" cried Mr. Punch. "Why, 'e's been dead these two 'undred year, nearly! 'E's as

dead as Christopher Columbus!"

Captain Lingo started violently, and his face became dark with anger.

"Dead? King James dead? Do you mark that, lads? He calls his blessed Majesty dead! Aha! thou renegade Englishman, thou hast imagined the death of the king! A felony, by St. George! And the punishment is death! What, thou reprobate, dost thou not know 'tis a felony, punishable by death, to imagine the death of the King?"

"But 'e *is* dead. One carn't live two 'undred years, you know."

"You hear!" said Captain Lingo, his voice quivering with rage. "He imagines the death of the King! Any judge in the kingdom would sentence him to die for that! 'Tis the law! But enough talk. Captain Lingo is not the man to stand by and see the law defied! For that, my pretty Englishman, thou shalt die the death twice over. There shall be violence in thy case. Thou shalt wish thou hadst never been born. Thou shalt be kept for the last. Ay, ay; there shall be fine sport at his taking off, eh, lads? Enough! Proceed with the ceremony. To imagine the death of the King! Ketch, art thou ready?"

"Ay, ay, Captain," said the Practitioner.

The captain cast his angry eye over the terrified group shivering in their damp garments. "One of you must be first. Who shall be first? Let me see." Each person quailed as the pirate's eye rested on him. "One moment. We will decide it by chance."

He plucked seven sprigs of grass, and broke them into varying lengths. He then held them in his hand

so that only the even ends showed. "Now choose," said he. "The longest blade shall be first."

Each drew a blade of grass, except Mr. Punch, who had already been reserved for the last. "Thou shalt be quartered alive," said the captain to him. "To dare imagine the death of the King!"

Freddie trembled as he drew his sprig of grass; but he did not draw the longest; the longest blade fell to Mr. Hanlon, and the next to Freddie. Mr. Toby was third, the Churchwarden fourth, the Sly Old Codger fifth, Aunt Amanda sixth, and the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg seventh.

"We will use that fallen log," said the captain, and led the way towards it. He was now very stern; all his politeness had been dissipated by the offense of Mr. Punch.

"Toby," said Aunt Amanda, as they were moving towards the place of the ceremony, "I hope you will excuse me for all the cross words I have ever spoken to you."

"Oh, nonsense, Aunt Amanda," said Toby, sniffling a little, "I've been a trial enough, I know it. What will become of the shop?"

"Poor Freddie!" said Aunt Amanda. "It just breaks my heart to see him so brave. He's so young to have to—to—And his poor mother! Oh dear, oh dear!"

"Now then," said Captain Lingo, "you may sit down on the grass until your turns come."

Toby helped Aunt Amanda to sit down. Freddie sat beside her and pressed his white face against her shoulder. The others grouped themselves on the

grass about them; all except Mr. Hanlon, who, knowing that his time had come, stepped forward and stood before Ketch the Practitioner, who was feeling the edge of his cutlass.

One of the pirates produced from his pocket some strong twine, and bound Mr. Hanlon's arms behind him. On a sign from Captain Lingo, this man led Mr. Hanlon to the fallen log, and made him kneel beside it and rest his head face down upon it, so that there was a good view from above of the back of his neck.

The dreadful moment had arrived.

Ketch the Practitioner took his place by Mr. Hanlon's side, planted his feet firmly, wide apart, tucked in his right shirt-sleeve at the shoulder, and raised his gleaming cutlass high above his head.

A scream from Aunt Amanda made him hesitate for an instant, but only for an instant; as Aunt Amanda and Freddie closed their eyes and buried their faces in their hands, the cutlass flashed twice around the head of Ketch and came down with a swift and horrible slash straight upon the back of Mr. Hanlon's neck.

A single stroke was enough; Mr. Hanlon's head rolled off upon the ground.

"Well done, Ketch," said Captain Lingo, quietly. "I doubt if there's another hand on the Spanish Main could have done it."

Ketch blushed with honest pride at these gracious words. He swung his bloody cutlass in embarrassment. All the pirates turned towards the pale group on the grass, and Captain Lingo said, "Next!"

Freddie stood up. His knees began to tremble under him, and his heart was beating so fast that he could hardly breathe. Aunt Amanda flung her arms about him as he stood beside her, and cried "No, no, no!" in a voice of anguish.

All eyes were on the Little Boy, as he stood awaiting his dreadful fate, with Aunt Amanda's arms about him. His time had come. His friends were waiting to see if he would be brave, and though his face was white his courage did not fail him. He looked at them in farewell, and each one gave him a tearful gaze in return.

He turned his eyes towards the warm and friendly landscape, for a last look at the world he was about to leave. It would be hard to go, and he would need all his strength to bear the—A loud cry from Freddie startled all the others. "Look!" he cried, and pointed a shaking finger.

They looked, and what they saw was Mr. Hanlon.

By the log on which his head had been cut off, Mr. Hanlon was standing, his hands behind his back, and his head in its proper place on his shoulders. He was smiling and bowing, and as the astonished spectators gazed at him with their mouths open, he sprang lightly into the air and clicked his heels together as he came down.



Mr. Hanlon was standing by the log on which his head had been cut off.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Toby in spite of himself. "Freddie, we've seen that little act before, haven't we?"

Freddie nodded. He remembered very well the first time he had seen Mr. Hanlon's head cut off, at the

Gaunt Street Theatre at home; he wondered that he had not thought of it before.

Captain Lingo was plainly very angry. His face turned a purple hue, and the scar across his mouth showed very white. He fingered his knife dangerously, and at the same time glared at Ketch, who was scratching his head in bewilderment. The captain did not raise his voice, but he spoke with deadly earnestness.

"A fine workman thou, friend Ketch," said he. "Truly a pretty hand with a cutlass, thou son of a sea-cook. I've a mind to let a little of thy blood with this knife, thou scurvy knave. But I will give thee one more chance. If thou fail again, by St. George thou shalt die the death. Once more, now! And remember!"

It was Ketch's turn now to tremble. He knew very well that Captain Lingo would do as he had said, if he should fail a second time. His own life hung on a thread now.

"Ay, ay, Captain," he said huskily, and led Mr. Hanlon back to the fallen log and made him kneel as before.

As Mr. Hanlon's head lay across the log, he turned it round towards his friends, and gave them a long slow wink.

Ketch's cutlass flashed as before. Round his head it swung twice, and down it came with a slashing stroke straight and true on the back of Mr. Hanlon's neck. Off rolled Mr. Hanlon's head upon the ground.

Everyone watched breathlessly; and Ketch did not breathe at all.

For a second Mr. Hanlon's body continued to kneel headless beside the log. Then the head on the ground popped like a flash to the neck it belonged to, and fastened itself accurately there in place. Ketch turned ghastly pale.

Mr. Hanlon sprang up, opened his mouth wide in a soundless laugh, bowed to Captain Lingo, jumped lightly into the air, and clicked his heels together three times as he came down.

Captain Lingo's face was a terrible sight to see. He gazed steadily at Ketch. The unfortunate Practitioner was shaking like a leaf. Captain Lingo slowly drew his knife, and held it behind him in his right hand. With the other hand he pointed to the ground before him.

"Hither, dog," he said, in a quiet, even voice.

Ketch hesitated, gave a wild look about him, and advanced slowly towards his captain. When he reached him, he fell on his knees and held up his shaking hands.

"No! no! no! captain," he cried. "Don't do it! Oh, please don't do it! I done my duty always, and I ain't never failed before! Remember my poor old mother, captain! Give me one chance, captain, just one! Don't kill me! Captain! Captain!"

The expression on Lingo's face did not change; but the glitter in his eye became even more murderous than before. He said not a word, but with his left hand snatched off the kerchief which bound Ketch's head, and seized him by the hair; and with his other hand he brought the knife swiftly around in front and lowered it to plunge it into Ketch's heart.

At that moment Aunt Amanda, forgetting her lameness, struggled to her feet, hobbled to the kneeling man, and throwing her body between him and the knife, shrieked at Captain Lingo.

"Stop! stop! you bloodthirsty villain! Ain't you got no shame? What are you going to murder him for? Ain't he done the best he could? You're a big bully, that's all you are! You ain't a man at all, you're a monster! Put up that knife, and take your hand out of his hair! Ain't you ashamed of yourself?"

Captain Lingo was taken completely by surprise. His eyes opened wide and his jaw dropped; he was so astonished that he took his hand from Ketch's hair and put up his knife.

"That's the idea," said Aunt Amanda. "You're more of a man than I thought. Mr. Ketch, you had better get up."

"Madam," said Captain Lingo, making her a bow, "'tis a bold action and generous. I trust I am able to respond to it in kind. My duty to you, ma'am; your obedient humble servant. Ketch, thou white-livered dog, get up, and thank this lady for thy life."

Ketch, still pale and trembling, stood up, and seizing one of Aunt Amanda's hands in both of his, made a low bow over it and kissed it fervently. By the look in his eyes it was plain to see that he was from that moment her devoted slave.

"Madam and gentlemen," said Captain Lingo, "I am sorry to inform you that the ceremony is over, until I can obtain another Practitioner to take the place of Ketch. I blush with shame when I think how I boasted of his skill. I hope you will not think I meant

to deceive you. I assure you I am more disappointed than you can possibly be. I am provoked and disgusted and irritated; I am annoyed; I can't deny it. There is nothing to do but to retire to our home in High Dudgeon."

"What's that?" said Aunt Amanda. "Is it a place, or is it just the way you feel?"

"Ask me no more," said Captain Lingo, turning away. "I must confer with my lads about our next step."

"Are you going to take us with you?" asked Aunt Amanda.

"We shall certainly give ourselves that pleasure, madam," said the captain, rather stiffly. "Lads, come with me."

On a sign from the captain, one of the pirates cut the twine which bound Mr. Hanlon's hands, and the restored one joined his friends on the grass. The seven pirates moved away to a spot some score of yards apart, where they all sat down on the ground and engaged at once in animated talk.

"I conclude," said the Churchwarden, "though I don't know as I'm right about it, and other people may have a different opinion, that we're a good deal better off—"

"What I say is," said Toby, clapping Freddie on the shoulder, "what I say is, three cheers for Mr. Hanlon!"

"Yes!" said Freddie. "That's just what I said that day after the theatre!"

"I wonder," said the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg, "I wonder if—er—ahem!—if Captain Lingo has

—er—such a thing as a pinch of snuff about him."

CHAPTER XVII

HIGH DUDGEON AND LOW DUDGEON

The pirate captain and his men rose from the ground, and Captain Lingo, in his politest manner, requested his captives to follow him. The entire party moved down the slope into the valley, and after a walk of some quarter of a mile entered a grove of trees. In this grove were tethered ten handsome mules, of which seven were saddled and three were laden with packs.

One of the pack-mules was quickly unladen, a fire was built, and in ten minutes the hungry guests and their hosts were making a very good breakfast of bacon, fried by Mr. Leatherbread, as the captain called him, one of the pirates to whom the business of the frying-pan was left by general consent. When the bacon had been washed down with clear cold water from a spring near by, and the mule had been packed again, Freddie and Aunt Amanda were assisted into the saddles of the two smallest mules, and the captain mounted into the saddle of the largest.

"Now look here, Captain Lingo," said Aunt Amanda, "I want to know where we are going and all about it. The idea of me sitting here a-straddle of a mule! And this bonnet simply ruined, and my dress just about fit

to go to the rag-bone man, and my hair—Look here, Captain Lingo, I ain't going a step on this mule until you tell me what—"

"Pardon me, my dear lady," said the captain, "but I must ask you to put up with my little whims a short while longer. I beg the pleasure of your society upon a little journey; nothing more. I assure you the country is very interesting. May I not promise myself the bliss of your approval?" He turned to the six pirates with a scowl. "Mount the rest of them, scoundrels!"

Four of the captives were mounted by the pirates on the remaining mules, and the procession moved out of the grove into the open valley.

Freddie had never ridden a mule before, and he was delighted. When they entered, as they soon did, the great forest which they had seen from the plateau, Freddie was more than ever delighted. After the blazing sun of the open country, the shade of the forest was delicious. The trees were huge, and while the trunks were far apart, their branches made a leafy roof overhead which was almost unbroken. Flowering plants grew everywhere; vines climbed the trees; little streams murmured here and there; and the only sound which disturbed the repose of the forest was the occasional screech of a parrot and the occasional chatter of monkeys. The first time Freddie heard the sudden scream of a parrot in the stillness he was thoroughly alarmed, but when he learned what it was, and saw the flash of the bird's plumage between the trees, he forgot all about his danger, and for the rest of the day he gave himself up to the pleasure of watching for parrots and monkeys among the branches.

The Sly Old Codger turned in his saddle and said to Toby, who was riding behind, with Mr. Punch walking between:

"A work of nature, my dear friend, a real work of nature. *So* beautiful! Parrots and monkeys flitting about overhead, the primeval forest stretching its bosky arms above us in all directions—*so* bosky! What one might call a real work of nature; so very, very bosky."

"Right you are," said Toby. "It puts our Druid Hill Park in the shade, that's a fact; makes it take a back seat and play second fiddle, as sure as you're born."

"Hi beg your pardon," said Mr. Punch. "'Ow can a park sit down and play a fiddle?"

All day long they moved onward, single file, further and further into the depths of the forest. At noon they halted for a luncheon of fried bacon, prepared by Mr. Leatherbread. The afternoon wore on, and the forest became gloomier and gloomier about them as they marched; the silence grew almost terrifying; and all the pleasure which Freddie had felt in the morning vanished. Night fell, and the procession entered a little clearing, and there the pirates made camp for the night.

After a supper of fried bacon, prepared by Mr. Leatherbread, the whole party retired to rest, each on a mattress of green branches and leaves, covered with blankets. The night was mild, and when the last blanket had been made ready the moon rose and tinged the tops of the trees with silver; and while Freddie was watching the moon as it climbed higher, he fell asleep. Aunt Amanda did not go to sleep so soon.

Ketch the Practitioner had devoted himself very specially to her in preparing her resting-place. While he was spreading the branches and blankets for her, she said to him:

"Ketch, where are we going?"

"Not so loud, ma'am," said he. "We are going to High Dudgeon."

"High Dudgeon! What's that?"

"S-sh! When we're disappointed, or disgusted, or vexed, we always go to our home in High Dudgeon."

"Is that where you live?"

"Part of the time, ma'am. Mostly we are away at sea or on the Island; but when anything goes wrong, and we're angry about it, we always go home and stay there, in High Dudgeon. Yes, ma'am."

"And what are they going to do with us when they get us there?"

"S-sh! You'll be in great danger there. If you can find any way to escape from there, I advise you—S-sh! Not another word. Captain Lingo is looking this way. I must go."

Aunt Amanda did not sleep very well that night.

In the morning, after a breakfast of fried bacon, prepared by Mr. Leatherbread, the company resumed its march.

At noon, a halt was made beside a spring for rest and food, and here Mr. Leatherbread prepared a luncheon of fried bacon.

In the evening, as the travellers were plodding

onward, Ketch walked for a time at the head of Aunt Amanda's mule. Aunt Amanda leaned forward and said to him:

"Ketch, are we going to have more bacon tonight?"

"No, ma'am," said he, in a low voice. "We'll have supper in High Dudgeon. My old mother's the cook there. You heard me mention her yesterday morning. I've an idea there'll be pigeon pies for supper. And mark what I'm saying to you, ma'am." His voice sank to a whisper. "If you get a pigeon pie for supper, look careful to see what's inside of it before you eat it."

"Mercy on us!" said Aunt Amanda. "Are they going to poison us?"

But Ketch slipped away in the gathering darkness, and said no more.

They had gone but a few hundred yards further, when, at the moment when the darkness of night was making ready to blot out everything, they suddenly emerged into a round grassy clearing enclosed by the forest, where the light was better, and over which a star or two could be seen glimmering in a pale blue sky. In the midst of this clearing rose a tower.

It was a round tower, built of stone; its top came scarcely to the top of the surrounding trees, and it was in fact not more than two stories high; it appeared, with its wide girth, low and squat. Its sides were pierced here and there with deep and narrow slits, for windows, and on one side was a heavy oaken door, with great iron hinges and an iron lock. Through two or three of the upper slits in the wall glimmered a light from within. It was otherwise dark and forbidding.

Aunt Amanda found Ketch at her mule's head again. She leaned forward and said to him:

"Is that High Dudgeon?"

"No, ma'am. That's Low Dudgeon."

"Low Dudgeon? What do you mean by Low Dudgeon?"

Ketch looked at the tower and shuddered. "I don't like to talk about it, ma'am. I don't like the place. It's the place where we used to live long ago, before we built High Dudgeon. There's none of us wants to live there now. We haven't lived there since—" Ketch paused, and shuddered again, and evidently decided not to go on.

"There's a light up there," said Aunt Amanda. "Does anybody live there?"

"No, ma'am," said Ketch. "Nobody *lives* there."

"But there's a light," said Aunt Amanda. "Surely there must be somebody there."

"There is, ma'am; there is; thirteen of 'em."

"Thirteen what?"

But Ketch only shuddered again, and would say no more.

Aunt Amanda noticed that instead of going straight onward past the door of Low Dudgeon, the pirates led the file in a wide course away from it, along the edge of the clearing, as if to avoid coming near to it; and when the procession had thus skirted the clearing and entered the forest again on the other side, leaving the low tower behind, a sigh, as if of

relief, went up from Ketch and all the other pirates; except, however, from Captain Lingo himself, who appeared to be wholly indifferent.

"How much further?" said Aunt Amanda to Ketch.

"About a mile, ma'am," said he.

The last mile of their journey was a long mile, and it was traversed in perfect darkness. The moon had not yet risen. Not a word was spoken, and there was no sound except the pad of the mules' feet and the breaking of twigs and branches as the travellers pushed their way through. The prisoners were in a state of greater nervousness and anxiety than before, and as they neared the place where their lives were to be disposed of in one way or another, their sense of uncertainty became almost unbearable. When it seemed that they must be close to the fateful place, the procession suddenly halted, and at the same instant the screech of a parrot startled the silence and made each of the prisoners jump.

"It's only the captain," said Ketch. "It's a signal."

Immediately, as if in response, there came from a distance in advance the note of a cuckoo, three times repeated. The procession moved forward.

A moment or two later, the whole company came forth from the forest under the stars, and stood on the edge of a wide round clearing, grown high with grass and weeds. In the midst of this clearing rose a tower.

"High Dudgeon," said Ketch over his shoulder.

This also was a round tower, built of stone; but it was very tall, much taller than the highest trees, and

from the top there must have been a view of all the surrounding country, even as far as the hill within which was the treasure cave; from the number of deep and narrow slits which served as windows it must have been six or seven stories high. The top of the tower was flat, with battlements around the rim. As a fortress, it seemed to be impregnable; as a dwelling-house, it was very dismal indeed. It was totally dark. The captives trembled at the thought of being imprisoned in such a place.

The wayfarers proceeded in their single file directly to the great iron-bound oaken door of the tower, and those who were mounted got down. Ketch assisted Aunt Amanda and Freddie to alight, and having done so he took charge of the mules and led them away.

Captain Lingo took from his breeches pocket a small key and unlocked the door.

"Be so kind as to enter," he said, and made way for the captives and his men.

When all were within, including Ketch, who had now returned, the captain locked the door on the inside and restored the key to his pocket.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SOCIETY FOR PIRATICAL RESEARCH

They were in a dark and narrow passage-way. As

they stood huddled there together, a candle glimmered at the end of the passage, held in a tremulous hand, and lighting up the face of a very old woman. She advanced towards the party by the door, and holding her candle high above her head inspected the strangers with little blinking watery eyes. She was short and bent; she hobbled as she came forward; her face was seamed with deep wrinkles, and the hand which held the candle was knotted and gnarled; wisps of dirty grey hair hung over her eyes.

"Aha! Mother Ketch," said Captain Lingo. "I wager thou didst not expect us so soon. What's in the larder? We are famished."

Old Mother Ketch looked at her son, the Practitioner, and nodded her head at him once or twice, blinking her eyes. Then she fixed her eyes on Aunt Amanda, and seemed to forget everybody else.

"Well? well?" said Captain Lingo, impatiently. "Art going to keep us here all night? Come, woman! Speak up directly! What's for supper, eh?"

Mother Ketch slowly removed her eyes from Aunt Amanda, and looked at the captain steadily.

"There's nought but pigeons and mushrooms and—" said she.

"Good!" said the captain. "Then we will have pigeon pies; one for each; and well filled, mind you. Now haste; be off."

Mother Ketch turned and hobbled slowly down the passage, and the glimmer of her candle disappeared.

"Follow me," said Captain Lingo.

The six pirates vanished somewhere in the darkness, and the others followed Captain Lingo up a winding stair. At the top was a heavy door, which he unlocked with his key, and locked again on the inside after his guests had passed through. He then led them down a dark passage-way, and turning to the right unlocked a door with his key and threw it open.

They were in a large dining-room, on the table of which were numerous candles, which the captain lighted. In one wall was an opening for a dumb-waiter for sending up food from the kitchen below. The party seated themselves at the table, and after a considerable time Ketch entered, a napkin on his arm, and at the same time the dumb-waiter rose from the kitchen, and the meal commenced.

Ketch waited on the table. Besides pigeon pies there were mushrooms, a lettuce salad, hot biscuit, and excellent coffee. Ketch placed the first pigeon pie before the captain, and Aunt Amanda noticed that he examined the top of it carefully as he did so. She observed that he examined the top of each pie carefully before he placed it, until he had put one before herself, after which he put the others about without looking at them. She examined the top of her own pie herself, to see what Ketch could have been looking at. She saw in the center of it a tiny figure made of very brown dough, and as she looked closer it seemed to have the shape of a tiny key. She glanced at the other pies, and none of them bore any mark of this kind.

Everyone set to with a good will, and Aunt Amanda opened her pie. She remembered Ketch's caution, and she prodded it secretly with her fork before

taking a bite. At the bottom her fork touched something hard. She immediately began to put the contents of her pie on her plate, and she did so in such a way as to leave the hard object beneath the rest. In the course of the meal, she dropped a portion of the pie to the floor, and stooped to pick it up. As she did so, she managed to take the hard object from her plate and conceal it in her lap. It was a key.

When the meal was over, the captain led his guests forth to their respective bedrooms, each carrying a lighted candle from the table. At the top of a stair was a closed door, which he unlocked with his key, and locked after the others had passed through. Along the passage which ran from this door were doors at intervals in the walls, and these he opened, one after another, showing one of his guests each time into a bedroom and leaving him there. On the stair, Aunt Amanda had whispered into Toby's ear the words, "Don't go to bed. Pass it along." And these words had been passed in a whisper from one to another of the captives.

Aunt Amanda, in her own room, now sat herself down to wait. She blew out her candle, and sat watching the shaft of moonlight which came through the slit that served for a window. She must have fallen asleep, for she came to herself with a start, and found the shaft of moonlight gone. She limped to the door, and found it locked. She took from her dress the pigeon-pie key and unlocked the door. The passage-way outside was silent and dark. She felt her way along the wall to the next door, and found it locked. She quietly unlocked it with her key. Toby was sitting within, waiting. He rose without a word, and followed her. They tiptoed from door to door, finding each one locked, and silently released each of

the prisoners.

The key fitted every lock on their way down stairs. They reached the ground floor without an accident, and there in the passage which they had first seen they stopped to listen. They heard the click of a latch at the rear; a door there opened quietly on a crack and a light shone through; every heart stopped beating for a moment. The door opened wider, and a lighted candle appeared, and over it the wrinkled face of an old woman; she peered out into the passage, shading the candle with a trembling hand; the party of quaking runaways stood as still as mice, and held their breath; the old woman blinked for a moment into the darkness, and blew out her candle. All was dark again, and the latch of the door clicked.

The runaways lost no time. They crept silently but rapidly to the entrance door. Aunt Amanda unlocked and opened it, and they pressed out hurriedly. They were standing on the grass in a flood of moonlight.

Aunt Amanda, whose lameness had been almost forgotten in her excitement, now leaned on Toby, who was holding Freddie's hand, and who led the way to the rim of the forest where the trail lay. There was some difficulty in finding the trail, but they did find it at last, and they filed into the forest. They had not gone more than twenty yards when Toby, who was in advance, saw a great black object directly across their path. He went forward cautiously, in spite of his alarm, and breathed a sigh of joy when he saw what it was: it was a mule, saddled and bridled, and tied to a bush. Further on were other mules, all tethered; there were ten in all, of which eight were saddled and two were laden with packs.

"Blessings on that Ketch," whispered Aunt Amanda.

In a moment the entire party were mounted. In another moment they were going along the trail at a fast walk. The mules knew the way, and there was now no danger of going astray in the forest. Only, where were they to go, after all? If the pirates should catch them, everything would soon be over. If they should manage to elude the pirates, they would still be lost in the wilderness of this unknown Island. What was to become of them not one could tell. The future seemed very dark indeed.

Once or twice they paused, to listen for sounds of pursuit; but they heard nothing; not a sound disturbed the stillness; and the little moonlight which filtered here and there through the trees seemed to make the darkness more intense.

They had gone about half a mile, and were plodding along in drowsy silence, when suddenly, out of the tall bushes beside the trail, seven dark figures sprang upon them and seized the bridles of their mules.

"Ah!" cried Toby. "We are lost! The pirates!"

The mules stood stock still.

"It's no use," said Toby. "We can't escape. They are armed, and we are not. All right, Captain Lingo, don't strike; we surrender. We'll go back with you; don't strike."

"I beg your pardon," said a voice which none of them had ever heard before. "Are you pirates?"

"Ain't you pirates yourselves?" cried Aunt Amanda.

"What?" said the voice. "Is there a lady here? In that case, you are probably not pirates. Perhaps we have been too hasty. I beg your pardon."

"Who are you?" said Aunt Amanda.

"Do you admit that you are not pirates?" said the voice.

"Admit it!" said Aunt Amanda. "We vow and declare it! The very idea!"

"I am sorry to hear it," said the voice. "We are deeply disappointed. We of course cannot doubt the word of a lady, but we were almost sure we had found them. We have been searching for pirates for a long time, and we were advised that they lived somewhere near here. We must have missed our way. Could you perhaps direct us? It is a place called High Dudgeon."

"You bet we could," said Toby, "but we won't. We are running away from there, and you had better run too."

"Then perhaps you happen to know the whereabouts of a place called Low Dudgeon, where the pirates formerly lived?"

"We do," said Toby. "You are about half-way now between High Dudgeon and Low Dudgeon; and you had better get out of this neighborhood as fast as you can."

"This is very interesting," said the voice. "I feel that you will be able to give us some valuable information. If you have no objection, we will walk behind you until we come to a place where there is more light, when we will have a few minutes' conversation on this interesting subject."

The seven dark figures stood aside, and the mules moved onward. The seven figures walked behind.

In five minutes they reached a patch of ground

where the moon shone brightly through the trees, and the riders drew in their animals, and turned to look at the figures who now marched sedately up beside them. These figures stood in a row facing the riders, and six of them turned their heads to the right, looking towards the first in the row, who was probably their leader.

They were seven tall men, dressed in black frock coats and striped trousers, with pearl-gray spats; but instead of high silk hats each wore a small black skull-cap, as more convenient, no doubt, for their rough life in the forest. It could be seen that they were no ordinary men; they looked like professors at college; their faces were thoughtful and even intellectual; each one wore spectacles; they squinted as if from too much poring over books by lamplight. The one at the head of the row was fat, with mutton-chop whiskers, and his frock coat was buttoned tight over a round stomach. He spoke in the same voice which they had heard in the dark.

"I beg your pardon," said he. "If you will be so kind as to direct us either to High Dudgeon or to Low Dudgeon, we will not fail to gratefully acknowledge —"

"Aha!" said one of the others, in a playful tone. "A split infinitive, Professor!"

"I beg your pardon. A slight inadvertence. To acknowledge gratefully your kind—"

"There's no time to talk now," said Toby. "We are running away from these bloodthirsty cut-throats, and if they catch us we are dead, as sure as you're born. I'll tell you what we will do. We'll all keep on to Low Dudgeon, and we'll go in there, if we can get

in, and decide there what we had better do. It looked like a strong tower, and we would certainly be as safe inside there as out of doors, if the pirates should come along."

The Professor looked down the line of his companions. "What is the sense of the Committee on this proposal?" said he. "Ah. Very good. We are agreed. Proceed, my dear sir."

"One minute," said Aunt Amanda. "Excuse my asking, but I should like to know who you are, anyway."

The Professor waved a fat hand towards his companions, and looking at Aunt Amanda, said:

"We belong, madam, to the Society for Piratical Research, under the patronage of his gracious Majesty, the King of this Island. You behold before you a committee of that Society; the Committee on Doubtful and Fabulous Tales, sometimes called for the sake of brevity, from the initials of its title, the Daft Committee. As Third Vice-President of the Society for Piratical Research, I have the honour to be Chairman of the Daft Committee. The seat of our Society is far from here, in the principal city of this kingdom, the famous City of Towers, blest as the residence of his gracious Majesty, the most learned and liberal of princes. Our camp, which we made only late this evening, lies at no great distance from this spot. We did not wish to delay our researches until morning, and so, as Third Vice-President of the Society for Piratical Research, and Chairman of the Daft Committee, I—"

"Much obliged," said Toby. "We've no time to listen to any more. We must get on."

The Daft Committee, led by the Third Vice-President, fell in behind the mules, and the whole party moved forward, as rapidly as the mules and the committee could walk.

Aunt Amanda felt far from easy at the prospect of entering Low Dudgeon; but she had told Toby something of Ketch's strange words and manner regarding that place, and she was glad to leave the responsibility to him. Their dark and silent progress through the forest continued, and when they had gone what they thought must have been about half a mile, they knew they must be near their destination. Every eye was watchful and every ear was alert. A grunt from Toby in advance notified the others that they had arrived, and they filed out of the forest into the clearing, and saw before them the squat tower of Low Dudgeon in the moonlight.

The same light as before appeared from within, through the upper slits in the side of the tower. As they drew in their mules at the edge of the clearing, the Daft Committee came up, and the Third Vice-President spoke in a low voice.

"I presume," he said, "that this is Low Dudgeon. I have heard of it, but I have never seen it. It was formerly, some hundred years ago, the headquarters of the pirates. But something occurred here, I do not know what, which impelled the pirates to move. They accordingly built themselves a much better residence, known as High Dudgeon, where I understand they now live. I do not believe that Low Dudgeon has been occupied since. Gentlemen," he said, turning to his companions, "we are fortunate in having found this interesting place at last, after so much trouble. It is the very spot in which to begin

our researches."

A murmur of approval arose from the other members of the committee.

"I don't know whether it's occupied or not," said Aunt Amanda. "Ketch told me that no one lives there, and that there's thirteen of 'em; and he seemed to be afraid of the place. And there's a light up there. I don't understand it."

"Gentlemen," said the Third Vice-President, "is it the sense of the committee that we begin our researches in Low Dudgeon?"

Every member of the Daft Committee murmured his assent.

"If we go into the forest," said Toby, "we may be caught; if we go in here, we are safe for a while, anyway, and we can decide there what we had better do; maybe these gentlemen can send for help. Anyway, let's get in if we can."

The riders dismounted from their mules and tied them to trees; in another moment the whole party were standing before the door of the tower.

"Better knock," said Toby.

They knocked, and knocked again; there was no answer.

"Aunt Amanda," said Toby, "try your key."

Aunt Amanda tried the key, and it fitted; she turned it, and the lock snapped back. Toby thrust open the door.

The company entered, and Toby took the key and

locked the door behind them. They were in a dark passage, near the foot of a winding stair. "We had better go up where the light is," said Toby, in a whisper.

They went cautiously and noiselessly up the stair to the landing. There they found themselves in a hall, and at a little distance down the hall they saw a dim light shining under a closed door. "There it is," said Toby. "Come on."

With the same breathless caution they tiptoed to the door. It had no lock, and Toby turned the knob and slowly pushed it open.

"Ah!" said Toby, in a frightened gasp, and started back.

The others crowded at his back and pushed him forward. The Third Vice-President of the Society for Piratical Research brushed past him into the room, and the other six members followed him. The party of fugitives moved slowly in after them.

In the middle of the room was a large round table. In the center of this table stood some twenty wax tapers in silver candlesticks, burning brightly; and seated around the table were thirteen men.

Not one of these men moved as the party came into the room. Not a limb nor muscle stirred. The Third Vice-President coughed aloud. Still none of the men moved so much as a finger. The whole party came forward to the table and stood close behind the thirteen men and examined them. They were dead.

They were sitting in all positions. Food was before them, as if they were in the midst of a meal. Some were leaning across the table as if in conversation.

Some were in the act of cutting meat on their plates, some in the act of putting forks to their mouths. Every face was ghastly white, and every eye was fixed in a vacant stare.

"See!" said Toby, in a whisper, pointing to their backs.

From the back of each was sticking the handle of a knife, the blade of which was buried in the flesh to the hilt.

Aunt Amanda sank on Toby's shoulder for a moment, but she soon recovered. Freddie grasped Toby's hand.

"Look," said Toby. "They must be pirates."

Each head was bound with a bright-colored kerchief, and as the horrified company examined the dead men closer, it was seen that they all wore knee breeches. A long dagger was sticking upright in the table, just under the candles. Pinned by this dagger to the table was a large sheet of white paper, and there was evidently writing on it.

The Third Vice-President had apparently little fear of thirteen dead men; he went directly to the table, and reaching across between two of the stiff figures drew the dagger from the table and took from the dagger's point the sheet of paper. He adjusted his spectacles, turned his back to the candles so as to obtain a good light on the paper, and read from it aloud:

"Thus does Captain Lingo serve All Traitors."

For a moment there was silence. Then Aunt Amanda spoke sharply.

"The wicked villain!" said she. "Thirteen of his men dead at once, by his own hand! No wonder the six

that are left are afraid of him! No wonder they don't like this place! Oh the wicked scoundrel! If I had him here, I declare I would—"

She paused suddenly and listened. There was a stealthy creaking on the stairs. It grew more distinct; then it stopped, and there was silence.

The thirteen in their chairs made no motion whatever; but the living turned with one accord towards the open doorway of the room. They waited with bated breath. In another moment Captain Lingo himself was standing in the doorway, a pistol in his right hand and a knife in his left. Without a word he advanced into the room, and behind him came his six men, shrinking obviously away from the sight of their thirteen murdered friends.

As Captain Lingo came to a stand before his recent prisoners, his eyes blazed, and with his right thumb he cocked his pistol. Each of his men held a pistol in his right hand and a cutlass in his left, and each cocked his pistol with his thumb.

The Third Vice-President of the Society for Piratical Research, who seemed in no wise disconcerted, stepped forward and addressed the pirate.

"Captain Lingo, I presume?"

"Ay, ay; be quick. I must finish this business quickly."

"My committee and myself have been long anxious, sir, in the interest of science, to make your acquaintance. I rejoice at this opportunity."

"Oh, indeed," said Captain Lingo, drily.

"Yes, sir; I assure you I am delighted. I believe I have the pleasure of speaking to a subject of King James

the Second."

"Ay, ay," said Lingo, eyeing him suspiciously. "What then?"

"Then the records of our Society are vindicated. They go back, my dear sir, some two hundred years; and they contain, from various sources, an unbroken account of Captain Lingo and his exploits from the time of James the Second to the present. But the sources of our information were not always reliable; some doubts were thrown upon our records by jealous persons outside the Society; and as it is the special business of the Committee on Doubtful and Fabulous Tales to look into such matters, the Committee is here before you at the present moment in the interest of truth. No member of our Society has ever seen Captain Lingo, and the jealous persons I have mentioned pretend that no such person has ever existed. The chief mission of our Committee is to vindicate our records by a sight of Captain Lingo himself. Thanks to you, sir, that has now been done. Our next mission is to determine for our Society this most important question: are you alive or dead?"

At this, the captain's brows came together in a terrible frown; the scar across his cheek and chin turned very white; and he glared under his eyebrows dangerously at the complacent Third Vice-President. His lips parted, showing his white teeth clenched tight together. He started to speak through his clenched teeth, and leveled his pistol straight at the Third Vice-President's breast; but at that moment a cry from the Churchwarden startled everybody.

"Bless my soul! Why didn't I never once think of this before? These men ain't real persons at all! How could they be, after two hundred years? They're no

better than wicked spirits! That's what they are, wicked spirits! Why didn't we think of that before? Aha! my fine friends, I've got a little medicine here for you! Ha! ha!"

He drew forth from his back pocket a little perfume bottle, and waved it over his head.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "Hurrah for the Odour of Sanctity!" And with these words the Churchwarden uncorked the bottle and sprinkled a few drops of his perfume on the floor, directly at the feet of Captain Lingo.

A sharp odour instantly filled the air; so sharp that it brought tears to the eyes of everyone. Captain Lingo and his men stepped quickly backward, but it was too late. A look of pained surprise crept over their faces, and remained fixed there. Their feet stood rooted to the floor, and the hands which held the cutlasses and pistols stiffened and became rigid. Not one of them could move an eye-lash. Their outlines began to waver; their faces began to be dim and vague, as if covered with close white veils; from their outsides inward they slowly faded, melted, dissolved; nothing remained of any of them but a wraith, a vapor, a puff of smoke, remotely in the shape of a human being; and then that also vanished; nothing remained; the place where they had been was empty.

All eyes turned to the table where the thirteen murdered pirates had been sitting. They were gone. Their chairs were vacant.

The Churchwarden calmly put the stopper in his bottle and restored it to his pocket.

"Humph!" said he. "Nothing like Odour of Sanctity.

Never knew it to fail. No harm to human persons, but no wicked spirit as ever lived can stand against it; and a blessed good thing the bottle didn't break as we came down the water-fall. No perfumery in this world like Odour of Sanctity!"

CHAPTER XIX

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR

The Third Vice-President and his fellow-members of the Daft Committee seated themselves in the chairs just vacated by the thirteen murdered pirates. Nothing could have persuaded any of the others to sit in those dreadful seats; but no feeling of this sort appeared to disturb the Committee, and they evidently saw no reason why they should not be comfortable.

The Third Vice-President drummed on the table with his fingers, and frowned to himself in silence. One of the Committee, taking his skull-cap from his head and smoothing it thoughtfully with his hand, glanced up at the Chairman and said:

"I fear, Professor, that our hopes are dashed. It is nothing less than disastrous."

"You are right, my dear sir," said the Chairman. "It is a terrible misfortune; terrible indeed. And just when we were on the point of—"

"What!" exclaimed Toby in astonishment. "Do you mean to say you are sorry those rascally pirates are gone?"

"My dear sir," said the Chairman, very patiently, "I am finding no fault. I do not wish to blame anyone. The loss of these pirates to science is one that can never be compensated. The Society for Piratical Research is now at an end. There are no other pirates on this island, and you must see for yourselves that without pirates our society must perish. It is a woful —"

"Well, I never!" said Aunt Amanda. "Of all things! Do you dare to sit there and tell me you'd rather see us all murdered by pirates than—"

"Be calm, my friends," said the Third Vice-President, placidly. "I have already said that I do not wish to find fault. I desire to be generous. It is my wish. In fact, I forgive you freely. Whatever bitterness you may have caused us, we are willing to believe that it was not intentional. The Daft Committee forgives you; freely. Let us be peaceful. It only remains to decide what steps we shall take to meet the future. I submit to you this question: whether we shall first go to the pirates' home in High Dudgeon, or return at once to the City of Towers, to confess our failure and receive our—Hark! I thought I heard a knock."

Everyone listened. There was indeed the sound of knocking, muffled but quite audible. The group standing about the table looked from one to another in silence. Was this some new danger? Were there other pirates to be reckoned with? The Churchwarden put his hand to his back pocket, to be ready with his bottle.

"I think it comes from within this room," said the Third Vice-President.

All eyes examined the room. The walls were unbroken, except by window-slits on one side, the open doorway on another, and on a third a closed door, which no one had before observed. Toby walked over to this closed door, and placed his ear against it. A muffled knock sounded from within.

Toby nodded his head to the others, and tried the door. It was locked. "Lend me your key, Aunt Amanda," said he; and when she had given it to him he inserted it in the lock and turned it and threw wide the door. Inside was a dark closet hung with cloaks. On the floor sat a man.

Toby stepped back in amazement. The man sat motionless, his legs crossed, gazing out into the lighted room. After a second or two he rose, and stood in the doorway, rubbing his eyes. He said not a word, but continued to rub his eyes until they evidently became used to the light, and gave two or three sniffs, as if he smelt an odour, and found it far from agreeable.

He was a thickset man, dressed in sailor's clothes, in no way like the clothes the pirates had worn. His eyes were small and very close together; his nose was broken and flat; his lower jaw stuck out beyond his upper; an unpleasant fellow enough, if looks were anything. In his belt he carried a long knife. His sailor collar was cut low in front, and his chest was tattooed in red and blue ink.

As he hesitated in the doorway, sniffing the air uneasily and blinking his eyes, the Chairman of the Daft Committee spoke in his calm voice.

"Come in, my good sir," said he. "I should like to take the liberty of asking you a few questions."

The sailorman walked slowly into the room and looked about him.

"What's that there smell in the air?" said he.

"Nothing only my Odour of Sanctity," said the Churchwarden.

"I don't like it," said the sailorman.

"I can't say that I like it much myself," said the Third Vice-President, "but it is too faint now to be disagreeable. Pray be seated, sir." One of the Committee rose and offered the sailorman his chair. The sailor sat down and gazed at the Third Vice-President, who went on with his speech. "You need have no fear, sir; if Captain Lingo causes you any uneasiness, I may tell you that he is gone, never to return; and all his men with him; even the thirteen dead men who were sitting in these chairs until a few minutes ago."

"What!" said the sailor. "Has them thirteen men been a-sitting here all these years?"

"My dear sir," said the Third Vice-President, "I assure you we saw them with our own eyes. But you will perhaps be kind enough to tell us who you are, and how you came to be locked up in that closet."

"Humph!" said the sailor, hesitating. "I don't know who you are, nor what you're doing in this here place. However, if Lingo's gone, and—Oh well, I might as well tell you. By the looks of you, I ain't got much cause to be afraid."

"Your courtesy under the circumstances will be much

appreciated," said the Third Vice-President.

"Courtesy be blowed," said the sailorman. "Well, here goes. I'm Matthew Speak, able-bodied seaman, of the brig Cotton Mather, out of New Bedford, Reuben Higginson, master."

"What!" cried Aunt Amanda, almost shrieking. "Are you—? The Cotton Mather! Reuben Higginson! Did you know him? It ain't possible! I can't believe it!"

"It ain't nothing to me whether you believes it or not. I shipped with Reuben Higginson at New Bedford and landed here with him and his crew on this same identical Island, all tight and safe; here on Correction Island, as the cap'n called it."

"What!" cried Aunt Amanda again. "Is this Correction Island? Well, I never! Here we are on Correction Island after all, and we never knew it! Are you sure?"

"That's what he called it, believe me or not. It ain't nothing to me, but I seen it on the map I sold to Mizzen, and the cap'n wrote it there in his own handwrite; that's all I know; but maybe if you'd hunt up this here Lemuel Mizzen, a sailor with a patch on one eye and—"

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Aunt Amanda.

"By crackey," said Toby, "I wouldn't 'a' believed it. Lemuel Mizzen!"

"Perhaps you will be so good as to tell us—" began the Third Vice-President.

"Freddie," said Aunt Amanda, "have you got the map?"

"Yes'm," said Freddie, and produced it from his

pocket.

Aunt Amanda took it from him and spread it open on the table before Matthew Speak. The sailorman glanced at it and nodded his head.

"That's it," said he. "I don't know how you come by it, but that's it. Higginson was lost with the Cotton Mather in a storm on his way back to New Bedford, and a lucky chance for me I wasn't aboard. A good while afterwards a fisherman off of this here Island picked up the map at sea in a bottle, and I got it off'n him; he squealed a good bit when I stuck him, but I got it, right enough. And then along comes Mizzen, me being in hiding, and I sold it to him for a set of false whiskers and a tattoo-needle."

"Yes, yes," said Freddie eagerly. "Mr. Mizzen told me about it."

"When Higginson sailed away from here in the Cotton Mather, I didn't go with him. I ran away. Ay, a runaway sailor, that's what I am. I liked the Spanish Main, and I didn't like Higginson; nor yet he didn't like me, neither. But before he sailed, I left my mark on him, I did; four of his teeth out and a black eye; and I won't say but what he broke my nose for me too, right enough. For a Quaker, he hit pretty good. And I stole this bit of writing from him; probably it ain't no account, but Higginson he seemed to set great store by it, so I stole it, and here it is." He took from his pocket a sheet of folded paper and laid it on the table beside the map; it was much soiled, and was evidently very old. He sniffed the air once or twice, and frowned. "I don't like this here smell. It's no good. I say I don't like it. It makes me feel queer. Well, I guess the old man thought this here bit of writing was safe in his locker right up to

the last; I expect he never missed it until he went to put it into the bottle with the map and throw it overboard." He shook the paper in his hand and dropped it again on the table. "And then," he went on, "I fell in with Lingo, and joined his crew."

"Look here," said Toby, "how long ago was all this?"

"How do I know?" said Speak. "I've been shut up in that there cupboard so long I ain't got no account of time. But I remember just before we sailed from New Bedford there was a lot of crazy people talkin' about getting up a fight with England and breakin' loose from her, and being free and independent and what not—a great pack of foolish nonsense—and something or other about some kind of a tea-party in Boston—I dunno. I ain't never heard what come of it. Most likely nothin' at all. I guess it must have been a good while ago. I dunno."

The Churchwarden started, and put his hand to his back pocket. "Are you as old as that?" said he.

"No older nor what you be, old fat-chaps," said Speak. "You attend to your own age, and I'll attend to mine."

"Never mind," said the Third Vice-President, hastily. "Pray tell us how you came to be locked up in that closet."

"Gimme a chanc't," said Speak. "I'd tell you if you'd gimme a chanc't. I joined Lingo. I served him true and faithful, and many a prize we've taken together, and watched many a smart lad walk the plank, that's a fact. Well, thirteen of his men laid a plan to go to his treasure-cave where all his treasure was hid, and make off with it; steal it; ay, ay; steal it, mind you; as

bad as that. Now me, I ain't got no patience with dishonesty; I'm all for being honest, I am; so, being as I had learned about this here plan, I went and told the captain. He never winked an eye, not him, but off he sent his other six men, out of the way, and made a fine supper here for them thirteen and sat down with them to it; ay, that he did. But first he gets a little white powder out of a silver box and takes it to Mother Ketch and orders her to put it in their food; and she won't, not she, and nothing he can do can make her; so he comes to me, and being as I hates dishonesty, I puts the powder in their food, and they eats it. Only, being kind of nervous, as you might say, I spills about two-thirds of it on my way upstairs in the dark; and there ain't enough left to do the work complete. What was left I put in the food on the table, and at that minute up the stairs comes the whole thirteen with the captain at their head, and I whips into that there cupboard and shuts the door, a-trembling in my boots for fear of what the captain's going to do to me when he finds out the powder won't work only partly. I can hear 'em all set down to the table laughin' hearty, and the captain's voice a-crackin' jokes and makin' 'em feel at home; but after a bit I don't hear nobody's voice but only the captain's, because of the white powder actin' on the others as far as it could, and them probably a-settin' up stiff and tongue-tied in their chairs, unable to move a hand, because of the mite of powder, d'ye see, and me a-settin' quiet in the dark cupboard, a-quakin' all over and wonderin' what the captain was a-goin' to do to me. And after a bit I don't hear the captain's voice no more, and there ain't no sound at all. And I guess the party is over. And in another minute I hears a key turn in the lock of my cupboard door, very soft and easy, and there I am shut up and

locked in as tight as pitch; and there I've been ever since."

"And serve you jolly well right, too, hif you arsk me," said Mr. Punch, with great disgust.

"It's the wickedest piece of business all round I ever heard of in my life," said Aunt Amanda, indignantly. "It's my opinion you're as bad as any of them."

"Worse, if anything," said the Churchwarden, whose hand was still on his back pocket.

"It's a pity the captain didn't knife you in the back with the rest of 'em," said Toby, angrily.

Speak's little eyes flashed fire. He drew his knife and held it out threateningly in his hand, and started to rise. But he did not rise. He remained fixed in his chair, though it was easy to see that he was trying to get up. He sniffed the air, and his head remained fixed in the act of sniffing. The hand which held the knife continued to hold it out, without moving. A look of alarm came into his eyes. It was evident that he had smelled the Odour of Sanctity, which yet lingered faintly in the room. His outline began to waver; his face became vague; his features ran together; he took on the appearance of vapor; and there in the chair by the table, in place of the thick and solid sailorman, was an almost transparent form of mist or smoke, remotely in the shape of a man.

Everyone waited to see him vanish. The form still lingered; it did not disappear; it continued to sit in its chair with its hand extended, holding out a shadowy knife. The Odour of Sanctity had lost its full power, and what remained of it was insufficient to make him disappear.

The Churchwarden pulled out his bottle, and commenced to uncork it.

"Stay," said the Third Vice-President, holding up his hand. "I pray you stay. Do not spill any more of that deadly fluid. There has been enough destruction here tonight. I propose that we leave the late Matthew Speak as he is. He belongs to the Society for Piratical Research. He is the Last of the Pirates, and I beg leave to claim him for the Society. As an exhibit, he will be highly valued. We shall from time to time conduct hither parties of the learned or the curious to view the Last of the Pirates. Nothing could be better. Our Society is now revived. I am immensely gratified. Low Dudgeon shall be known as the only Museum in the world with but a single Exhibit. Let the late Matthew Speak repose here in his chair as a permanent relic of a bygone age; the sole Exhibit in a Museum all his own. The interest of such an Exhibit will doubtless warrant a small charge at the door."

The Committee murmured an earnest approval. The Churchwarden looked at his companions, and put the bottle back into his pocket with a sigh.

"I thank you," said the Third Vice-President. "We will now proceed to consider our next step."

"I simply can't stay in this room," exclaimed Aunt Amanda, "with that thing sitting in that chair."

"It is nothing, madam, I assure you," said the Third Vice-President. "See!"

He leaned over and passed his hand directly through the body in the chair; in at the breast and out at the back.

"Oh!" cried Aunt Amanda; and her friends all gasped;

but the Committee only nodded their heads in token of their interest.

"You see it is nothing," said the Third Vice-President. "We will now look at the paper which our departed friend has left."

He picked up the paper from the table where Speak had left it, adjusted his spectacles, turned his back to the candles so as to get a good light, and read the paper through to himself. He then glanced at the company and read aloud:

"Shiraz the Rug-Merchant.

"Outside the Gate of Wanderers, six hundred Paces to the Right, along the Wall.

"Thee shall know his Shop by certain Numbers, to wit: 3101310.

"If he Hide himself, say these words: Shagli Jamshid Shahriman.

"Thee shall buy of his Wares; not that which he shall offer First, nor Second; but that which he shall offer Third, that thee shall Buy; and for that thee shall Pay whatever he shall Demand.

"Thereafter thee shall do whatever he shall Direct.

"But enter not into the City but by the Shop of Shiraz the Rug-Merchant."

There was silence for a moment, then Aunt Amanda said:

"That's the way we are to get those wonderful things the map speaks of. It doesn't seem to tell us much, though. Where do you suppose is this Gate of Wanderers?"

"That, dear madam," said the Third Vice-President, "is one of the gates of our City of Towers. We know it very well, of course."

"Then," said Aunt Amanda, "as captain of my party, my orders is that we go there at once."

"Much good would that do," said Toby. "We've got to buy something of this here Shiraz, if that's his name,

and pay anything he asks, too. And there ain't a penny amongst us. How could we buy anything?"

"The pirates' treasure!" cried Freddie. "The pirates' treasure in the cave!"

"By crackey!" said Toby. "I clean forgot all about it. Good for you, Freddie! Talk about money to buy things with! We'll buy out that old Shiraz's whole shop! The treasure belongs to us, as sure as you're born. By crickets, we're in luck."

"If you will pardon me," said the Third Vice-President, "we know nothing of any treasure, and if you would be so good as to——"

"I will," said Aunt Amanda, and she quickly explained the whole matter. The Daft Committee, including its Chairman, was much impressed.

"We do not wish to intrude," said the Chairman, "but if we could be of any service——"

"Of course!" cried Toby. "You've got to help us get the treasure out of the cave, and then help us to find the City of Towers. And if you'll help us, why what I say is, the Committee ought to have a share of the treasure. Is that right?"

Toby's friends willingly agreed, and the Committee gladly consented to go with them to the Treasure Cave and then to the City of Towers.

"The Society for Piratical Research," said the Third Vice-President, "is coming back to life! We now have a Museum with one Exhibit, and we are about to acquire a Fund of Money. Come, my friends, it is time to depart. If you will go out first, I will remain and blow out the candles. We must remember to

close the door behind us, for a draught of air would probably blow the late Mr. Matthew Speak out of the window."

In a few moments the whole party was standing in the moonlight on the grass before the deserted tower of Low Dudgeon. Not quite deserted, however; in every mind was a picture of a misty and vapory form, remotely in the shape of a man, sitting motionless in a chair beside a table in a dark and silent room.

"All right," said Toby, "now for the Treasure Cave and the City of Towers."

CHAPTER XX

THE CITY OF TOWERS

At the Pirates' Cave, the task of getting out the treasure proved very difficult, but it was done at last.

The Committee's camp in the forest had supplied abundance of provisions, and a great number of animals; the Committee traveled in luxury.

On the level ground where Mr. Hanlon had given his exhibition of head-work, the toilers were now resting in the hot sun, and drying their garments, thoroughly soaked by their trips in and out of the cave, under the water-fall. They looked with intense delight on the boxes and bags which lay before them.

"What I say is," said Toby, "let's divide the treasure now, so we won't have to bother about it when we get to the City of Towers."

"How beautiful is nature!" said the Sly Old Codger. "Behold that wide expanse of field and forest resting so—so—expansively beneath the orb of day! A true, true work of nature! At such a moment as this, dear friends, a warm feeling invades my heart, a feeling of —of—Did I hear a suggestion to divide the treasure?"

The division was carefully made, and when it was done, and each person had declared himself well satisfied, each share was packed separately, and the treasure loaded on the backs of the extra mules. It was a princely fortune.

"Do you suppose," said the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg, "that—er—I shall be able to obtain, in the City of Towers, such a thing as a pipeful—ahem! —a pipeful of tobacco?"

"Never fear," said the Third Vice-President. "I fancy you will be able to buy there all the tobacco you can use."

"Wery sorry I am to 'ear it," said Mr. Punch. "Hi regard the tobacco 'abit as a wery reprehensible 'abit. Wery."

"Oh, you do!" said Toby, glaring at him.

"Wery reprehensible indeed," went on Mr. Punch, calmly. "My conscience 'as troubled me for a long time by reason of my position in the tobacco trade. Being posted, as one may s'y, in a wery hadwantageous position for hobserwation, I 'ave seen too much, entirely too much, of the sad effects of the hobnoxious weed. Many a time 'ave I wept to myself,

when the hobserver may 'ave thought it was only rain on me cheek, to see 'em, young and hold, going in and hout of Toby Littleback's shop, knowing what would come of it sooner or later, and me a-standing there hencouraging of 'em in, as one may s'y, with me packet of cigars in me 'and. Hoften enough 'ave I wished to give it hup and embark in a hoccupation less reprehensible; many a time 'ave I said to myself, 'Ho, hif I could only be hinnocent once, just once.' And now Hi shall put be'ind me hall the d'ys of me sinful past, and with my share of the treasure Hi shall open a shop for the purveying of tripe."

"There's a deal more harm been done by tripe than ever there was by tobacco," said Toby.

"There is a total absence of nicotine in tripe," said Mr. Punch, loftily. "At least, such is my hinformation. And I carn't 'elp 'oping that my friend Littleback will reform hisself, now that 'e can afford it, and engage in some pursuit less 'armful to the young. Hif I was arsked, I would suggest pinking and pleating."

"You ain't been asked," said Toby. "I can see myself pinking and pleating. When I want advice what to do with my money, I'll ask you. Tobacco is my line, and tobacco is going to be my line to the end of the chapter, and that's flat. Pinking and pleating! Humph."

"It's my belief," said the Churchwarden, "after listening to what's been said, pro and con, backwards and forwards, up and down, that if we don't start for the City of Towers, we'll never get there."

"And what's more," said Toby, "when I get back I'm going to have an *Indian* outside my door, instead of a tripe-seller."

"Excuse me," said the Third Vice-President. "I am sorry to interrupt this interesting discussion, but we really ought to be going. Gentlemen," to the Committee, "our steeds are waiting. To the City of Towers!"

The journey which now commenced proved to be a very long one. Day after day the pilgrims plodded through a wilderness of forest and field, over streams, across mountains, down into deep valleys and up again, camping at night wherever they happened to find water and wood, and sleeping under the stars in blankets on beds of boughs. The moon was gone before their journey was over.

One morning the trail brought them down on a mountain-side to a well-paved road. This road they followed for some hours, and it brought them finally to the top of a gentle hill, covered with trees. From the top of this hill they saw a striking scene.

Stretching away from the foot of the hill lay a great rolling valley, up which the road ran as straight as a ribbon. Far away, at the end of the road, against a dark wooded mountain, stood a great city, walled around with a high wall, and shining in the sun with white and gold domes and turrets and towers. The rear of the city rose along the lower slope of the mountain, and on the top of the mountain, concealing its peak, lay a cloud; black below, and glittering with sunlight at the edges. It hung there motionless during the time when the watchers sat watching the scene. Directly under the cloud, on the slope where the farthest portion of the city lay, was an open space among the buildings, like a great garden or park, and in the midst of it a vast white building with a flat roof, great enough for the palace

of a king. That which struck the strangers most, at their first look, was the great number of towers which rose at all points in the city; surely so many towers had never been gotten together in one place before; and the most remarkable one of them was the tower which rose from just behind the great white building in the park. It was dull in colour, and doubtless of brick; it was round in shape, tapering gradually upwards. It rose to a height which none of the strangers would have thought possible, had they not seen it with their own eyes; it rose straight to the cloud which hung motionless upon the mountain; it pierced the cloud, and its top was lost to view in the cloud or above it.

"The City of Towers!" said the Third Vice-President, waving his arm in that direction. "The Gate of Wanderers is before us, at the end of the road."

The party urged their animals forward down the hill-side, and pressed on until noon, when they halted for rest and refreshment in a wood beside the road. There they sat at their ease on the grass, and the Third Vice-President looked from one to another, and spoke as follows:

"My friends, I must tell you the story of the Towers. Our King, you must know, is a handsome and amiable man, in appearance about thirty years of age. When I tell you that he has been our king for more than forty years, you will be surprised. His wife was a princess of some few years less than his own, and of a beauty unequalled in the kingdom. Her wedding ring, the gift of her husband, was a single ruby in a plain gold band, and this ring she was never known to remove from her wedding-finger for a single moment. She was blessed with three

beautiful children, two boys and a girl, the oldest of whom was nearly nine years of age.

"When the prince, our present King, was thirty years old, his father the King, who was then alive, gave a great ball at the palace, and at this ball the old King declared to the assembled court that he desired to build a tower; a mighty tower, higher than any other in the world, where he might seek repose from time to time; a tower so tall that it would reach the cloud that hangs perpetually on the mountain. To him who should build such a tower in the shortest time the King would give any reward which the fortunate bidder might ask. The old King laughed as he made his offer, and it was plain that he was only half serious; but many of the richest of his nobility desired the prize, and contended for it earnestly. One proposed to erect the tower in ten years, another in eight, and one was found who was willing to promise it in six years and a half; but these terms were all too long. The King was old, and he would not wait so long.

"'Is there no one,' said the old King at last, 'who will build me my tower in less than six years and a half?'

"'I will build it in one night,' said a voice from the rear of the ball-room.

"An old man came forward and stood before the King; an old man, dressed in a short gown tied in with a cord about the middle, with sandals on his feet, a lantern with a lighted candle in one hand, and a staff in the other. No one in that place had ever seen him before, and no one knew how he had gotten in amongst that glittering company.

"'I will build your tower in one night,' said the old

man.

"The old King laughed outright, but he accepted the offer then and there. 'In the morning,' said he, 'if we find the tower finished, you shall have any gift which may be in my power to give.'

"The old man bowed, and made his way slowly out of the palace. A great shout of laughter went up from the company, and in this the King himself joined heartily; but the joke was, as I must tell you, my friends, that in the morning when the King rose, there stood the tower in fact, behind the palace, so tall that its top could not be seen in the cloud that hung upon the mountain; and there, my friends, the tower stands to this day.

"That evening the old man returned for his reward. He stood before the King, and on the King's right and left stood the prince and the prince's wife and children. The King asked the old man what reward he desired.

"'I ask nothing,' replied the other, with a sly smile, 'except the ruby ring upon the finger of the Princess.'

"The Princess turned pale, and hid her hand behind her. She would not give up her wedding-ring; nothing the King could say could move her. He offered the old man anything else he might demand; a dozen ruby rings; a box of ruby rings; anything; but the old man would have nothing but the ring upon the Princess's finger. The Princess grew paler still, as if with fear; but she would not give up the ring. The old man smiled his sly smile again, and went away.

"The next morning the Princess and her three children were gone. Search was made everywhere,

but they were not to be found. The King and the Prince, mounting the winding stair of the tower, stopped at last when they were all but exhausted, and at that moment heard a sound of weeping from above. They climbed higher, and on the stair they found the children sitting, huddled together and weeping bitterly. Their mother was gone, they knew not where; and they did not know how they came to be in the tower. The strongest climbers in the city mounted as far as they could ascend, but the top of the tower was far beyond their reach; they found no Princess. She has never been seen from that day.

"Soon after, the old King died, and his son came to the throne. As for him, our present King, and his three children, time stopped for them from the day on which the Princess disappeared. They are no older now than when she left them. It is supposed that they are awaiting her return unchanged, in order that she may not find them old on her return, if she should still be young. There are those who say that she has lived all these years, and still lives, somewhere, in some strange form, perhaps far from here, bewitched by the old man, and waiting for release from her enchantment. I do not know."

"And what was her name?" said Aunt Amanda.

"She was named," said the Third Vice-President, "the Princess Miranda."

"And what are all those other towers in the city?" said Aunt Amanda.

"It was the fashion, after the King's Tower was built, to build towers. The King, as you may suppose, sets the fashion in all things. But no more pleasure-towers are built nowadays; the thing had its day, and

died out. There is a fashion now in pleasure-domes. They are modeled after the pleasure-dome built by Kubla Khan in Xanadu."

"Well," said Toby, "I don't see what we've got to do with all this. The party I want to see is Shiraz the Rug-Merchant."

CHAPTER XXI

SHIRAZ THE RUG-MERCHANT

The wayfarers came to a halt before the Wanderers' Gate. The wall of the city stood before them, and stretched away to a great distance on either hand. People were going in and out at the gate; some on foot, driving donkeys before them, some on horseback, some in wagons, and all brisk and talkative. The Third Vice-President received a respectful greeting from several of those on horseback. He turned to his companions with a wave of the hand, and said:

"The Wanderers' Bazaar!"

On each side of the open gate, at the foot of the high thick wall, was what appeared to be a fair. As far as the eye could see, the base of the wall was lined with booths, each with an awning over it from the wall behind, gaily striped in orange and blue and yellow and brown. In these booths was spread out in disorderly profusion a mass of merchandise of all

kinds; gold and silver ornaments, brass and copper vessels, rugs and carpets, spectacles and clocks, toys and games, herbs and ointments, fish-nets and sailors' instruments, canes and crutches, ribbons and laces, perfumery, precious stones—things innumerable; even parrots and monkeys, in cages; in one booth was a potter, twirling his potter's wheel; in another a fortune-teller, laying little sticks down in curious patterns on his table; in another a man pasting on cards bits of coloured feathers, in the form of tiny birds and fowls, most life-like; in another a glass-blower, delicately twining a thread of spun glass for the rigging of a ship; in another a man sitting on a rug with a snake before him, whose flat head stood stiffly up from his coil, and waved a little to the motion of his master's finger; in another, a man was bending over a flower-pot with a wand in his hand, and as he moved the wand a stalk grew from the pot and at its end a bud appeared and unfolded into a flower before the very eyes of his audience; in another a great ape was marking down figures with chalk as his master called them; in another a shuttle was weaving back and forth in a loom; there seemed to be no end to the curious and diverting things to be seen in those booths. The people in them were apparently of all the nations of the earth; there were brown men and yellow men and black men, as well as white; men with slant eyes, with round eyes, with flat noses, with beak-noses, with wooly hair, with straight hair; there were turbans, and fezzes, and hoods, and white gowns, and coloured robes, and velvet jackets, and cotton blouses; and from all the venders rose such a hubbub as Freddie had never in his life heard before, except once in the Gaunt Street Theatre at home. A lively crowd chaffered with the venders and walked in the

paved street before their booths. It was a scene full of life and colour, and Freddie was transported with delight.

"Oh!" he said, "can't we get down here and see all those sights? I should like to spend the whole day here!"

"We've got other fish to fry just now, Freddie," said Toby. "We'll have to see this some other time."

"It is a precious thought," said the Sly Old Fox, "that we have here with us on our mules enough treasure to buy this whole bazaar, if we wished to do it. It is a beautiful thought."

"Six 'undred paces to the right!" said Mr. Punch.

"Shiraz the Rug-Merchant!" said Toby. "By the looks of it, there must be about five hundred rug-merchants along there."

"What was the number we were to find him by?" said Aunt Amanda.

"It's 3103101," said Toby.

"You are quite mistaken," said Mr. Punch. "Hit's 3013101."

"That's exactly what I said," said Toby.

"Excuse me," said the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg, "it seems to me that it is—er—3101301."

"My recollection is," said the Churchwarden, "that it is 3031010."

"I am sorry to differ," said the Sly Old Codger, "but I am perfectly sure it is 3013010."

"Why don't you look at the paper?" said Aunt Amanda, in an exasperated tone.

Everyone looked at everyone else to produce the paper, but no one produced it.

"I regret to confess it," said the Third Vice-President, placidly, "but I have a distinct recollection of having left it on the table at Low Dudgeon. Never mind, it is perfectly safe."

"Well!" said Aunt Amanda. "Isn't that a perfect shame! Whatever are we going to do? And where's the map? Freddie, have you got the map?"

Freddie looked in all his pockets. "No'm," said he. "It isn't here."

"I recall distinctly," said the Third Vice-President, without any sign of worry, "that the map was left on the table at Low Dudgeon with the other paper."

"Merciful fathers!" exclaimed Aunt Amanda. "And you've left the map behind too! I never yet see a man that had a head on him worth a—Now listen to me; is there anyone that remembers the words the paper said we had to say to the——"

"Ah! madam," said the Third Vice-President. "There I can be of assistance, I fancy. The words are derived from the Persian, and I am accordingly familiar with them. 'Shagli Jamshid Shahriman.' Am I right, gentlemen?"

The Daft Committee nodded their heads in assent.

"Then I see no reason," said the Third Vice-President, "why we should not proceed."

"Come on then," said Toby. "I'll get down and pace

off the six hundred steps, and see where we come to."

The party moved slowly through the crowd, along the booths, while Toby walked beside them, carefully counting his steps.

"Five hundred and eighty," said he. "Five hundred and ninety. Ninety-five. Six hundred"; and stopped. The procession stopped also, and all of the riders got down from their mules. Many of the passers-by gazed curiously at them, and some paused for a moment before going on; but no one seemed to take more than a passing interest. One of the Committee led the mules to the open side of the street, where they would be out of the way, and stood guard over them. The others joined Toby in front of the booth at which he was now standing.

It was not the kind of booth they were seeking at all. There were no rugs nor carpets of any kind; only clocks and watches, a great number of them, and a few sundials and hour-glasses. Behind the counter stood a lad of about twenty, very dark of skin, with snapping black eyes and shining white teeth which showed as he now bowed and smiled; a white turban on his head, and a loose white robe hanging from his shoulders. He was slim and sleek, and his fingers were very long and delicate. He rubbed his hands together as the riders dismounted, and commenced to chatter to them in an unknown tongue, bowing and smiling the while. His wares were displayed about him on shelves and boxes and tables, as well as on the counter, and the clocks and watches, as usual in such places, showed all hours of the twelve. A striped awning of orange and blue, fastened at the rear to the side of the city wall, shielded him and his

booth from the sun. Behind him in the wall was a closed iron door.

"We're in the wrong shop," said Toby to his companions. "Some mistake. Anyway, here goes." And addressing the young man behind the counter, he said: "Good-afternoon. We are looking for Mr. Shiraz the Rug-Merchant. This don't look much like a rug shop, but maybe you can tell us. Shiraz; that's his name."

"No understand," said the young man, rubbing his hands and bowing pleasantly.

"Shiraz," said Toby. "Think. Shiraz. Easy word, Shiraz. You understand?"

"Clocks and watches," said the young man. "Sundials. You buy?"

"No, no," said Toby. "We no buy. Want Shiraz. Confound it, that's an easy word, ain't it? Shiraz! Can't you understand that?"

"No sell Shiraz," said the young man. "Clocks and watches."

"Look here," said Toby, "what's the number of this place?"

"No number," said the young man, looking puzzled and shaking his head. "Clocks and watches."

"By crackey," said Toby, "we're in the wrong place sure enough."

Now while this talk was going on, Freddie had made a discovery. He had noticed, on a box at the rear, against the wall, a row of seven old clocks. They were battered and broken, and were evidently long

since out of repair; two of them had no hands. Like most of the clocks in the place, they were stopped, and had probably, from the looks of them, ceased many years before to keep time. He noted idly the time shown by each of these clocks, and started in surprise. The hour shown by the first clock at the left was three o'clock. That shown by the next was one o'clock. The next had no hands, and showed no time at all. The next showed one o'clock, the next three o'clock, the next one o'clock, and the seventh had no hands. He ran his eye over them again, and the numbers which resulted were 3101310.

"Come along," said Toby. "We might as well ask at some of these other shops. There ain't no use wasting time here."

He moved away, and the others followed him towards the adjoining booth. The teeth of the dark young man shone white, and he bowed politely to the departing strangers.

Freddie pulled at Toby's coat, and whispered in his ear. Toby listened, and without a word led the party back to the booth.

"Now see here, young feller," said he, "I've got your number, and I don't want no nonsense. I reckon you can understand numbers, if you can't understand anything else." He fixed his eyes on the row of old clocks at the rear. "Listen to this, my young friend: 3-1-0-1-3-1-0."

The smile left the young man's face. He seemed a trifle uneasy. His long fingers rested on the counter, and he leaned forward intently.

"No understand," said he.

"By crackey," said Toby, "this beats all. Where's Shiraz? We're in the right place, and we want Shiraz. Out with him!"

"Clocks and watches," said the young man, but this time somewhat nervously. "You buy?"

"Buy nothing!" cried Toby. "We want to see Shiraz the Rug-Merchant. Professor," said he, turning round, "what's the words to bring out Shiraz the Rug-Merchant?"

"Shagli Jamshid Shahriman!" said the Third Vice-President, in a loud voice.

Instantly the manner of the young man changed. Crossing his arms upon his breast, he made a low salaam, and spoke with the utmost deference.

"I trust you will pardon," said he, "my seeming lack of courtesy. It is necessary to exercise a certain caution. There are wicked spirits, assuming from time to time the most unlikely forms, who seek to gain access to my great-great-grandfather. His life is continually in danger, for he possesses secrets which enable him constantly to interfere with their designs. By reason of this danger, he was obliged many years ago to retire from the rug business, and he has lived ever since in deep seclusion. It is your wish to see Shiraz the Persian?"

"You seem to speak English pretty good," said Toby.

"Perfectly, my lord. And twelve other tongues as well. You desire to see my great-great-grandfather?"

"That's the exact idea," said Toby.

"Then I will beg your indulgence for a few moments."

The young man bowed again, and disappeared through the doorway in the wall, closing the door behind him. After a considerable absence he returned.

"If you will follow me," said he, "I will conduct you to my great-great-grandfather."

"We will await your return here," said the Third Vice-President to Toby and his companions. "It is unnecessary for us to pursue this adventure further."

The Third Vice-President and his friends returned to the mules, and the others followed the young man to the door behind him in the wall. The door was closed and locked behind them, and they found themselves in darkness. "If you will come to me here," said the voice of the young man, a little in advance, "I will show you the way down." When they felt themselves near him, they heard his voice again. "Be good enough to step carefully forward, until you feel the first step of a descending stair. Then descend cautiously, if you please." Each one put out a foot, and in a moment they were all going down a stairway, of which the treads were evidently of stone, much worn.

When they had gone down some thirty steps, they were aware that the stair had ended, and that they were on a landing. "You will now cross the bridge, one by one, holding on to the railing," said the voice of the young man. One by one the party stepped forward, feeling the way cautiously, and as each in turn found with his hand a slight wooden railing, a breath of fresh air blew upon his face and the sound of rushing water came from below. Instead of the firm stone they had just been treading, they were conscious of wooden planking under their feet, and it

gave beneath their pressure most uneasily. The bridge was a long one, and the sound of rushing water followed them its entire length. They walked again, however, on firm ground, and heard the young man's voice before them. "Be good enough to follow the right hand wall," it said, "and turn with the wall."

Each right hand touched the surface of a wall, and in a moment the wall made a turning to the right. In another moment their progress was barred by a wall in advance, and the voice of the young man spoke from their midst. "You will kindly stoop as you go in," said he, and at the same moment a round opening appeared before them, dimly lit from within. It was only large enough to admit a single person, stooping. The young man entered first, and the others followed, one by one. When they were all on the other side of the door, the young man swung it noiselessly to, on its hinges, and it was seen that it fitted accurately, so that it was impossible to distinguish it from the wall.

They were in a small room, unfurnished except for a table in the center, on which burned an oil lamp of silver, in shape like a boat; the walls were bare, except for certain shelves containing bottles of coloured liquids, other bottles of coloured powders, mortars, retorts, gas-burners, and huge dusty books. There appeared to be no outlet from the room, but the young man pressed his finger on a spot behind one of the bottles on a shelf, and a circular door, like the one by which they had entered, swung slowly open in the opposite wall.

"We have arrived," said the young man. "Please to follow."

He stooped and entered the circular doorway, and the others, one by one, followed. They found themselves in a rich and luxurious apartment, softly lighted by a hanging lamp; in the center was a table, littered with open books and scrolls of paper, and bearing notably a great round globe of solid crystal.

Beside the table, on a divan, reclined what appeared to be a dry and shriveled mummy.

CHAPTER XXII

SIX ENCHANTED SOULS

"This is my great-great-grandfather," said the young man.

The room in which they stood was hung about on all the walls with rare and beautiful rugs, and similar rugs covered the floor. Richly embroidered cushions and delicate silk and cashmere shawls lay on the few easy chairs that were disposed about the room. The bowl of the hanging lamp, above the table, was of bits of amber and orange and ruby glass, through which shone a subdued and mellow light. Near the ceiling were three or four small openings, covered with iron gratings, and the air in the apartment was pure, except for the odour of tobacco. The figure on the divan was smoking a pipe; a water-pipe, whose long flexible stem reached to the floor, where its bowl rested.

Shiraz the Rug-Merchant looked at his visitors with little beady black eyes. His skin was very dark, and shriveled and wrinkled like the skin of a dried apple. His cheek-bones seemed as if about to break through his cheeks, and his lips were stretched back from his teeth, which were black and broken. His hands were like the claws of a bird. Thin white hair straggled over his tight dark scalp. He wore a robe of some soft material, harmoniously mottled upon a ground of maroon, and on his feet were slippers of red morocco, pointed upwards at the toes. His turban lay upon the table beside him.



Shiraz the Rug-Merchant looked at his visitors with little beady black eyes.

He was the smallest man the strangers had ever seen. After a searching look at them with his beady eyes, he rose from the divan, laid down the stem of his pipe, and stood up. He was not taller than Freddie. As he stood by the divan, looking up at his visitors, he seemed indeed a mere mummy of a man, likely to

fall to pieces at a breath of air.

"You are welcome," he said, in a voice surprisingly strong. "I perceive that you have come from a great distance. Permit me to inquire what errand has brought you to your servant's poor habitation."

"I reckon we want to buy something," said Toby. "I don't know what, exactly, but a chap by the name of Higginson, Captain Reuben Higginson, he give us the direction, as you might say."

"Ah, yes," said Shiraz the Persian. "I remember him very well. I was sorry to learn of his misfortune. An excellent man; a member of some strange sect——"

"A Quaker," said Toby. "The paper he left said we might buy something here, and here we are, ready to buy."

"I have long since retired from the rug business," said Shiraz, "but I have brought with me here, as you may see, some of my choicest treasures, as a slight solace in my seclusion." He glanced towards the rugs on the walls. "I am reluctant to part with any of them, but I am willing to make an exception, in view of your having made so long a journey to see me. My son," said he to the young man, "bring hither the Omar prayer-rug."

The young man took from one of the walls a small rug, and laid it at the feet of Shiraz.

"You will immediately perceive," said the Persian, "the extreme beauty of this rug. It is one of my rarest treasures. It is a prayer-rug from the mosque of Omar at Isfahan; a Kalicheh of cut-pile fabric, with the Sehna knot, as I need not tell you; made in Kurdistan three hundred years ago; observe, if you please, the

delicacy of the design and the harmony of the colouring. Its possession is as a spring of water to the desert Bedouin; as a palm with dates on the road to Mecca; as a word to the believer from the mouth of the Prophet. Its price, to those who have journeyed across the sea to buy it, is twelve copper pennies."

The Sly Old Fox stooped down and examined it. His eyes lit up with pleasure. "Beautiful!" said he. "I have never seen a rug more beautiful; it is a real work of —of—I will take it. At twelve pennies. It is mine."

"No, no!" said Aunt Amanda. "You'll do nothing of the kind. It is certainly the finest piece of carpet I have ever seen, and the price is low enough, in all conscience. But we are not going to buy it. I am sorry, sir, but we can't buy your rug. Show us something else."

Shiraz displayed his teeth more plainly than ever in a sly smile.

"Your servant is desolated," he replied. "I crave your pardon for showing a trifle so far beneath your notice. My son, take it away. If your excellencies will deign to overlook my error, I will produce an article more worthy of your attention. This time I promise myself the ecstasy of your approval."

"Pretty good line of talk," whispered Toby in Mr. Punch's ear.

"My son," continued Shiraz, "bring hither the Wishing Rug."

The young man took away the prayer-rug, and brought another from the wall; a much larger one, large enough, indeed, for twenty people to stand on. It was dingy and frayed, and in no way beautiful like

the other.

"A rug of the Tomb of Rustam," said Shiraz, "gained by the hero in battle from the genie Akhnavid. It is the last of the Wishing Rugs. Its property is, that it will transport to the farthest regions of the earth, in the twinkling of an eye, those who sit upon it and but name aloud the place of their desire. Excellencies," he said, addressing his visitors very earnestly, "if it is your wish to return home, the moment has arrived; you have only to sit upon this rug and wish yourselves at home, and you will find yourselves there, safe and sound, before the words shall have well left your lips. And the price is only twenty pennies."

Every one of the party hesitated. A vision of the Old Tobacco Shop entered each mind. It had never seemed so cozy, so quiet, so secure as at that moment. How or when they would ever get there, in the natural course of events, no one knew. If they did not seize this opportunity, they might be lost forever. It was a chance such as they could scarcely have hoped for.

"Could we take our belongings with us?" said the Sly Old Fox.

"All that can be piled on the rug," said Shiraz.

"Then I will buy it," said the Sly Old Codger. "I do not consider twenty pennies too much for such a rug. The rug is mine."

"It's nothing of the sort," said Aunt Amanda, waking from deep thought. "Nobody's going to buy the rug. I'm captain of this expedition, and my orders is, to wait and see what's going to happen next. I'm sorry,

sir, but the rug ain't exactly what we want. You must show us something else."

The Rug-Merchant appeared greatly mortified. "I do not know how I could have made such a mistake," he said. "I should have known that these little trifles could not interest you. I trust you will believe that I meant no offense. I fear there is nothing in my poor collection which merits your notice. Permit me to wish you a safe journey. Do you intend to remain long in the City of Towers?"

"That won't do," said Toby. "You must show us something else."

The Rug-Merchant looked intently at Aunt Amanda. "You command it?" said he.

"I do," said she.

"To hear is to obey," said Shiraz. "I tremble to think how contemptible are the baubles I shall now offer you, but I trust you will not be angry with your servant." He turned to the young man, and spoke to him in an unknown tongue. "Be not offended, excellencies," he went on, "by your poor servant's ignorance in the art of pleasing."

The young man disappeared behind one of the hanging rugs, and in a moment returned with certain small objects, which he stood upon the table in a row. They were eight hour-glasses, of a very ordinary kind, much like those already seen in the booth outside. The sand in each one was wholly in the upper glass, and was just beginning to trickle down into the lower. The strangers were obviously disappointed.

"I fear your displeasure," said Shiraz, "but apart from

my trifling rugs, these are all I have to offer."

"And what," said the Sly Old Fox, "what may be the price of these interesting objects?"

"The price," said Shiraz, fixing his beady eyes on Aunt Amanda, "the price is this and nothing less: your treasure on the mules outside; your share of the treasure on the mules."

Everyone gasped. The treasure which they had gone through so many perils to secure, for these indifferent trinkets! A life of ease and plenty for an hour-glass!

"Ahem!" said the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg. "Excuse me for saying it, but the—er—price appears to be a little bit high."

"It is too high for me," said the Sly Old Fox, positively. "I regret to say it, but I am compelled to withdraw; I cannot go on at such a figure. Please consider me out of it."

"And—er—me too," said the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg.

"Well," said Toby, doubtfully, "it's a blamed hard thing to give up all that treasure for one of these here little toys. I don't see my way clear to doing it. What do you say, Aunt Amanda?"

"I'll do it," said Aunt Amanda, looking at Shiraz, whose eyes were still on her. "I've come all this way to do it, and I'll do it. I ain't going to back out now at the last minute. My mind's made up. Mr. Shiraz, I'll buy an hour-glass."

"By crackey," said Toby, "then I will too. What about you, Freddie?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Freddie.

"Hi'll 'ave one myself," said Mr. Punch.

"After due consideration," said the Churchwarden, "I think I will buy one also."

Mr. Hanlon nodded a vigorous assent.

The two Old Codgers, however, were firm in their refusal. They could not be persuaded. They retired from the enterprise then and there.

Under the conduct of the young man, the two Old Codgers left the room, and returned to the Committee who were waiting with the mules outside; and with them went Toby and Mr. Punch and Mr. Hanlon, to bring back that portion of the treasure which was to pay for the six hour-glasses.

This was a work of much difficulty, and occupied a great deal of time. While it was going on, the Rug-Merchant, having first asked permission, reclined again on the divan and resumed his pipe, while Aunt Amanda, Freddie, and the Churchwarden seated themselves, at his invitation, and watched him in silence.

The treasure was at length piled, complete, in a corner of the room. Toby, Mr. Punch, and Mr. Hanlon returned for the last time, and without the great-great-grandson of the Rug-Merchant.

"The others will wait outside for an hour," said Toby. "If we don't come back by that time, they'll go on into the city without us."

Shiraz the Rug-Merchant laid down the stem of his pipe, and rising bowed to Aunt Amanda with great deference.

"Permit me, most gracious lady," said he, "to see the fingers of your left hand."

He took in his own right hand the third finger of Aunt Amanda's left, and bent his eyes close over it. He straightened himself up with a long breath, and crossing his arms upon his breast, made a low salaam.

"It is as I thought," said he. "The mark is here, on the third finger of the left hand. Highness," said he, bowing lower, "I pray you accept your servant's salutation on your return." And raising her hand to his lips, he kissed it in a very courtly manner.

"Goodness alive!" said Aunt Amanda, turning as red as a rose, "you make me feel too foolish for anything."

"You have been away a long time," said Shiraz, "but you have returned. Happy am I to be the first to greet you on your return. You and the others have all been enchanted. You are six enchanted souls, and in your present shapes not one of you is himself. I suppose you do not know that you are enchanted; you think that you are yourselves; is it not so? I assure you it is a mistake; but I can put you in the way of correcting your errors, and restoring yourselves to your true shapes, if you desire it. Madam," said he, bowing again to Aunt Amanda, "I await your commands."

"I reckon we all want to be corrected," said Aunt Amanda. "It's what we've come here for. We've come a long way to this island, and for nothing on earth but to be corrected, if there's any way to do it. If you can do it, go ahead."

"Hearing is obedience," said Shiraz. "Please to take the hour-glasses."

Each one took up an hour-glass from the table and held it in his hand.

"It is necessary," said Shiraz, "to destroy the sands in the glasses. If they can be destroyed, the enchantment will be over. There is no power on earth which can destroy the sands but one, and that is the White Fire of the Preserver. Will you risk the fire?"

"I will," said Aunt Amanda, now somewhat pale; and the others nodded assent.

"Then I will give you the White Robes," said Shiraz. "Without them you can not withstand the Fire."

He went to a wall and drew from behind the hangings a box, which he opened on the table. From this box he took six white linen gowns, and at his direction each put on one of the gowns. Freddie's was much too long, and he was obliged to hold it up.

"Well," said Toby, "I always did look ridiculous in a night-gown, but this beats—"

"Peace," said Shiraz. "The Fire will not harm you now. Two things only are necessary: to fear nothing, and to hold tight to the hour-glasses."

With these words he clapped his hands, and from behind the hangings on the rear wall stepped a black man, clad in a robe similar to the others. To this man the Persian spoke in some strange tongue, and the man bowed.

"Now," said Shiraz, "you will follow my servant. Farewell, and peace be with you."

CHAPTER XXIII

FROM THE FIRE BACK TO THE FRYING PAN

The white-robed figures, having left the room by a small circular door behind the hangings, followed the black servant along a pitch-dark passage, and in a few moments came to a bridge, similar to the one they had crossed before. As they felt their way over it cautiously one by one, the sound of rushing water came to them from below, and a cold breeze fanned their cheeks. A little further on they touched the first step of a stair, and began to ascend its worn stone treads. They mounted some thirty steps, and touching the wall with their hands, moved onward along a passage. This passage made an abrupt turn to the left, and when they had cleared the corner they saw in its sides before them a gleam of light here and there.

"The Master's work-rooms," said the black servant. "Please to follow."

They passed now and then beneath a lighted window, too high to be seen through, and at the end of the passage the servant paused before a closed iron door. He opened this door with a key, and led them forth.

Before them was a garden, the most beautiful that any of them had ever seen. High over it was a dome

of pale green and amber glass, through which the sunlight streamed in mild and parti-coloured rays. The walls which supported the dome were so high that it was impossible to see beyond. In the center was a fountain, dropping in a sparkling shower into a marble basin; around it spread a well-ordered carpet of flowers, of all the colours, as it seemed, of the rainbow; along the walls were cocoa palms, banana trees, and the feathery bamboo; white cockatoos sailed across from palm to palm; the air was heavy with a warm odour of moist earth and blossoms. The whole party drew a deep breath of pleasure. The dark place from which they had come seemed to fade away like a dream before the soft beauty of the garden.

The servant led them to the opposite side, and unlocked a door in the wall, making way for them to pass in before him. They entered, and heard the door locked behind them; the servant was no longer with them; they were alone in a small square room, of stone walls and an earthen floor; there was no opening, but in the opposite wall was a closed door. A pale light pervaded the place, from what source they could not discover. In the earthen floor from wall to wall grew a thicket of stiff stalks, higher than Freddie's head, and clustered closely around each stalk from bottom to top were flowers of a waxen whiteness.

"It seems a real pity," said Aunt Amanda, "to break those pretty plants, but I reckon we've got to wade into them. I'm mighty curious to see what's on the other side of that door. Probably the fire the old man was talking about. Oh, dear, I don't like fire. But we've got to get to that door, so come along."

The whole party moved in a body into the thicket of waxen stalks.

As they stepped in, the stalks broke around them with sharp reports. They moved on again, and the reports, as the stalks broke, became louder and louder; and now each one felt the hour-glass in his hand being tugged at, and found that wherever his hand touched a flower, the petals flattened themselves on the hand and the glass, and clung so tight that it took a hard jerk to get them loose. There was danger of losing the glasses, and with one accord they held the glasses high above their heads. The moment they did so, the conduct of the stalks became terrifying indeed.

As if in anger, the broken stalks spouted forth, with a hiss and a rush, blinding jets of liquid white fire, which tore at the ceiling angrily and roared and crackled. From the broken stalks it spread to the others, and in a moment jets of liquid white fire were blazing and crackling upward from all the stalks in the room, and the terrified captives were in the very midst of it.

It ran up their robes and showered on them from the ceiling; it became denser and angrier; it was all but unbearable, though they felt it in only a tiny fraction of its real strength; in another instant the frail white gowns must surely be consumed. But in some strange way the gowns shed off the liquid fire, and remained unscorched.

For a moment the sufferers were stupefied. They were unable to move. Freddie tried to scream, but he could make no sound; he almost fainted away; but he felt, through it all, the sturdy arm of Mr. Toby tight about him.

They pushed on in a close body and passed the center of the room; the white glare became more blinding, the roar and crackle more deafening; they were surrounded, cut off, in the midst of destruction; they were bewildered; they stopped again; there was no use in going back; they must get forward through the furnace at any cost; they made a new start; and in a frenzy of terror, their hands before their eyes, with a rush they gained the door. They crowded against it; they pushed and beat upon it; it gave way before them; they rushed through, and it closed behind them of its own accord.

They were standing in broad daylight on the sidewalk of a city street, under a high blank wall, with shops on the opposite side; each with an hour-glass, empty of sand, in his right hand, and each clad only in a long white night-gown.

CHAPTER XXIV

DISENCHANTMENT COMPLETE

They looked behind them. A high stone wall rose at their backs, and in it was no sign of a door.

They looked across the street. It was a narrow street, paved with cobble-stones; on the opposite side, where a row of little low shops stretched away on either hand, a few people were going in and out at the doors, and a few others were walking at some distance, before the shop-windows. An ox-cart was

coming slowly down the street.

Freddie had sometimes dreamed of being out among people in broad daylight in his night-gown, and he now felt the same terror he had felt in those dreams; he looked anxiously at the shops for a place in which to hide. No one appeared to observe them yet, but they would soon be seen, and it would be dreadful, unless they could find shelter without a moment's delay.

"We had better run into one of those shops," said he, breathlessly, "and ask them to hide us until we can get some clothes."

"Ah, no," said a soft voice beside him, at his right. "It is not a shop that I must go to now. I must hurry home."

Freddie looked around at his right for Aunt Amanda. There was no Aunt Amanda. In her place, holding an empty hour-glass in her right hand, was a lady, the fairest whom Freddie had ever seen. She was young; her eyes were of the blue of summer skies; her hair was golden yellow; on her soft white cheek was a tinge of pink; two heavy braids of hair hung almost to her knees; her eyes were sparkling with happiness, and a tender and wistful smile curved her lips. As Freddie gazed at her, he thought that there could not be in the world another so radiantly beautiful. She looked about her as one who sees familiar things after a long absence.

Freddie's eyes fell to the hand which was nearest him, her left. On the third finger of her left hand was a ruby ring.

"Are you," he faltered, "are you—Aunt Amanda?"

"I think," she said, smiling on him, "I think I was, once. I think I can remember that name. And you are —let me see; what was your name? Ah, yes, your name was Freddie. But we must hurry; we must not keep them waiting."

Freddie turned, and saw beside him four strange men, all gazing at the beautiful lady in amazement. In the right hand of each was an empty hour-glass.

Freddie looked down on the two men who stood nearest him; he looked *down* on them; he was suddenly aware that he was not looking up. They were short, for full-grown men, and of precisely the same height; their faces were square, their cheek-bones prominent, and their noses hooked; the head of one was bald, and the hair of the other's head lay flat down on his forehead where it curved back like a hairpin; except for their heads, they were in all respects twins. There was no hump on the back of either of them.

"Mr. Punch and Mr. Toby!" said Freddie.

"The wery same," said the bald-headed one.

"That's me," said the other.

Behind Mr. Toby stood a lean man in spectacles. His night-gown hung upon him very loosely, and he was very spare indeed. His smooth-shaven cheeks were somewhat hollow; his eyes behind his glasses were deep and solemn; his frame was the frame of one who subdues the flesh by fasting; snow-white hair, curling inward at the back of his neck, made a kind of aureole around his thin face; he looked for all the world as he stood barefoot in his long white gown, like one of those saints you see in painted glass

windows in a church.

"Is it," said Freddie, hesitating, "is it—the Churchwarden?"

"I have reason to believe," said the saintly looking man, "that I have been known by that name. But I am in reality, and always have been, in reality, something far more lowly than a churchwarden; I am, and always have been, at heart, a meek and humble follower of the holy Thomas à Kempis, whose life of serene and cloistered sanctity I have always wished to imitate. Now that I am myself, it is my ambition to be known, if it is not too presumptuous to say so, as Thomas the Inferior. Pax vobiscum."

"I ain't got the least idea what that means," said Toby, "but anyway it's the Churchwarden's voice, whether he calls himself Thomas the Inferior or Daniel the Deleterious. You're heartily welcome, Warden, and I hope you won't mind my saying that a good meal wouldn't do you any harm, from the looks of you. I'm pretty near starved to death myself. Mr. Punch, we've got rid of our humps, as sure as you're born. We're as straight in our bodies as we've always been in our minds, and that's as straight as a string. By crackey, I never felt so fine in my life; blamed if I couldn't lick my weight in wildcats."

"Hi 'ave no wish to do so," said Mr. Punch. "Hi do not desire to engage in any conflict whatever; Hi should regard such conduct as wery reprehensible; wery. But one cannot but admit, harfter one's back 'as been so long out of correct proportion, as one may s'y, that one enjoys a wery pronounced satisfaction when one feels one's self restored to one's rightful position as a hupright person, in common with one's fellow—"

"What about Mr. Hanlon?" said Toby, turning around.

"Michael Hanlon, prisent!" said a cheerful voice.

Behind the Inferior Thomas stood a tall and handsome man, the picture of an athlete in the prime of condition. Short curling black hair clustered on his head; his eyes were of a humorous dark blue; his cheeks were like red apples; his shoulders were muscular, his back was straight, his figure slim; and he wore his night-gown as a Greek runner in ancient times might have worn his robe after the games.

"What!" said Freddie. "Can you talk?"

"Faith," said Mr. Hanlon, "I've a tongue in me head that can wag with anny that iver come off the blarney stone, and it's no lies I'm tellin' ye. For an Irish gintleman to have to listen and listen, and kape his tongue still in his head and say niver a worrd at all, at all, 'tis a hard life, me frinds, a hard life, and it's plaised I am to be mesilf at last, and the nate bit of tongue doin' his duty like a thrue son of Erin—I could tell ye a swate little shtory that comes to me mind, of a dumb Irishman that could not spake at all, at all, and the deaf wife of him that could not hear, and their twelve pigs all lyin' down in the mud with wan of thim standing up and crying out that the wolf was comin' in through the gate, and the good wife unable to hear and the good man unable to spake—"

"I reckon you've got your tongue, all right," said Toby. "I wish we had time to hear that story, but we haven't. Now, Freddie, what do you think we'd better —Why, Freddie! What's that you've got on your lip?"

Freddie put his hand to his upper lip. What he felt

there was a tiny silken mustache. He blushed.

"And 'e's taller than any of us except Mr. 'Anlon!" exclaimed Mr. Punch. "My word!"

Freddie looked down at Mr. Punch, and realized his own height. He looked at his hands, and they were almost as large as Mr. Hanlon's. His night-gown came to his ankles, and he realized that he was no longer holding it up.

"Why," he said, "I must be grown up!"

"Grown up is the word," said Toby, "but I'd 'a' known you anywhere. Twenty-one years old, I should say."

"Twenty-two," said Mr. Punch.

Everyone now fell silent. The young and lovely lady, who had said nothing during their talk, was smiling from one to another. She seemed to feel no embarrassment nor concern, nor anything indeed but happiness. She looked at Toby with a smile, and all the men looked at her.

"Do you know me?" she said to Toby.

"You are changed," said he, "that's a fact. But I always knew that Aunt Amanda was like that, down deep inside of her. If she could only have looked like what she was, that's the way she would have looked, and I always knew it. I'm glad you've come to look like yourself at last."

"Ah!" said the beautiful lady. "I am glad you don't feel that I am strange to you. I know you all now, better than I have ever known you. You have been with me a long while, under disguise. I don't seem to remember very well what your disguises were, for I seem to have known you always as you are: my loyal

knight," (turning to Freddie), "my body-guard," (turning to Mr. Toby and Mr. Punch), "my confessor," (turning to Thomas the Inferior), "and my courier," (turning to Mr. Hanlon). "In my exile you have been with me, and in my homecoming you shall be with me still."

"We hope to be with you always," said the tall young knight who used to be Freddie. "But we are beginning to be noticed. I have seen one or two people stare from the shop windows. We had better hurry to one of those shops and seek refuge until we can find proper clothes."

"Ah, no!" said the lady, with a radiant smile. "I must hasten home. They have been waiting a long time, and I must not lose a moment. I know the way! This street is changed since I was here, but I know it! I know the way! Come with me! I am going home!"

She placed her empty hour-glass in Freddie's hand, and led the way up the street. Her bare feet trod the pavement swiftly; she walked as if she had never known what it was to be lame; she went swimmingly, with a motion of infinite grace. The others looked about them, uneasily, as they followed, but she seemed to care nothing for the eyes of the people. The ox-cart stopped as it came to them, and the driver who was walking beside it stopped also, and gazed at them with his mouth open. Faces appeared at shop-windows as they went by, and figures appeared at shop-doors. Two or three foot-passengers passed them, and after they had gone, went to the nearest shop-door and stood there for a moment in talk with the shop-keeper. They then began to follow the strange white-clad group up the street. In a few moments others joined them. Freddie

looked behind, and wished to run; but the lady who was leading paid no attention.

A little further on she turned a corner, and the party found themselves in a much busier street. The sidewalks were alive with people. In a moment there was a great silence. When the six figures first appeared, some of the people began to laugh. Then they looked at the face of the lady who swept along in advance of her attendants, and they laughed no more. They began to whisper one to another. They fell apart, and made way for her and her attendants. They stopped; they forgot their own affairs; some ran into the shops and called out the persons who were within; they gaped, and whispered, and nodded, and held up their hands, and with one accord began to follow.

Further on, heads appeared from the windows of pleasure-towers and pleasure-domes; doors opened; all who could walk joined themselves to the crowd which was following the wondrous lady and her five strange companions.

Deeper and deeper into the city; on past the region of shops into the region of gardens and mansions; up by a gradual ascent to the place of the largest and tallest towers and domes; on they went, the six white-gowned and bare-footed figures before, and the crowd behind; and the further they went, the greater became the crowd; and still there was no sound from the people, except the sound of an awestruck whispering.

The dark cloud on the mountain-top was now plainly in view before them between the towers and domes, and they could see the great mass of the King's Tower where it rose to the cloud and lost itself

within it. At the end of the street which they were now following a majestic gateway could be seen, and beyond it a park.

Behind them the street was choked from wall to wall with a vast multitude. From every house, as the multitude passed, its people poured forth and joined the throng; business was forgotten; shops and houses were deserted; it seemed as if the whole city was in the street, following the lady and her five attendants. She looked not behind her once. She seemed to be unaware of anything in the world about her; her eyes shone like stars; she had forgotten even her companions; she spoke not a word, but looked forward to the stately gateway and the park beyond. Still no sound came from the multitude, except a sound of whispering.

They reached the gateway. On each side was a great stone pillar, supporting a gate of massive bronze. The gates were open. Without an instant's hesitation she led the way within, and as she did so placed her left hand on her heart. The throng seemed to waver a moment, and then as the six barefoot and white-gowned figures moved swiftly up the driveway into the park, it flowed in silently between the gates, and followed at a respectful distance.

Before them, at a distance, on a knoll from which terraces of velvet grass descended, stood the palace of the King; white and broad and flat-roofed.

Passing a grove of trees, the lady left the roadway and stepped into the smooth grass of a lawn, and sped across it directly towards the terraces before the palace of the King. She mounted the gentle slope, her five friends following her; and the vast throng, filling the park to the gates, came on behind. She reached

the first terrace; her hand was still on her heart. A dog barked.

Windows in the palace front began to go up, and faces to appear. From an archway sprang a pack of beautiful tall white curly-haired dogs, and rushed on the lady, barking. Freddie made as if to protect her, but she waved him back with a smile. The dogs sprang up as if to devour her, but they did no harm; they barked as if their throats would burst; they leaped and gambolled about her; they thrust their noses into her hand; they almost spoke; and in the midst of it there appeared upon the wide steps before the palace door a noble-looking man, and beside him three children.

At sight of this man and the children, the lady covered her eyes for an instant with her hands, and gave a sob; but she quickly looked up, and sped on more swiftly than before, her hands hanging beside her, and a bright misty look in her eyes.

The man upon the palace steps shaded his eyes with his hands, and gazed upon her and the multitude spread out across the park behind her. One of the children, a tiny boy, he took by the hand, and another, a girl a little older, he grasped with his other hand; and with the third, a boy of something over nine, beside them, they all four came down the steps and crossed the terrace to meet the radiant lady.

On the next terrace they met. He dropped his children's hands, and stopped. He was a man of some thirty years, richly clad, and handsome beyond measure. As he stopped, the multitude found its voice. A mighty shout went up.

"Long live the King! Long live the King!"

He paid no attention. His eyes were on the fair lady before him. A cry from the oldest boy rang out clear and sharp in the silence.

"Mother!"

The King held out his arms.

"My darling!" he cried. "At last! At last!"

"Beloved!" she cried, and rushed into his arms, and buried her face in his shoulder.

The children clung to her, weeping, and with one arm she pressed them close against her side.

The multitude found its voice again.

"Long live Queen Miranda! Long live Queen Miranda!"

CHAPTER XXV

THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN

"There's an Old Man," said Robert to Freddie. "He lives on the mountain. I saw him once."

They were sitting on the palace lawn, looking up at the mountain which rose behind the King's tower. The sun was directly overhead, and was accordingly hidden by the cloud. The lower slopes of the

mountain were easy and gradual, but they grew steeper as they ascended, and at the point where the mountain entered the cloud it was a straight and smooth wall of granite, plainly impossible to climb. The King's eldest child fixed his big eyes on the tall young man beside him.

"I like you," said he. "I wish you would take me up the mountain some time for blackberries. Will you?"

"If the Queen permits," said Freddie, "we will go tomorrow."

A long time had passed since the Queen's return; a happy time, during which the five who had come with the Queen were made to feel as if they had lived all their lives in a palace. The two Old Codgers were found by Toby, comfortably established in a double shop of their own, on one side of which the Old Codger with the Wooden Leg sold tobacco, and on the other side of which the Sly Old Fox sold jewelry; each of them entirely contented with his fortune, and settled down for life. The Third Vice-President had paid his respects at the palace, and was unable to talk of anything but his Museum, for which he was devising many plans, including a method whereby the late Mr. Matthew Speak might be assured against ever being blown out of the window.

The saintly person who had once been the Churchwarden was occupied nowadays, in a little room in the basement of the palace, in copying in beautiful letters an ancient book belonging to the King.

Mr. Punch and Mr. Toby spent their time in exploring the city, arm in arm, very inquisitive, very

talkative, and making friends with everybody.

Mr. Hanlon's work in life was, it appeared, the climbing of the King's Tower. Every day he disappeared within, and every day he declared that he would mount to the top before he finished; but he had not yet got to the top, and there did not seem much prospect of his ever doing so.

As for Freddie,—not that he was called Freddie now; the King had given him a high-sounding name,—the Chevalier Frederick; and by that name he was spoken of by everybody, except that Toby sometimes forgot and called him the Chandelier. As for the Chevalier Frederick, his interest was mainly in the Queen's three children, Robert, Genevieve, and James; and at the present moment the oldest, Robert, was sitting with the Chevalier on the palace lawn, gossiping.

"We will go tomorrow," the Chevalier was saying, and then the little boy Robert went on about the old man he had seen on the mountain.

"I saw him once," said Robert. "Just before Mother went away. I ran away from home, I did, and I was gone all day. Mother was terribly worried. I ran away to the mountain, and I was muddy all over when I got back, and it was dark, too! Mother was terribly worried. I was gone all day, I was; and I didn't get back until after dark, I didn't; and I was muddy all over. Oh, but it was dark. Mother, she was terribly worried." He stopped to think it over, and then went on again. "There wasn't any Tower then. It was just before the old chap came and built the Tower in a night; you know about that, don't you? I ran away and didn't come home until after dark, I didn't; Mother was worried; and Jenny—I never call her Genevieve, because Jenny's shorter—and Jenny

wouldn't go because she was afraid, and James was too little, so I went all by myself; and it was getting pretty dark, and I was starting home down the mountain, because I knew Mother would be worried, and I saw the Old Man coming down the mountain, and he didn't see me, and he had a pack on his back and a long stick in his hand, and a gown belted in about the middle, and he was kind of fat and bald-headed; and he didn't see me but I saw him, and pretty soon he went down into a gully and I didn't see him any more, and I came on home, because it was getting dark, and I knew Mother would be worried."

"Then perhaps we had better not go up there," said Freddie.

"Oh no," said Robert. "It's a grand place to climb and gather berries and flowers. And I'd like to see the Old Man again. Will you take me there today?"

"Tomorrow," said Freddie, "if the Queen will permit."

At this moment Mr. Hanlon appeared, somewhat out of breath, and he and Freddie went into the palace together. He was quite jubilant.

"Faith," said he, "'tis a tower indade, that tower, and a swate little bit of a journey to the top of it, if there's iver a top at all. But it's Michael Hanlon will do it, by the bones of St. Patrick, and don't ye forget what I'm tellin' ye, me b'y. I've been up there this day, so high, so high—! I'll niver tell ye how high. It's comin' better; me wind and me legs are better; in a wake, or two wakes, 'tis meself will be fit for the grand ascent, and then there'll be news from the top, and a proud look in the eye of Michael Hanlon, Esquire! Wait and see, me b'y!"

The next morning, Queen Miranda having given her consent, Freddie and Robert left the palace for their day on the mountain. All day they wandered up the trails, and in the afternoon, when their luncheon was all gone and they were tired, they began to descend. It was growing dark; they had had a glorious day, and they were sorry it would soon be over. They stretched themselves on the ground beneath a mountain oak, and looked below them, past the Tower, across the roof of the palace to the city. There was no living thing in sight, except a bird which sailed across their view and disappeared. "Well, Robert," said Freddie, "I suppose the Old Man who used to be here is gone. Come; we must go; your mother will be worried."

They got to their feet. As they did so, a kind of groan startled them. They listened. It came again, from some point near by. Freddie thought he could make out a weak human voice, trying to call for help. Drawing Robert after him, he climbed over a number of boulders and mounted to the top of a rise in the ground, and looked down into a deep gully, covered on its sides with rocks and bushes. What he saw there gave him a start of alarm.

At the bottom was an old man, lying on his back, with one leg doubled under him, his face up to the sky. From his lips came a groan, followed by a faint cry for help. His head was bald, he was rather stout, he wore a long white beard, and he was clad in a short dark gown, belted about the middle. His legs were bare, and on the foot which was visible he wore a sandal.

Robert looked over Freddie's shoulder, and whispered in his ear. "That's him! He's fallen down

and hurt himself."

It was true. The old man had evidently fallen, and he was plainly suffering. Freddie clambered down to him, and knelt beside him. The old man looked into the young man's eyes, and said, in a feeble whisper:

"My leg. Broken. Help me home."

Freddie assisted him into a sitting position, and then lifted him up and held him.

"I cannot walk," said the old man. "Unless you can carry me, I must die here."

Freddie was properly proud of his new strength, and he believed that he could carry the old man.

"Where do you live?" said he.

"Up the mountain. I will show you. I beg you to carry me home."

"I will do my best," said Freddie.

He turned his back to the old man, and supporting him at the same time put the old man's arms about his neck, and by a great effort got the poor creature on his back. Carrying him thus, he began to go haltingly up the side of the gully. The little boy watched them wonderingly.

It was a terrible journey. The old man directed Freddie from moment to moment, and the way led steadily up the mountain, by a course which Freddie had not seen that day. The burden on Freddie's back became heavier and heavier; he panted harder and harder under it; he stumbled from time to time, and every instant told himself that he could go no further. The old man seemed to think of nothing but

of getting home. The little boy followed, staring with big eyes.

Freddie had gone but a short way up the mountain-side when he felt through all his back, where it touched the old man, a chill; his shoulders and throat, where the arms of the old man touched them, became cold; as he struggled on, the chill increased; he felt as if he were hugging to his back a burden of ice.

"Are we nearly there?" he asked, trying to wipe a cold perspiration from his forehead.

"No, no," said the old man. "Go on. A long way yet. You can't be tired so soon."

The cold upon Freddie's back and shoulders and throat became a dead numbness; he was too cold to shiver; his arms too were now becoming numb, and he felt that he could hold his burden no longer. He stopped.

"I must put you down," he said. "I must rest a moment. I don't know what makes me so cold."

"No, no," said the old man. "Too soon! too soon! Keep on!"

"I cannot," said Freddie. "I am freezing. My strength is gone. I must rest."

With these words he let the old man carefully down, and laid him on the ground. He stood there panting and rubbing his frozen hands together.

"Stupid weakling," said the old man, staring up at him, "go and search upon the mountain-side and bring me hither seeds of the fennel which you will there find, and be quick; for I perish."

Freddie and the little boy hastened away together, and at a distance on the mountain-side found, after a long search, a few plants of the fennel, with which they hurried back to the old man.

He was gone.

They looked far and near; they examined every nook and cranny; the mountain was steep at this point, and difficult for any sound man; for an old man, crippled, it seemed impossible, but he was nowhere to be found; he was gone.

Freddie and Robert turned homeward, and made hard work of it. The little boy became extremely heated with his labor; but Freddie remained as cold as ever. It is true that he perspired, but the beads upon his forehead were like the beads upon ice-cold glass. His hands were so numb that when he cut them slightly on a rock he felt no pain. His back, where the old man had clung to it with his body, was coldest of all; he was so stiff that he could scarcely bend his arms or body; many times the little boy had to help him down; the chill spread; at the foot of the mountain his legs were nearly as cold as his arms; when they passed the Tower, his knees were as if frozen, and would not bend; the little boy put his arm about him and tried to help him walk; he began to lose knowledge of his whereabouts; he held out a stiff arm before him, like a blind man, and dragged one foot after the other like a man whose legs are made of stone. The little boy, weeping to himself, took his icy outstretched hand, and led him home.

The palace door was thrown open. The little boy rushed in with a cry, and turned around to his companion. The white-faced rigid creature which was Freddie stood in the doorway, staring vacantly,

and fell slowly forward on its face upon the floor.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE KING'S TOWER

Freddie was very ill. He was so ill that after a week the King gave up all hope, and believed he would die. The Queen wept bitterly; she scarcely left his side; at night she did not sleep for weeping, and by day she sat by his bed and watched his cold white face. His friends were not allowed to see him, and of these it appeared that Mr. Hanlon had been gone for some days up the Tower.

All that the best doctors in the city could do had been done, but the Chevalier was no better. He lay under the blankets, cold as ice and motionless as stone; and his eyes, big round eyes like the eyes of a child, stared up strangely out of deep sockets. They looked up at the King, who was bending down over the bed and smiling encouragingly. The Queen and her three children, Robert, Genevieve, and James, were standing close by, but they could not smile.

"Come, Chevalier," said the King, "you will be well soon, I am sure."

A faint voice came from the pale lips; not the voice of a grown man, but the voice of a child.

"That isn't my name," it said, "my name is—Fweddie."

The King went away, and took his children with him; and after they had gone the Queen heard the childish voice again from the bed.

"I want to see Aunt Amanda."

The Queen went to him, and stood beside the bed. He looked up at her.

"You aren't Aunt Amanda," he said. "I want to see Aunt Amanda."

"I think that was my name once," said the Queen. "Will you talk to me?"

He looked at her again, and she saw that he did not know her.

"My farver sent me," he said. "Mr. Toby has gone to the barber-shop, and my farver he wants a pound of Cage-Roach Mitchner."

"Mr. Toby is here in the palace now, and I'm sure he —"

"I don't know about any palace. I can't wait long. My farver told me to hurry."

The Queen said no more, and Freddie appeared to go to sleep. The night came on, and the Queen still sat by his side. It grew very late; her children had long since gone to bed, and even the King was asleep in his own apartments. The palace was silent, and there was scarcely a light anywhere in the great place except the light of a taper on a table in Freddie's room. The Queen was bending forward, watching the face on the pillow. The eyes were closed, the lips were together, and there was no sign of breathing. She knew that it could not be much longer; she buried her face in her hands and wept bitterly.

A gentle tap upon the door aroused her. She rose and admitted Mr. Toby and Mr. Punch, Thomas the Inferior, and Mr. Hanlon.

"Quick, ma'am," said Mr. Hanlon. "There's not a minute to be lost. If you plase, I'll ask ye to put on yer bonnet in a hurry, ma'am. We're off on a journey, and the poor sick young lad's coming along with us. If you'll just be in a hurry with the bonnet, ma'am!"

The Queen, scarcely realizing what she was doing, left the room, and went first to the nursery, where she bent over her three sleeping children and kissed them each, and murmured a loving good-bye above them, as if she were going to leave them; and for a long, long time she gazed at each rosy face, as if to fix it in her memory forever.

When she returned to the room, wearing a shawl over her head and shoulders, she was startled to see that the sick youth was sitting upright in a chair, thickly wrapped in blankets. His round childlike eyes were wide open, and to her surprise a faint smile seemed to hover about his lips.

She looked at the others. Each held, in his hand an empty hour-glass.

"Plase to get your hour-glass, ma'am," said Mr. Hanlon, "and Freddie's too."

Freddie's hour-glass was soon found in a drawer in the same room; the Queen's she brought in a moment from another room.

Mr. Hanlon picked up from the floor, where he had previously laid it, a small canvas bag, and placed it on the table under the candle. All of the empty hour-glasses he placed upon the table, and unscrewed the

part of each by which it was designed to receive its load of sand. He lifted his bag, and out of it poured into each glass a quantity of fine white sand. "A little more or less won't matter a mite," said he, when he had filled them all. "A foine time I've had getting the sand, 'tis sure, but it's the true article, straight from the hand of the old crayture himself, and 'tis him we're going to this very minute, and the young lad with us. By the sand in the hour-glasses we'll get back to the old crayture in one-tinth the time it took me to find him without it, and by the same we'll get him to save for us the poor lad's life, or me name's not Michael."

Each now took his hour-glass in his hand. They were the same hour-glasses they had bought of Shiraz the Persian, and the sand which was now in them was the same sort of fine white sand which had been in them before their ordeal in the fire.

Mr. Punch and Mr. Toby lifted the sick youth from his chair, and carried him between them, in a sitting position, towards the door. Mr. Hanlon looked at him anxiously, and commanded haste.

In a moment the whole party were in the hall, and in a few moments more they were crossing the lawn towards King's Tower. It was a clear night, and the sky was spangled with stars.

Mr. Hanlon opened the door of the Tower, and when they were all within closed it again.

"Madam and gintlemen," said he, "we are going to the top of the Tower. I have been there meself; and there's wan at the top who can bring back our young frind to life, if he's a mind to do it."

"Oh!" gasped the Queen in terror. "I must not go to the top of this tower. Ah!" she stopped suddenly and went on in a determined voice. "I will, though. If it is to be, then it must be. Our young Chevalier came here for me, and I will go with him! If my strength holds out, I will go even to the top of the Tower, whatever evil may befall me there!"

"'Tis not strength that's needed, madam," said Mr. Hanlon, "for the old crayture that give me the sand was willing to help us up to him, and the sand will make the travellin' easy, or else the old haythen has much desayved me. 'Twas all I could do to get to the top, belave me, and ye'd niver do it without the sand in the glasses, let alone carry up the young lad in your arms besides. Now we'll be going up the stairs, and if the old crayture didn't desayve me, you're to hold your hour-glasses in your hands, and see what happens."

Mr. Hanlon went up first; then came the Queen, and after her Mr. Punch and Mr. Toby, bearing between them in an upright position the stiff cold form of the young Chevalier; and last of all came Thomas the Inferior, in his long brown gown and sandals.

Each climbed slowly, but the steps appeared to flow downward under their feet with great rapidity. They were not conscious of selecting any particular tread to step on; but while a foot was rising from one step to the next, it seemed as if a thousand steps were passing downward, until the foot came down and found itself on a perfectly motionless tread. Undoubtedly they were mounting, without unusual exertion, a thousand steps at a time.

Even at that rate of progress, the journey upward seemed an endless one. They paused sometimes to go

into one of the rooms on a landing for a moment's rest, and at those times they looked out of a window. It was not long before they were so high that on looking out, the City's lights were no more than a glowing blur. At the last window on their upward progress they looked up at the cloud; it was immediately above their heads. After that there were no more windows. They went on upward in silence, aware in the darkness of the swift flow of steps downward under them as they raised their feet. Each observed that as he raised his foot the sand in his hour-glass flowed downward a thousand times more rapidly, as if time were suddenly running faster than it was used to running.

The walls of the tower were by this time coming closer together, and the stair was even steeper than before. They were panting for breath, and Mr. Punch and Mr. Toby seemed to be all but exhausted. "We are almost at the top," said Mr. Hanlon. "Keep on. Don't give up."

It was now, because there were no more rooms nor windows, completely dark. The face of the sick youth could not be seen, and no one knew whether he was still living. Even the sand in their hour-glasses they were now unable to see.

"We are almost there," said Mr. Hanlon. "Only another minute or two. 'Tis easy work to what I had in coming up alone."

Mr. Punch gave a groan. "Hi carn't go another step," said he. "Hi'm completely—"

At this moment Mr. Hanlon stopped upon a landing. It had been a long while since there had been a landing, and they were all glad to rest upon it. They

crowded about Mr. Hanlon in the dark.

"The door is over there," said he. "Keep close to me."

He walked a few feet forward across the level floor, and came to a stop again.

"'Tis the top of the tower," said he. "I hope we're not too late to save the young lad's life. Stand close behind me."

He moved forward again, and stopped; he was evidently feeling a wall with his hands.

"Ah!" said he. "'Tis the door itself. Now, thin, we'll see!"

He knocked upon the door with his knuckles.

There was no response.

He knocked again.

There was a sound upon the other side of the door, as of the rattling of a chain and the sliding of a bolt.

A slit of light appeared up and down in the dark wall; it became wider; it was apparent that the door was opening; and in another moment the door was flung wide, and in the doorway stood an Old Man, holding up in his right hand a lantern in which glimmered a candle.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SORCERER'S DEN

He was an old man, rather stout, dressed in a short gown tied in with a cord about the middle, and wearing sandals on his feet. He stooped somewhat; a white beard hung to his waist; his head was bald, except for a forelock of white hair which drooped over his forehead towards his eyes. There was a humorous twinkle in his eye, and a smile overspread his broad round face.

"'Tis the old parrty who will cure the Chivalier," said Mr. Hanlon, behind his hand.

"It's the Old Man of the Mountain," whispered Toby.

"It's the Magician who built the Tower," whispered Queen Miranda, in alarm.

"Hit's me own father, as ever was!" cried Mr. Punch, aloud. "Greetings, old dear! 'Ere's a surprise, what? 'Owever did you come 'ere? Hi'm no end glad to see you, and the larst person Hi should 'ave thought to see in this—My word, what a lark!"

"Come in, Punch," said the old gentleman, affably, "and your friends too. I'm very glad to see you, my boy. I've had some trouble in getting you here, but here you are at last, thanks to my good friend Hanlon, and you are now well out of the hands of Shiraz. Put the Little Boy down in that chair, and we'll see what we can do for him!"

To speak of a grown-up youth with a mustache as a Little Boy seemed hardly respectful, but Freddie did not seem to mind it; indeed, his big round childlike eyes dwelt fondly on the old man, and there was something like a smile about his lips. He was seated

gently in a chair within the room, and while Mr. Punch's father set down his lantern on a table, the others looked about them.

They were in a small square room with a low ceiling. By the dim light of the candle they could see that it was bare and dusty; cobwebs hung in all the corners; there seemed to be no windows, but set upright in one wall was what looked like the back of a clock, as tall as a man. Opposite the door by which they had entered was another door. Around the walls were shelves, from floor to ceiling, crowded with hour-glasses of all sizes.

The old gentleman observed the look which Toby cast at the shelves.

"One of my store-rooms," said he. "I've got a good many of 'em, all told, and in fact you'll find a store-room of mine in the top of nearly every clock-tower in the world. It takes a deal of space to keep all the hour-glasses in, I can tell you. If you'll give me yours, I'll put 'em away for you. Shiraz got 'em away from me once, but he won't do it again. He manages to steal one now and then, when I'm away, but I usually get 'em back, sooner or later."

He collected the hour-glasses from his visitors, and put them away on a shelf.

"Look 'ere, parent," said Mr. Punch, "hif I didn't know better, I'd s'y as I'd seen this room before. There's the back of the clock, and the door over there looks like —"

"You've a sharp eye, Punch, my boy," said the old gentleman. "Quite a detective you are, my son. Now, then, we'd better get busy. Aunt Amanda, do you

want me to cast off your enchantment?"

"Why do you call me that?" asked Queen Miranda.

"Because that's your name. Don't you know who you are?"

"I know I was enchanted once, under the name of Aunt Amanda."

"No, no. You're enchanted *now*, under the name of Queen Miranda."

"But Shiraz the Persian told us he would disenchant us, and he did."

"No, no. You were yourselves before, and *now* you are enchanted."

"My brain is in a whirl," said Queen Miranda. "Are we ourselves now, or were we ourselves before?"

"By crackey," said Toby, "it's too much for me, and I give it up. Anyway, what we want to know is, can you cure the Chevalier?"

"I can, and I will," said the old man. "There's nothing the matter with him, except that he isn't himself. As soon as he's himself again, he'll be well. He was given the chance once before, but he didn't know how to use it; he made a great mistake."

"What mistake?" said Toby.

"He made the mistake of carrying the Old Man of the Mountain on his back. If he had only lifted him up in his arms before him, the Old Man would have been as light as a feather, and Freddie would have been himself again in a flash. But of course he didn't know. We've got to correct his mistake."

"Well, by crickets," said Toby, "this is Correction Island, right enough. Blamed if I know which is the mistake and which is the correction. It looks to me as if it was a mistake to be corrected, and we've got to correct the correction back again."

"Something like that," said the old man, smiling. "I'm going to undo the correction of each one of you, and then you'll all be yourselves once more, instead of these false things you now are."

Queen Miranda looked at the ruby ring on her finger, and wept quietly to herself. As for Freddie, his eyes never left the face of the old man.

The old man stooped over Freddie, and laid his cheek against the young Chevalier's pale forehead, and then against the young man's cheeks; he then threw aside the blankets and sat himself down on Freddie's knees. His body pressed the young man's breast, and his cheek touched the young man's cheeks one after the other. It was some moments before there was any change. The others watched anxiously. A red glow began to appear in Freddie's cheeks, and his eyes became brighter. He raised his hands; he moved his head; he looked about him; he smiled into the face of the old man.

"You are better?" said the old man.

"I'm very well," said Freddie, in a clear voice. "But I think I must have been sick. Have I been sick?"

"Rather," said the old man. "But you are going to be yourself again in another minute. Now, then; put your arms around me and lift me off. Can you do that?"

"Easily," said Freddie, and he lifted the old man in

his arms, and rising to his feet at the same time, tossed the old man off with an easy gesture.

As the old man touched the floor, there was no longer any Chevalier. Freddie was standing before the chair in his own person; the Little Boy once more, with sparkling eyes and rosy cheeks. He looked around in surprise.

"Where are Aunt Amanda and the others?" said the Little Boy.

"Wait just a minute, Freddie," said the old man. "Now, madam," he said to Queen Miranda, "if you will be kind enough to lift me up and toss me away —"

Queen Miranda looked at him doubtfully. He was a solid-looking person, and it seemed absurd to think of lifting him. But she did as he directed, and placing her hands under his arms she found that he weighed no more than a baby. She held him up off the floor.

"Now cast me off," said he.

She tossed him away with an easy gesture, and he alighted on his feet with a bound.

"Aunt Amanda!" cried Freddie, and rushed into her arms.

"Land sakes!" said she. "I thought you were never coming. Where are all the others? I'm glad there's nobody but this old man to see me in this bedraggled bonnet. Why don't that Toby Littleback come? Now ain't it like him to keep me waiting here all night? I never see such an exasperatin'—"

"Wait just one moment, Aunt Amanda," said the old man. "I'll have him here immediately."

He stood before Toby, and directed him what to do. Toby seized him in his strong hands and lifted him up over his head like a feather pillow; and such a toss did Toby give him as sent him flying across the room almost to the wall. The old man came down on his feet with a bound.

"You Toby Littleback!" said Aunt Amanda. "Ain't it just like you to keep me and Freddie waiting here all night, while—And where's Mr. Punch and all the rest of 'em?"

Toby stood before her, with his hands in his pockets. His hump was on his back in its rightful place, and he looked exactly as he had looked the first time Freddie had seen him, standing in the doorway of the Old Tobacco Shop.

"I ain't been nowhere, Aunt Amanda," said Toby. "And I don't know where Mr. Punch is, neither. I ain't his guardian, anyway. The last I seen of him, as far as I remember, was in Shiraz's garden, lookin' round at the flowers. By crackey, if he can't take care of himself, I ain't a-going to do it for him. Maybe the old gentleman here can tell you, if you want to know."

"Wait just a moment," said the old man. "I'll have him here immediately."

Mr. Punch laughed immoderately as he picked up his own father and tossed him in the air and hurled him across the room. The old man did not seem to mind it a bit, but joined in the laugh as he came down on his feet with a bounce. Mr. Punch was immediately himself again; his hump was on his back, his breast stuck out, his long-tailed coat and knee breeches were as before, and he looked as if he might just

have stepped down from his wooden box beside the Tobacco Shop's door.

"Wery glad," said he, "to myke you acquainted with me old parent; and a wery good parent too, hif——"

"That's enough, Punch," said his father. "Now we'll bring on the Churchwarden."

In another moment the thin and saintly-looking Thomas the Inferior was gone, and in his place was the fat and comfortable Churchwarden, blinking at his friends through his round spectacles.

"I have been considering," said he, "that it would be highly desirable, after all I have passed through lately, to sit in my chair on the pavement against the wall of my church with a pipe and a newspaper; and I have concluded that——"

"We will now call Mr. Hanlon," said the old man.

From the time Mr. Hanlon placed his hands under the old man's arms his tongue was rattling on at a prodigious speed; and as he tossed the old man lightly away like a doll he was saying, "And niver once did the spacheless man and the deaf wife have anny worrds except once; and 'twas then that——." But he spoke no more. He was himself again. He was dumb. Toby greeted him warmly, but he only nodded his head vigorously, and smiled his old-time cheerful smile.

"That's all," said the old man.

"But the two Old Codgers——" began Toby.

"They will not be here," said the old man. "No use waiting. They made their choice some time ago. They are as much themselves now as they ever were,

and they will remain where they are in perfect contentment. No need to bother about them. All that remains now is to bid you farewell, and wish you a pleasant journey."

"Have we far to go?" said Toby.

"You'll see," said the old gentleman, going to the door, that was opposite the one by which they had entered, and throwing it open.

He stood aside as they passed, and smiled upon each with a kind and fatherly smile. He placed his hand on Freddie's head, and turned the Little Boy's face up so that he could look down into his eyes.

"Remember!" he said. "Never carry the Old Man of the Mountain on your back. Carry him before you in your hands, and he will be as light as a feather. Now farewell."

He gently pushed them out and closed the door behind them, and they went slowly down a dark stair. Toby held Freddie's hand, and Mr. Punch helped Aunt Amanda. They could see very little, and they knew very little where they were, until they found themselves after a time on a level floor, and feeling the wall with their hands came to a pair of swinging doors. Through these doors they passed, and Toby knocked his knee against something in the dark.

"It's a long bench!" said Toby. "And here's a sight of other long benches! Blamed if they don't seem like pews in a church!"

A dim light as of tall windows was visible at some distance on their left.

The Churchwarden pushed forward and walked swiftly here and there with the step of one who knows the way. In a moment he returned.

"It's a church," he said, calmly. "It's *my* church. This way, madam and gentlemen."

He led the way to the left. Under a great round window which could be dimly seen in the wall was a wide door, before which they all paused.

"As captain of this party," said Aunt Amanda, "my orders is that we open the door and see what will happen next."

"Ay, ay, ma'am," said the Churchwarden, and opened the door.

In a moment they were standing under the stars on a brick pavement before a church, and on the pavement against the church wall was an empty chair.

"Ah!" said the Churchwarden, and sat down in the chair.

"Mercy on us!" cried Aunt Amanda. "We're *home*!"

"Blamed if we ain't!" said Toby. "It's our own street, and I can almost see the Tobacco Shop from here!"

"Harfter a life of adventure," said Mr. Punch, "one will find it wery pleasant to stand quietly on one's little perch and rest one's legs and see one's old friends go in and hout at the Old Tobacco Shop once more, watching for the 'ands of the clock to come together for a bit of relaxation with one's——"

"All right, young feller!" cried Toby to Freddie. "Come with me. Mr. Punch, take Aunt Amanda

home. I'll be with you as soon as I've got Freddie safe."

Aunt Amanda and Mr. Punch went off together towards the Old Tobacco Shop. Mr. Hanlon, after shaking hands all round, departed for the Gaunt Street Theatre, where he would be no longer troubled by the imps, who had long since been destroyed by the Odour of Sanctity. The Churchwarden preferred to enjoy for awhile the comfort of his old chair by the Church wall, and Toby and Freddie left him there, his hands folded placidly across his stomach.

Freddie and Toby crossed the street-car track, hand in hand together. The horse had gone to bed for the night, and there was no danger. All the houses were dark. It was very late. No light was to be seen anywhere, except a gas-lamp at the next corner. The streets were silent and deserted. Freddie yawned.

Freddie's house was dark, like all the rest. A narrow brick passage-way followed a fence to the rear, between this house and the next, and a gate opened from the sidewalk into this passage. Freddie and Toby went through this gate and crept quietly to the backyard of Freddie's house. The kitchen-door was locked, but Toby found a window which was unfastened. He raised it noiselessly, and helped Freddie to climb in. With a whispered good-night the Little Boy left his friend and tiptoed into the house and up the back stairs in the dark to his own room.

His bed was there in its old place, and the covers were turned down. He did not stop to say his prayers. He yawned and stretched his arms. He wanted nothing now but to lie snug and safe under the cool sheets. He threw off his clothes and left

them on the floor. He knew where his night-gown was. He crept into bed; he pulled the covers up to his ears; he nestled his head into the pillow, and breathed a deep sigh.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE OLD TOBACCO SHOP

The next morning, when Freddie awoke, his mother and father were standing over his bed.

"I think he had better not go there anymore," his father was saying.

"Oh, I don't think it will do him any harm now," said his mother.

"It all comes of his staying away so long," said his father. "I always told him to hurry back, and just see how long he stayed this time. If he can't come back in less than six months or six years or heaven knows how long, he'd better not go at all."

"Oh," said his mother, "I'm sure he'll come back promptly after this."

"I couldn't," said Freddie. "It took such a long time to get to the Island, and there was all the trouble with the pirates, and it was a terrible long journey before we got to the palace, and of course we couldn't run away from the queen after we'd gone all that long way with her, and the queen's children didn't want

me to go anyway, and there wasn't any way to get back, except for finding out how to get to the top of the tower, and maybe I wouldn't have got back at all if I hadn't met the Old Man of the Mountain, and got sick and cured again by Mr. Punch's father, and I might have got drowned when the ship disappeared, or I might have had my head cut off by the pirates, and then you wouldn't have seen me any more, and you'd have been sorry."

His father looked at his mother, and nodded his head.

"He'd better stay in bed today," said he. "We won't talk to him about it until tomorrow."

"Yes," said his mother, "that will be much better. Poor little Freddie!"

Freddie did not know why he should be called poor, but he was still tired from the adventurous life he had recently lived, and he was very glad to remain in bed all day.

The next morning, after his father had said good-bye for the day, his mother allowed him to get up, and a little later to go out into the sunshine. He strolled down the street, enjoying the familiar sights after his long absence. He found his legs a little weak; he must have been very ill indeed at the King's palace, and he could not expect to get over it in one day. He crossed the street-car track, and on the pavement before the church he saw a well-known figure.

The Churchwarden was sitting in his chair tilted back against the wall, smoking a long pipe and reading a newspaper. As Freddie approached he put down his paper and looked at him over his spectacles.

"Good morning," said he. "I'm glad to see you back again. I hear you've been away." And he winked his eye at Freddie in a very knowing manner.

"Yes, sir," said Freddie. "I guess I must have been pretty sick."

"No doubt about it, my son. But of course I knew all the time you'd pull through."

Freddie did not believe it for a moment; obviously the Churchwarden was bragging.

"The street looks pretty good," said Freddie, "after being away so long. Would you rather sit here on the pavement than do anything else?"

"I believe you, son. I'd rather sit here on a sunny day with a pipe and a newspaper than have all the treasure of the Incas."

Freddie was glad to hear that the Churchwarden did not regret the loss of his share of the treasure, though whether Captain Lingo belonged to the Incas he did not know.

"I don't care anything about the treasure myself," said he. "I'm too glad to be well again and back in our own street."

"I'm glad I'm here myself, son. And if you happen to see Toby Littleback this morning, tell him I'm alive and resting well, considering."

"Yes, sir," said Freddie, and continued his stroll.

The Old Tobacco Shop, when he arrived, looked as it had looked on the fateful day when he had last seen it. He paused before the door, and gazed at Mr. Punch. He half expected the little man to step down

and shake hands with him; but Mr. Punch did not move a muscle; he did not even look at Freddie; he held out in one hand a packet of black cigars, and his wooden face, if it expressed anything at all, showed the great calm which he must have felt when he got back to his little perch. Freddie looked up at the clock in the tower, with some thought that the hands might be together; but it was a quarter past ten, and anyway Mr. Punch's father was probably by this time far away in some other of his store-rooms about the world.

Freddie entered the shop. Mr. Toby was behind the counter, opening a package of tobacco.

"Aha! young feller!" he cried. "Back again, sure enough! Blamed if it don't seem as if you'd been away from here for a year. And a mighty sick chap you were, that's a fact. I reckon we all thought you were going to die, maybe; by crackey, I never seen anyone so pale in my life. Are you all right now?"

"Yes, sir," said Freddie. "And I'm glad to be back. Are you glad to be here in the shop, the same as ever?"

"Me? You bet I am. You couldn't buy me to leave this shop, not if you offered me all the money that Captain Kidd ever buried. No, sir. And look here, young man; I reckon you ain't surprised to see that the Chinaman's head is gone; eh?"

Freddie looked at the shelf behind Toby, and sure enough, the Chinaman's head was gone. He knew, of course, that it was lying at the bottom of the ocean.

"I kind of lost it one day," said Toby, winking his eye. "Mislaid it, you know, or lost it, one or the other, I don't know which,—but, anyway, I reckon it won't

never be found. It's gone. I hope you don't mind it now, do you?"

"No, sir," said Freddie. He was glad to know that Mr. Toby was not still feeling disturbed because he had left it on board The Sieve.

"All right, then," said Toby. "You'd better go in and see Aunt Amanda."

Freddie opened the door at the rear of the shop and went into the back room. Aunt Amanda was sitting by the table, sewing.

On the table were the wax flowers and the album and the double glasses through which you looked at the twin pictures. The room was just as if they had never left it.

"Eshyereerilart," said Aunt Amanda, taking a handful of pins from her mouth. "Bless your dear little heart, I'm glad you're back again. Are you well? Sit down on the hassock."

Freddie took his customary place on the hassock at her feet. He looked up at her and wondered if she were sorry she had been a queen once and was a queen no more.

"Yes'm," said he. "I'm all well now."

"And glad to be back here in the shop again?"

"Yes'm; I cert'n'y am."



"Ah, yes," said Aunt Amanda, "there's no place like the Old Tobacco Shop, after all."

"Ah, yes," said Aunt Amanda, "there's no place like the Old Tobacco Shop, after all. I wouldn't exchange it for a palace if you'd give it to me."

"Wouldn't you?" said Freddie, a little surprised at this.

"I should say not. I wouldn't be myself in a palace. I'm pretty well satisfied here."

"But what about the children?" said Freddie.

"The children?" asked Aunt Amanda.

"Yes. Robert and Jenny and James. *You* know."

Aunt Amanda looked at him for a moment, and then nodded her head and sighed.

"Yes," she said. "You know about them, don't you? I forgot that you knew. Yes, I miss them a good deal, and I suppose I even cry sometimes because I haven't got them. But I love to think about them. I'm happy thinking about them, even if I can't have them."

"James was the littlest," said Freddie.

"Yes," said Aunt Amanda, nodding her head to herself as if at a gentle memory.

"He was too little to go out much with the others," said Freddie.

"Yes," said Aunt Amanda, "he was too little."

"And Jenny," said Freddie, "she wouldn't go with Robert the day he ran away. He wanted her to, but she wouldn't."

"No," said Aunt Amanda, "she wouldn't."

"He was gone all day," said Freddie.

"Yes," said Aunt Amanda, "he was gone all day, and he didn't get back until after dark. I didn't know where he was. When he got back it was dark, and he was muddy all over. I was terribly worried."

THE END.

Transcriber's Note

Archaic and variable spelling preserved as printed.
Author's punctuation style preserved.
Hyphenation standardized.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE OLD TOBACCO SHOP ***

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