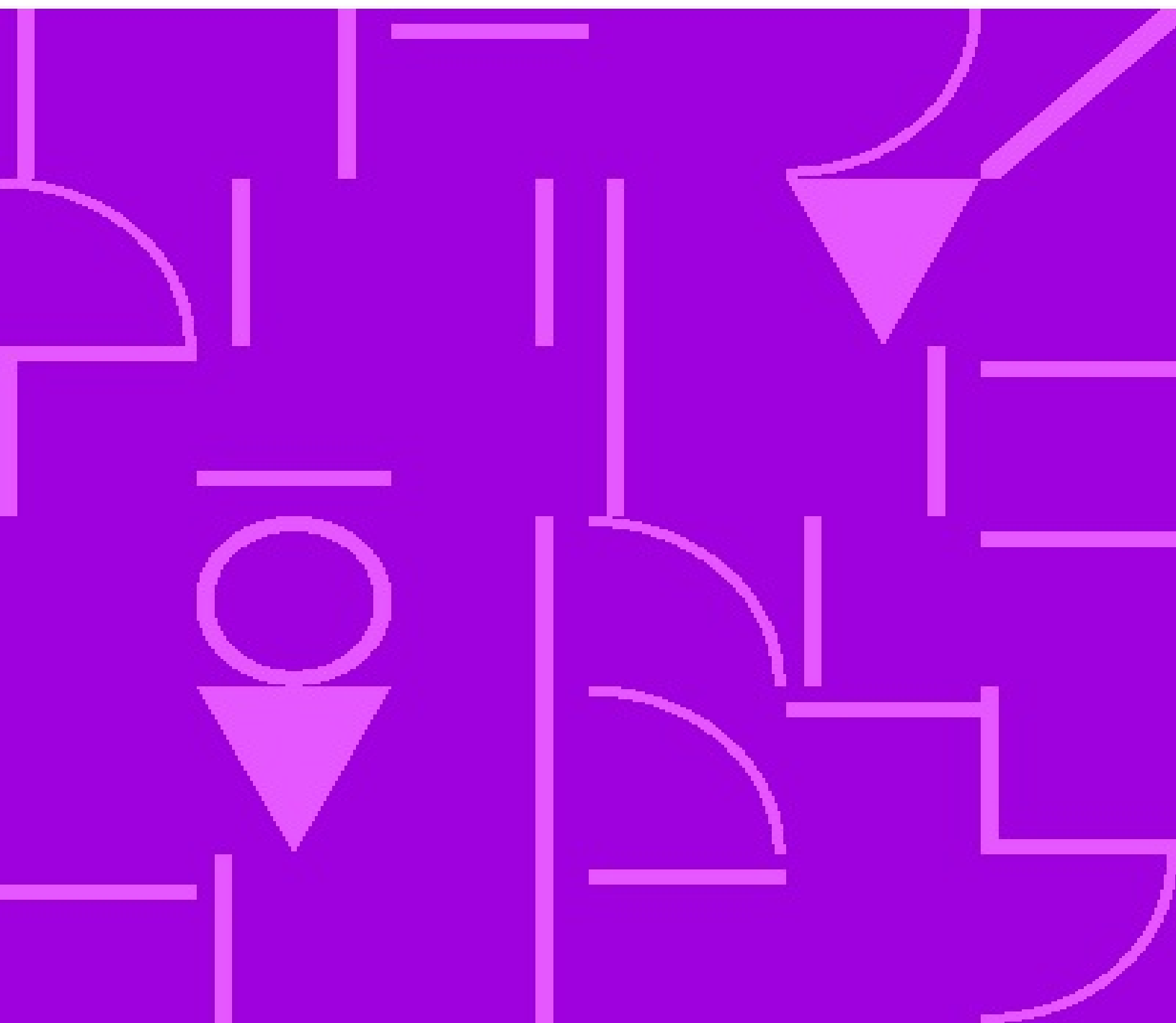


The Knights of the White Shield

Up-the-Ladder Club Series, Round One Play

Edward A. (Edward Augustus) Rand



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Title: The Knights of the White Shield
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Author: Edward A. Rand

Release Date: February 4, 2005 [EBook #14903]

Language: English

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE KNIGHTS OF THE WHITE SHIELD ***

Produced by Bill Tozier, Barbara Tozier, and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team.

UP-THE-LADDER CLUB SERIES.

ROUND ONE PLAY.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE WHITE SHIELD.

BY

EDWARD A. RAND

AUTHOR OF "SCHOOL AND CAMP SERIES:" "PUSHING AHEAD; OR, BIG BROTHER DAVE," "ROY'S DORY AT THE SEA-SHORE," AND "LITTLE BROWN-TOP;" "BARK CABIN ON KEARSARGE," "SCHOONER ON THE BEACH," "NELLIE'S NEW YEAR," "CHRISTMAS JACK," "KINDLING-WOOD JIMMY," ETC.

1886.

NEW YORK.

DEDICATED

TO KEN AND THE OTHER BOYS.

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UP-THE-LADDER CLUB.

CHAPTER I.

MAKING A CLUB.

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There was a clattering of feet on the stairs leading to the chamber of Aunt Stanshy's barn. First there popped up one head and a pair of curious eyes. Then there popped up a second head and two more eyes. Then there popped up a third head and two more eyes.

"Jolly! Don't she beat all?"

It was Sid Waters who said this.

"It's de best barn in de lane," said Juggie Jones, a little colored boy, his dark eyes lighting up with true interest.

"Well, I think it is a pretty good barn," rejoined Charlie Macomber, with apparent unconcern. At the same time a secret pride was dwelling in his bosom, that suddenly made his jacket too tight for him. If Seamont, in which the barn was located, was one of the best of towns in the opinion of its inhabitants, this particular barn, in Charlie's estimate, was one of the best structures of that sort in the place. Below, on the first floor, there was a chance of a stall for Brindle, now grazing in a little pasture adjoining the garden. There was, also, a stall for a horse, and an extra stall, though empty, always gives dignity to a barn, suggesting what has been, and, while speaking of a glory departed, hints of that which may be another day.

But the chamber! What palace of gold ever had a room equal to that chamber? It had a row of barrels, behind which or in which you could safely hide. It had a ladder that would let you smartly bump your head against the highest rafter in the roof, a cross-beam, too, from which you could suspend a swing, and a window in the rear from which you could look upon the Missigatchee River (supposed to have been christened by the Indians). This river-view you could have had, if the window had not been boarded up, but there was a front window, whose big square shutter was generally open. This gave a boy a view of the lane and, if maliciously disposed, a chance to safely let drive an apple or a snow-ball at any "down-townie" that might rashly invade the neighborhood. There was also a window high up, at one end, well latticed with cobwebs. Then there was a closet, which was splendid for "Hy-spy," and—notice!—honor upon honor—there was a "cupelo," as Charlie called it, on top of the barn. Through the slats of the "cupelo," one could look upon the river shining gloriously at sunset, as if the sun were a Chinese mandarin that at this hour spread his yellow silk robe upon the river in a vain attempt to warm up the cold waters just from the sea. Besides this there were various attractions, such as oars in the corner, nets hanging from nails, and let it not be forgotten that a big strip of dried halibut dangled from a spike in the wall. To a hungry boy what is there better than such a halibut, unless it be two halibuts? Already there had been sly, toothsome pickings of this.

It is no wonder, then, that the soul of Sid Waters, to say nothing of his stomach in view of the halibut, was powerfully affected, and again he cried out, "Jolly!" Then he clapped his hands, shouting, "Just the place for a club!"

"A club" said Juggie Jones. "Got nuff dose on my wood-pile."

“He means an or-gorgan-gangor—” Charlie spoke very hesitatingly. It was a long word and threatened to catch crosswise in his windpipe and choke him.

“Organization?” inquired Sid. “O I will show you. We had plenty of ’em in Boston.”

As Sid had just moved from the city, and especially a city so full of knowledge as Boston, Charlie and Juggie received this piece of news with all possible respect.

“We can make one right here,” suggested Charlie.

“Yes, straight off,” said the late citizen of Boston.

“But whar’s de boys?” asked Juggie.

“O three will do,” said Sid Waters, “for you don’t want many to start with. I know the club will be popular after she has been started. And then, fellers,” he said, in a quiet tone, “there’s a better chance for offices in a small club, you know. We can fill ’em all now and get good berths.”

It was a great temptation, but a conviction of the importance of numbers finally prevailed. The three pioneers in this great club movement saw also it would look better to defer all elections until others had joined, as it would give these a chance for position. The magnanimity native to the three conquered, and it was decided to accumulate more material before making the club.

“We might adjourn and meet in an hour,” suggested Sid. “That would give us more opportunity to invite other fellers in.”

How Charlie did admire Sid for his easy flow of language! The “lane,” as Seamont called the narrow street before the barn, was now searched for recruits, and the barn-chamber was deserted a whole hour. The big horse-flies sawed on their bass-viol at their leisure. The warm gold of the sunshine undisturbed continued to decorate the floor of the chamber. Hark! There’s a noise in the yard! It grows to a harried, breathless scramble on the stairs. Finally eight boys appeared, the future members of the club, save one or two later additions. There was Sid or Sidney Waters, aged eleven. He was the oldest boy present, and the brains really of the enterprise. He was a bit vain, rather selfish, and liked to have his own way, a very rare failing among boys. Still, he was a bright boy, and he had his generous impulses as well as his selfish ones. Rick Grimes, aged ten, was a stout, Dutchy kind of lad, rather slow and heavy, but well-meaning and pretty resolute. There was also Billy Grimes, Rick’s cousin, and a year younger. You would have said that these two boys came from the same ancestral stock when you saw their cheeks. These had a well-filled look, as if padded for Thanksgiving.

This peculiarity of feature gave the cousins special titles in whose selection the boy-instinct for nicknames had shown its unerring accuracy of aim. One was “Choppy,” and the other, Billy, was “Cousin Choppy.” Their playmates were generally considerate and did not apply these titles unless they “got mad.” Forgetting themselves, these titles might be sent flying about freely as snow-balls in a January thaw. There was Worthington Wentworth. It takes a long breath and a very straight throat to say that, and we will not repeat it, but will call him Wort Wentworth, as the boys did. His hair was twisted all over his head, like a brush fence, and his black eyes were very lively. He was one of the rogues of the club, and at school took more rattannings, as a mark of his teacher’s affection, than any other boy. Juggie Jones—full name Jugurtha Bonaparte Jones—was a little colored fellow lately from the South, now living with his

granny, a washer-woman, in a little yellow house at the head of the lane. He was always laughing and showing his white teeth. He was a great favorite with the boys. Wort and Juggie were of the same age as Charlie,—nine. Pip or Piper Peckham, aged eight, was a big-eyed, black-haired, little fellow with a peaked face. Timid, sensitive to neglect, very fond of notice, he was sometimes a subject for the tricks of his playmates. Then there was Tony or Antonio Blanco, a late arrival at Seamont. He was an olive-faced, black-haired, shy little fellow. When he spoke, he used English, but his accent was Italian. He was rarely heard from. An air of mystery encircled him. Whether his father was a count in Italy or a seller of pea-nuts in New York, no one at Seamont had been able to say for a month, and that was a long time in circles of gossip. It was finally asserted that his father lived in Italy. Tony was of the same age as Pip.

Concerning Charlie we shall find out farther along.

“Will the gentlemen please come to order,” shouted Sid Waters, pompously, “and sit—sit—on the floor?”

The meeting obeyed at once.

“Ahem—I ’spose we had better fill the offices first. Who will be president?”

This magnanimous tender of the office to any one present was received in silence. The meeting was overawed by the thought of this mighty honor so nigh at hand. All recovered in a short time, and several, including Pip Peckham, were about to sacrifice themselves for the common good, when Sid dexterously presented himself as an offering ahead of them all, and said: “Well, if nobody wants it, as I don’t like to see an office go a-beggin’, I’ll—I’ll take it!”

“Three cheers for our president!” said Charlie, magnanimously, and the three were given, though it must be confessed that several disappointed souls cheered faintly.

“We ought to have a governor,” said Charlie.

“What! besides a president?” inquired Sid, a slight sneer noticeable in his tones.

“Don’t they have a governor in Massachusetts?” inquired Charlie, triumphantly.

“Well, ye—ye—yes.”

That settled it, for Massachusetts custom was plainly authority in this matter.

Rick Grimes was made governor.

“Treasurer now!” called out Sid.

“Charlie, would you like to be that?” he whispered. Charlie was about to say “Yes,” when the fruit hanging before his thirsty lips was suddenly snatched away.

“I’d like that,” piped a voice. It was Pip Peckham.

“Ahem!” said the president, “I think the office ought to be given to experience,” and here he looked in the direction of Charlie.

“Who’s he?” inquired Billy. “Who’s Sperience?”

“Silence!” ordered the president. “Little boys must speak only when they are spoken to.”

Billy pouted.

“Why couldn’t we have two treasuries?” inquired Gov. Grimes, putting the thing for its keeper. This happy solution of a difficult problem was at once accepted. Charlie was named as the first official of this grade, and Pip as the second.

“We ought to have a keeper of the great seal,” said the president.

“What is that?” asked the inquisitive Billy. The president was puzzled to say just what it did mean, “But,” he affirmed, “I think we ought to have it. It is something, I know, and they put it on things.”

“I know what it is,” said Gov. Grimes, eagerly. “My uncle has two down on the wharf, in a tank, a great one and a little one, and I guess we could have the great one up here, and some one be keeper of it.”

The contempt of the president was undisguised. “That isn’t it! If I could only think, but there is so much noise! Order, gentlemen!”

Whatever noise had been made, the president was the author of the most of it, though he did not seem to know it.

“Perhaps we’d better ’journ that,” said Gov. Grimes. “That’s what they do to things in meetings, when they want to put them off, my father says.”

“Well, we can do that, only I think we’d better have a—”

“I will!” shouted Wort, fearful that he might lose his chance for an office, and eagerly assenting beforehand to any thing that was coming.

“You be janitor, and take care of the—the—hall?” said Sid, looking round on the barn-chamber. “That’s what I meant.”

“Yes, yes!”

“There ought to be a sentinel,” said Sid; “one, you know, to look after the door and not let any down-townies up. Will you, Juggie?”

“Yes,” replied that man of war, Jugurtha Bonaparte Jones.

“Billy’s got nothing,” said Juggie.

“So he hasn’t,” said Gov. Grimes. “We ought to have a secretary, to put up notices and soon.”

“Billy shall be that,” declared the president. As Billy was backward in his studies and could not write, his office promised to be one of great honor and no duties. Every body had been pat into office except one, shy, silent, little olive-face, Tony. He was contented to be an unnoticed flower in the field. Charlie

was the first to detect it, and whispered to Sid, “Tony hasn’t got nothing.”

It was felt to be a very small kind of a club that had not an office for every member, and Tony was made assistant-sentinel. The club was in raptures, every body in office!

“What shall be the name of the club?” asked the president. This was followed by a long discussion. Earth and sky were searched for a name.

“Call it Star Club,” said Billy.

“No, that aint bright enough,” replied the governor. The titles “Sun,” “Moon,” and “Comet” were successively rejected. “Let’s ask teacher,” chirped little Pip. The idea took, and it was resolved to visit “teacher” as soon as the club had been manufactured.

“I think we ought to pay something,” suggested Charlie. The club resolved that each member should pay a cent a month.

“And what do with the money?” asked the governor.

“Buy swords,” replied the martial Jugurtha.

The idea spread like wild-fire, and, not stopping to count how long at the above rate it would take to accumulate money sufficient to buy a sword for every one, the club voted Juggie’s proposition a wise and patriotic one.

“I think,” said the self-forgetful Sid, “that the president ought to have the first sword.”

“And the governor next,” said Rick.

“And the treasury next,” said Charlie.

“I’m that, Charlie, too, and I want one,” clamored Pip.

“A sentinel ought to have one fust, ’cause he’s at de door, and might hab to dribe away down-townies,” said Juggie.

“No, me first,” said the governor.

“No, me,” said the president.

“No, me,” said the secretary.

It was “me!” “me!” “me!” all over the barn chamber, and the members of that swordless club were almost at swords’ points.

“Sposin’ we ’journ this,” said Charlie the peace-maker, remembering the rule for “doing things” in meetings.

“Yes,” exclaimed Sid, “and until we get a real sword each one can chalk a sword on his pants.”

“Hurrah!” sang out Gov. Grimes, and each one, happy in the thought that he could have a sword as speedily as his neighbor, cheered lustily.

“Now, boys, let’s go and see ‘teacher’ about our name,” suggested the president. The barn was vacated at once, and the members of the club went down stairs as if a fire were after them, and then rushed along the lane, all heading for a cozy story-and-a-half house where “teacher” lived. “The Sunday-school teacher” was Miss Bertha Barry, brown-haired, brown-eyed, vivacious Bertha Barry. All the boys were in her class, save Tony.

“O, she won’t do for a teacher,” said old Mrs. Jones, when the pastor invited Bertha to enter the Sunday-school as a worker. “Too flighty!”

“She wont stick,” growled Timothy Scriggins, a venerable male gossip, who scolded every body and every thing, satisfied only with Timothy Scriggins.

However, she *did do* and she did *stick*. The boys took a very positive fancy to this young, sprightly, energetic teacher, and their liking lasted. She compelled their respect and she won their hearts. They looked upon her as an older sister, and promptly confided to her their troubles and solicited her advice. In a troop, running, panting, they came into her yard and presented themselves at her door.

“Come into the sitting-room, boys. Glad to see you. Well!”

Her air said: “I wonder what brought my class in a body to me,” something was evidently on the minds of all. The president quickly dissipated the mystery.

“We—we—” said Sid, trying to catch his breath, “have—formed a—club—and—want—you—to name it.”

“Yes! yes! yes!” was the chorus coming from the eager faces turned up to Miss Bertha.

“Name a club? Dear me! What shall I tell you? Where is your club?”

“Here!” said Sid, looking round in pride.

“No; I mean, where do you hold your meetings?”

“In my barn,” said Charlie. “You go in from the street and go up some stairs. It’s up stairs.”

“You might go up higher,” added the governor. “There’s a ladder there, so you can get up—up in the cupelo, but you wont want to go up there.”

“Why, that suggests a name. It’s a little odd, but you’ll think of it every time you go up stairs and see the ladder. Call it ‘Up-the-Ladder Club,’ and then it will have a meaning that you are boys who mean to do your best, climbing up always, up, up, up!”

Miss Bertha here reached as high as she could, and her admirers, with sparkling eyes, stretched upward their small arms, also, shouting, “Up-the-Ladder Club! Up-the-Ladder Club!”

“I’ll put it to vote, teacher,” said the president, with dignity. “Those in favor of it, say ‘Aye.’”

A ringing “Aye” was now given, and after it, came a sharp-featured, wrinkled face at the door.

“Land’s sake, Bertha, what’s the matter?”

“O it’s only my class, grandmother.”

“It scat me dreadfully. I thought it was fire,” and, saying this, the old lady, with a sigh of relief, withdrew.

“And now, teacher, we want a badge; something to wear, you know,” exclaimed Sid.

“What’s that you have on?” Miss Bertha asked of Juggie.

“A sword,” replied that warrior, displaying his right leg, on which he had already chalked a sword.

“That’s for the down-townies,” said the governor, in a martial tone.

“I’m—afraid—the ‘down-townies’ will laugh at that; are not you?”

The club had only thought of what they might do to the “down-townies,” not at all of what the latter would do to them. They certainly had not given a thought to any ridicule these old enemies might heap upon them. A sudden chill now struck the sword-plan and it went down in the boys’ estimation like the mercury in the glass on a cold day.

“Now, I don’t want my class to be sword-boys. I can’t say I fancy the idea. I will tell you something that I think will be nice, and I will make the badge.”

Here the mercury began to climb the glass again, and that chilled look in the boys’ faces began to thaw out.

“I will make you—each one of you—a pretty white shield, to be worn on the left arm, make it of pasteboard, so it will be stiff, and then cover it nicely with white silk.”

The boys began to hurrah. The mercury was away up the glass now.

“A white shield, that will mean something. That means purity, honesty, every thing good and fair, and that your beautiful white shield will be your defense against harm. You are my knights of the white shield.”

The applause following this was almost tumultuous.

“You are the Up-the-Ladder Club, that is, boys who are always going ahead in every thing good; climbing up, not lazy or bad, but boys, with an ambition—a true Up-the-Ladder Club—”

“Or,” suggested Sid, impressively, “the Knights of the White Shield.”

How Charlie did admire the ready wit of the president! The enthusiasm of the club increased. As in that reputed story of Maria Theresa, where her nobles are said to have surrounded her, and, waving their swords enthusiastically, pledged her their support, so the Up-the-Ladder Club waved their caps around this their young queen. The excitement became so intense it was necessary to open the door to give it suitable vent, and out into the open air went these newly-dubbed knights.

“There go Bertha Barry’s boys, I know,” growled Timothy Scriggins, who chanced to meet this band of knights issuing from the yard of their queen. “I never saw sich a teacher.”

Well, the boys loved her. There was now a rush for the barn. When they had all safely arrived in the chamber, Charlie suddenly and soberly exclaimed, “There!”

“What’s the matter?” inquired Sid. “You look pale. Has any one put his sword—I mean his shield into—I mean on you?”

Charlie did not feel like joking. A dark thought had overshadowed him and changed a peaceful to a threatening sky.

“What is it?” asked Gov. Grimes.

“I did not,” replied Charlie, “ask Aunt Stanshy if we might have the barn!”

That was an omission indeed, and the club appreciated it, as “Aunt Stanshy” was well known by the boys. All the sunshine seemed to disappear suddenly and a cloud was on every thing.

Aunt Stanshy’s name in full was Constantia, but, like the crown-jewels of England, it was only used on very important occasions. The house and barn both belonged to Aunt Stanshy, property that had been willed her by her father, Solomon Macomber, whose body slept under the wings of a blue-stone cherub in the cemetery. Her nephew, Charles, on the death of his wife, came to live with Aunt Stanshy, bringing his infant heir. When the father died, little Charlie was left in Aunt Stanshy’s care. She was a tall, resolute woman, so tall that Simes Badger told Charlie that when he wanted to put colors on a flag-staff, he needn’t go out of the house. That made Charlie mad. Aunt Stanshy had sharp, black eyes, and spectacles made them look all the sharper. As Charlie said, “Aunt Stanshy’s eyes sometimes look as if they had snappin’ crackers in ’em.” Aunt Stanshy was really kind at heart and really loved Charlie, and he had all the comforts of home; but she would sometimes speak quick, and she was always sure to “speak her mind,” be the rate of speech slow or quick. Simes Badger was a retired old salt and kept the light-house; not that scanty funds compelled him, but mostly because he must do something about the sea to keep him at all contented. Simes once remarked, “I’ll allow that Stanshy is a leetle tart at times, and I’ve knowed her since she was a gal. But then if you take a good sour apple and stew it and sugar it, it makes a first-class apple-pie. Howsomever, it must be well stewed and well sugared.” The boys now trembled lest this vigorous, resolute soul might not favor their plans, and denying it a place of meeting might end the days of the infant club.

“There,” said Sid, mournfully, “we’ve made a club, but we’ve got no place to stick it in! How would it do to make Aunt Stanshy an honorary member of the club?”

The faces of all brightened at this happy thought.

“And not athk her to pay a thent a month, but ektheuth her,” suggested Pip, who had a lisping style of speech.

This was another happy thought and acceptable to the club.

“I’ll go and ask her,” said Charlie. As he went down stairs, the members of the club gathered around the

open window, anxiously looking out and awaiting the return of their ambassador to her majesty in the kitchen, Constantia the first. Aunt Stanshy was washing clothes when Charlie entered. With a drooping head and faltering tongue he told about the club and asked for the barn, having announced her honorary membership, and also the remission of the monthly due. Aunt Stanshy had a streak of fun in her nature and a big one. When she looked out into the yard, and glancing up saw the seven sober, anxious faces at the barn window, she laughed and said, "Well, Charlie, have I got to lug a big, heavy white shield around?"

"O it's a beautiful one of pasteboard and silk."

"Well, well, say yes."

When he had gone, Aunt Stanshy took her hands out of the suds, sat down in a flag-bottomed chair by the store, and laughed till her sides ached. She was washing again when the granny of the "Sentinel" came in to help her. Granny took the flag-bottomed chair and asked, "What's de news, Stanshy?"

Aunt Stanshy burst out laughing, and the big ribbon-ends of her cap fluttered like a pennant at the mast-head.

"Why, I'm an honorary member and sha'n't have to pay a cent; ha, ha, ha!"

"A what?"

But Aunt Stanshy made no explanation. She only pounded her clothes and roared, so tickled was she. Subsiding, she soon broke out again.

"Why, chile, what's de matter?" asked granny. "You done gone crazy and sure for't."

"I'm an honorary member, and have got to wear a silk shield, I tell you."

Granny went home, shaking her head and saying, "I do b'lieve she's losin' her mind sure, and dat am mournfu' in one so young an' lubly."

CHAPTER II.

THE GRAND MARCH.

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“Please, aunty, lend me your wash-stick.”

As he spoke Charlie was all excitement, running eagerly from the barn into the house. Obtaining the coveted treasure, he as eagerly ran back. Two minutes passed.

“May I have the curtain-stick up in your chamber that you don’t want?”

“How do you know I don’t want it?”

“‘Cause it’s doing nothing, standing up in the corner.”

“O what eyes! Yes, you may have it.”

Three minutes went.

“Aunty, couldn’t I have the broom-handle out in the entry? Some of the boys knew you wouldn’t let me, but I said you would. I knew you would let a feller take it,” said the ingenious Charlie.

“For pity’s sake, Charles Pitt Macomber, what next?”

This was Charlie’s real name and used for greater impressiveness.

“That broom-handle is what I fasten the back window with, and if any bugglars get in tonight, I must blame you.”

However, Charlie carried his point. In a few minutes he appeared again, and pointed at his shoulder.

“Aunty, see here!”

“Why, Charles Pitt, what have you done to your shoulder?”

Charlie grinned. There, on the left shoulder, was a chalk shield. “Teacher, of course, must have time to make our silk shields, and so we got up these.”

Aunt Stanshy’s eyes let out some funny, bright sparks.

“O, no, it’s only the grand march.”

“The grand march!”

“Yes, and see here, aunty. I have only this chalk shield, and you don’t want your boy to go that way. Please let me take that old sword above the sitting-room mantel-piece,” pleaded Charlie, with beseeching eyes.

“Grandsir’s sword? O that wont do. Why, that sword was at the battles of Quebec and Banker Hill and Waterloo and—”

Constantia! In her loyalty to grandsir’s memory, she was unconsciously mentioning places he had never been in! All this array of names only fired Charlie’s ardor. At last Aunt Stanshy said, “There, take it! The next thing, I spose, you’ll want me.”

“We may; but you’d have to dress up in man’s clothes, you know.”

“Never!” said Aunt Stanshy, firmly. “Don’t go out of the lane with grandsir’s sword!”

“We’ll be along soon.”

“How will I know it? I may be up stairs.”

“We will give three cheers under the window.”

There was an increasing commotion in the barn chamber.

“Now, fellers!” exclaimed Sid Waters. “You won’t be ready for the grand march.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” they shouted back.

“Is the chariot ready for the president?” inquired Sid.

“Yes,” said Charlie, who purposed to furnish his go-cart for the occasion. “It’s down in the yard.”

“I have the first ride, you know.”

“And I the second,” said the governor.

“Yes, but the governor must go behind while the president rides.”

Rick’s heart sank within him, but all had promised to obey orders and there was no appeal.

“Every feller’s—I mean knight’s—uniform ready?” asked the president.

Charlie’s certainly was. Every moment he could spare out of school that day, he had been sewing in his snug little bedroom. Such stitches! They looked like pairs of bars trying to straddle a brush fence. For epaulets he arranged pieces of black cloth, the center of each being brightened with a strip of red. His belt was made of white flannel dotted with a flaming row of red stars, and with these were interspersed various sizes of mild chocolate suns. Each of the other warriors sported a chalk shield, as did Charlie. This was the only thing in common. Other insignia varied in character, color, and size, as much as would those of Chinese, Anglo-Saxon and Zulu troops. Pip Peckham, in his anxiety for distinction, had chalked a shield on each shoulder! The cheapness of the material used would readily permit this, but Pip’s appearance was insignificant beside Charlie’s, who strode forward to the march, flourishing grandsir’s sword. Not even Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Napoleon, or General Grant, ever had a sword to be compared with Charlie’s that day. The warriors moved out from their “armory” into the yard. Aunt Stanshy was up stairs making a bed. Suddenly under her window, arose a wild, semi-civilized, semi-barbarous shout.

“What is to pay?” she screamed. “O those little boobies!” and she sprang to the window. The “Grand March” had been inaugurated with full pomp. Sid Waters, as president, was sitting in the go-cart, his head ornamented with a huge smothering three-cornered hat, made out of a New York daily. Rick Grimes, as governor, was walking behind the go-cart, now and then giving the “chariot” an obsequious push, but impatiently awaiting his turn for a ride. Billy Grimes and Pip Peckham were serving as horses, and soldiers also, pulling along the president and sharing the broom-handle between them. Whether that handle might be a “musket” or a “spear,” no one could say. Charlie served as a body-guard, now looking at Aunt Stanshy’s window and then glancing in pride at grandsir’s sword. Juggie was a color-bearer, and at the same time a color-guard of one appeared in the shape of Tony, flourishing Aunt Stanshy’s clothes-stick. The colors were a very small American flag on a very long bean-pole. Twenty feet ahead of the whole procession, in solitary glory, walked Wort. He was a kind of “chief marshal,” Sid had said, but Wort could not forget that he had also been made “keeper of the great seal” that very day, and in token of it he took along the borrowed curtain-stick.

“Halt!”

This summons came not from the chief marshal but the president, and was promptly obeyed by all. Wort retreated from his advanced position and assumed command. “The grand review will now begin,” he shouted. “The whole of you may get into line. Now forward! For—*ward!*”

“Say wheel, first!” called out Sid, not intending Aunt Stanshy or any other spectator should hear the advice be thought it necessary to give the chief marshal.

“Wheel first!” shouted Wort, but the only “wheel” that started was one on the go-cart, which concluded to leave its axle, much to the disgust of the president and the confusion of the company. Sid sprang from the cart. “Here, let me do it, Wort.”

“Form in line!” Wort shouted majestically.

“Form in line!” Sid was whispering to several old veterans. “Where’s Juggie?”

“Here, cap’n.”

“Keep your bugle handy and sound it when Wort says, ‘Charge!’”

Juggie proudly brandished a fish-horn which he had borrowed of Simes Badger.

“Shoulder arms!” screamed Wort.

“Ground arms!”

“Ow, my teeth!” squeaked Pip, whose foot had been vigorously rammed by Billy Grimes.

“Order arms! Present arms! March! Charge!”

These directions followed one another so rapidly that only the oldest veterans, and they wildly, could attempt obedience.

“Blow your bugle!” shouted Sid to Juggie.

“Charge! Cavalry, forward!” Wort was shrieking.

It was a wild melee. The cavalry (go-cart) was shoved forward by Gov. Grimes, running it against Pip and Billy, while the “infantry” rushed ahead, each on his own hook, the color-bearer and the color-guard trying to get into place somewhere. Wort vainly endeavored to keep at the head of something or somebody. All this time Juggie was swelling his cheeks and sounding his horn, and this was the only thing that was successfully done. Fortunately the ground to be charged across was not a long stretch, and in a moment they were all shoving against the fence.

“Wort, you didn’t do that right,” claimed the president.

“Yes, I did.”

“No, you’re wrong,” asserted Sid.

“Let me try?” asked Rick.

“No, this will do,” said Sid. “You may march us, Rick.”

This compromise was accepted. Away they all went, Rick strutting forward with great dignity, but Juggie waved his flag cautiously, for the flourishing of such a long pole might lead to his capsizing. Tony followed Juggie. Billy and Pip still tugged at the go-cart that the president continued to monopolize. Charlie solemnly guarded the precious freight in the “chariot.” Wort, who had been at the head of the column, had now wandered to the rear, and his face wore a puzzled look, as if he did not know where to put the chief marshal.

“You ought to have two policemen in front,” squeaked a little voice from the sidewalk. It was Tommy Keys, a small boy, who had seen a procession in Boston, and thought he knew how such things ought to be managed.

“Shet up,” shouted the governor, indignant at even the faintest suggestion of weakness, and he rushed upon Tommy with a drawn clothes-stick. Away went the terrified Tommy.

“So may all our foes be routed!” said the president, and to this sentiment there was a response of three cheers. Alas, how soon all that pride was to be humiliated! The column was now nearing the head of the lane which ran into Water Street, the leading business avenue of the town. Sid, who always had an eye out to the course that was prudent, was exclaiming, in low tones, “Don’t—don’t go too near Water Street! Look out for down-townies, fellers!” It is often the case in a village of any size that there will be among the boys two parties representing two different sections and supposed to represent two different ideas and civilizations. Seamont had its boy-clans, those at the lower end of the village being the down-townies, and those at the upper end were designated as up-townies. The club belonged to the up-townies, “the only fit class for gentlemen,” Sid had declared. The down-townies delighted to hurl all kinds of epithets at the other boys, and these “gentlemen” up-townies could sling titles almost as successfully, and both sides would sometimes give additional flavor to their epithets by means of missiles, even as mothers sometimes season their injunctions to boys with a twig from the old apple-tree in the yard. The club had had no hand in these intestine feuds, but sympathized with the warriors in their neighborhood, the up-townies. There had been war recently between the two hostile sections, so that the boys did not venture far from their homes, and what did our valiant column now run into but a band of six belligerent down-townies! The

club, at Sid's suggestion, had already passed a vote to give no quarter to down-townies, and that in case of trouble it should be "war to the last drop!" They prudently did not say what that drop might be, blood or only perspiration. Here was a grand test-hour close at hand. One of the down-townies raised a provoking cry, "Ho, fellers; see those little ragamuffins!"

He pointed toward the column, whose advance Juggie was enthusiastically stimulating by loud and prolonged blasts on the fish-horn.

"Boys, let's go for 'em," said one of the down-townies. Raising the war-whoop of the down-townies, which was a savage, senseless yell, and lacking the fine martial tones of the up-townies' battle-cry, the enemy made their charge. Sid Waters stepped, or leaped rather, from the "chariot" and ran toward the barn. Away went the "colors" in the hands of Juggie, almost capsizing him, as the tall standard swayed violently. Away went Wort, and away went Tony. Away rattled the go-cart, Billy and Pip making excellent time as they dragged it along. An engine rushing to a fire could not have gone much faster.

"Don't run!" shouted Gov. Grimes. "Stand your ground, my men! Rally!"

"No, sir," said Charlie, replying to the first appeal, and then, in response to the second, said, quickly, "Yes, sir."

Charlie was the only one among "my men" willing to "rally." But the governor was not discouraged. He was resolute, even at times to stubbornness.

He waved his clothes-stick and shrieked, "Come on! I defy you!"

Charlie also looked defiant; but he was so intent on facing the enemy that he did not pay proper attention to his armor, and the sword that had been so loyal to grandsir now turned into a rebel to Charlie. It did what swords will sometimes do; it insisted on mixing up with his chubby legs as he changed his position, and over he went! Rick had grappled the enemy, but it was a hopeless struggle, and things looked ominous for that fragment of the club now in the battle.

Suddenly a sharp, penetrating, commanding voice was heard. "Don't you touch 'em, you rascals," and a tall, resolute figure rose above the prostrate Charlie, flourishing a broom. It was Aunt Stanshy, who, from her window, had watched the boys, and, seeing the approach of that down-town thunder-cloud, rushed out to meet the storm. Her prowess was witnessed by Simes Badger, who, as a leading village gossip, was loafing away an hour of leisure in a flag-bottomed chair before Silas Trefethen's grocery. He told the story to all the village gossips of the masculine sex who gathered at the grocery as soon as they had swallowed their tea and had done as few chores at home as possible.

"Well!" said Simes, laughing.

He was a gaunt, long-drawn-out man, owning a straggling, gray beard, a pair of brown, twinkling eyes, and a nasal voice.

"I saw something, to-day, that beat the Dutch. It was Aunt Stanshy, and she did beat the Dutch; yes, she did, yaw, yaw, yaw! You see a parcel of young ones went up the lane in fine feather, colors flying and drums beat-in'." (This, to mildly put it, was a misstatement, as not a drum was there to be beaten; but Simes had a weakness for "misstatements.") "Well, they neared Water Street, and just then the enemy

appeared, a lot of down-townies, yaw, yaw! My, didn't those sojers scatter, all but two! I expected them two would be cut up like meat in a sausage-machine, but, turnin' to look down the lane, I saw a sight! It was Stanshy! She had left the house, broom in hand, and rushed up to the battle-ground, and there she stood among them down-townie chaps, and she fetched that broom backward an forward in grand style, as if sweepin' out of the way a lot of dirt!"

Here Simes, who always fancied that he was gifted with dramatic powers unusually fine, pulled a broom out of the stock in a neighboring barrel, and began to sway it backward and forward.

"My! didn't Stanshy sweep the battle-field? The enemy went down like leaves before a November gale!"

Simes, who was bound to act out the narrative, gave an unlucky sweep with his broom above the heads of his grinning and gaping auditors, and whacked Silas Trefethen, who was behind the counter putting up codfish.

"Mind, Simes, there! What are you up to, man?" shouted Silas, tartly, trying to make a stand against the staggering blow dealt amid the laughter of Simes's auditors.

"O, O! 'Scuse me, Silas! I was only 'lustratin'."

"'Lustrate next time on that post behind you. If Stanshy Macomber had such rigor in her arm as that, I pity those down-townies!"

Was not Aunt Stanshy indignant when she heard how Simes Badger had taken her off at the store! "I'll try my broom on him next time," she told Juggie's granny.

Aunt Stanshy was very popular with the club, who passed a vote of thanks to their honorary member. The down-townies, though, christened her "the dragon of the lane," and did not venture near her. Knowing that this fear existed, Sid Waters and other members of the club, especially the runaways, now ventured several times as far as Water Street, shouting defiance to imaginary enemies behind corners and trees. Sid was exceedingly daring with his tongue. It was noticed that he never again *rode* on such occasions. He evidently wished to have his legs handy, as he could rely on these better than the go-cart.

CHAPTER III.

FOR SUNDAY-SCHOOL SCHOLARS, AN OFFER.

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Charlie and Aunt Stanshy worshiped at St. John's. Dear old St. John's! It was a brick edifice, homely in its style, but glorious in its associations. It had two tiers of arched windows, the upper row letting light into a long, lofty gallery, that generally had for its occupants perhaps a dozen very shy auditors. If a "coaster" were in port over Sunday, then the heavy, shuffling tread of several men of the sea might be heard on the gallery stairs. This might happen when the service was a third through, and by the time it was two thirds through the shuffling tread might be heard on the stairs again, and this time echoing toward the door. The gallery was plain and old-fashioned in its finish, but it was supported by twisted wooden pillars considered to be marvels of architectural ingenuity in their day. The pews were old-fashioned in their form and decoration; but then they were surrounded by so many dear associations of the past, that when Aunt Stanshy entered one of those box pews she seemed to have stepped aboard a ship and it drifted her at once far, far away among old friends. On a rainy day, especially, did Aunt Stanshy enjoy the old church. True, not many would come out, and their heads above the backs of the pews looked like scattered turtle heads lifted above the surface of a pond in the woods. Aunt Stanshy was sure to be there, and, while she heard the rain beating upon the windows, there was the minister's voice reverently echoing in prayer, and Aunt Stanshy had such a sense of protection from this world's many storms. On fair-weather Sundays there would be quite a rush for the old church. The Browns, Pauls, Randalls, Jamesons, Tapiеys, would turn up, smiling, radiant and self-assured as if they had never been absent from church a single service. Their manner almost seemed to declare that they had been there day and night. O, young people, do dare to be rainy-weather Christians!

Aunt Stanshy and Charlie were walking away from the church the noon of the Sunday after the grand march. At St. John's, the Sunday-school followed the morning service.

"Aunty," said Charlie, nudging his companion, "here comes somebody."

That somebody was Mr. Walton, to whom were intrusted the spiritual interests of the congregation. He was tall, stalwart, owned a fair complexion, and wore his hair rather long; hair, too, that would curl, no matter how patiently the brush and comb coaxed it to be straight and dignified. His blue eyes had a rather sharp look at first when turned toward you, but you soon felt that they were kindly, sympathetic, and magnetic. Mr. Walton was very friendly toward the boys, and for that reason he had a strong hold on the affections of many little fellows.

"Well, Miss Macomber, I am glad to see you out, and as for my boy here, I should miss him ever so much if he were not in my school."

"I should miss *you*, if you wasn't there," replied Charlie, anxious to return the compliment.

"Don't you know of some boy you could get into the school, Charlie?" asked Mr. Walton.

"I know of one who belongs to my club."

"You belong to a club! What is the name of it?"

“The U. T. L. Club.”

“U. T. L.! What does that mean?”

“It is Miss Bertha Barry’s notion, sir,” explained Aunt Stanshy, with an air that was somewhat critical. Then she had noticed, or fancied that she had detected, that Mr. Walton, who was single, rather liked Miss Bertha and her ideas. He did not seem to notice Aunt Stanshy’s tone, but remarked,

“U. T. L.! That means ‘Up Too Late!’”

“Ha, ha, guess again,” replied the delighted Charlie.

“Useful To Learn!”

“No sir.”

“Up With The Lark!”

“You have got one word too many in there. ‘Up The’ is right.”

“Up The—Lane!”

“That’s where I live,” said Aunt Stanshy, proudly.

“Up The—”

“It’s ‘Up The Ladder,’ sir,” said Charlie.

“Well, Up-the-Ladder boys ought to be making advances and going ahead all the time.”

“That is what teacher says.”

“What do you do in the club?”

“We had a grand march yesterday, and we have a pammerrammer next Saturday.”

“All the boys in your club go to Sunday-school?”

“All except Tony.”

“Who is Tony?”

“He’s an Italian boy, and his father is away off.”

“Couldn’t you get him into your class?”

“I might try.”

“I will make the club an offer. If they will get five boys into school and keep them there two months, I will give them a banner.”

Charlie was delighted and promised to tell the boys in the club.

Mr. Walton here left Charlie and Aunt Stanshy, and went to his home. Aunt Stanshy greatly revered any one who led the worship of the congregation in the old church and encompassed such with a dignity-fence that was about as high as the famous steeple of old St. John's, and that was a landmark for souls at sea.

Then there was a family mystery about Mr. Walton that fascinated Aunt Stanshy. He lived with his old white-haired mother, and there were hints and whispers that the two mourned over a once wayward and now absent member of the family. It leaked out that this was a son younger than Mr. Walton, and he had married a beautiful foreign lady whom the clergyman loved also, but had relinquished to the younger brother. This younger son was off somewhere on the sea, it was whispered; but he had a child ashore. On stormy days, it was noticed that the white-haired mother would watch the steeple, which consisted of a series of diminutive houses rising one above the other, as if ambitious to fly, but finally relinquishing the task into the hands or wings rather of a gilded weather-cock. The mother would watch the pigeons flying into their hiding-places in the steeple, seeking a refuge from the wild storm, and then her eyes would be lifted higher to the weather-vane, as if seeking for news about the sea-wind. Still higher went her thoughts—to God.

"She's thinking of *him*, that son," said the observant neighbors, who never knowingly gave up a chance to see something. To Aunt Stanshy this bit of mystery only made Mr. Walton all the more interesting.

Mr. Walton thought the next day he would fish for scholars in the Grimes neighborhood, where Tony lived. Billy and Rick, or "the governor," as the club boys more generally called him now, lived in a long, low-roofed building that had two green doors. One door led into the home where lived Simes Badger when off duty at the light house. His wife took care of Tony. In the other part of the house lived Billy and the "governor" with Jotham and Ann Grimes. Billy was the child of Jotham and Ann. The "governor's" parents lived in Dakota, but kept him at the East for the sake of an education in its better schools. It was after dark when Mr. Walton chanced to reach the long, low-roofed house, and "rap-rap" went his vigorous knuckles against green door number one.

"Who's there?" sang out a boyish voice within.

"Tush, tush, Tony! Wait till I come," said Simes from his little bedroom at one side of the kitchen. He was off duty, Jotham Grimes having gone to the light-house. "It may be some sailor who wants me," added Simes. Mr. Walton, having heard a boy's voice, concluded its owner must still be at the door, and he announced his errand.

"It's rather late to call, but I wanted to know if you wouldn't like to come into our Sunday-school?"

"No, your old Sunday-school may go to the bottom of the sea," was the gruff reply of the disappointed Simes, who did not know his caller.

Mr. Walton felt that it might be prudent at that hour to withdraw, but he did not relinquish his intention to secure Tony; and Tony finally came to school.

The boy exceedingly interested the minister. "Where have I seen that face?" asked Mr. Walton, and with bowed head he sat in his study brooding over the problem, looking intently down as if trying to make out a pearl at the bottom of the sea.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PAMMERRAMMER.

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“Auntie, what do you think a couple of standing up collars would cost?”

“A standing up collar, Charles Pitt! What do you want that for?”

“Why, we have a pammerrammer to-morrow, and I am the one to ’splain it; that is, me or the governor.”

“He is gettin’ to be a man!” thought Aunt Stanshy in sorrow. “A pammerrammer!” she inquired. “I most get into that. Do you have spectators?”

“O, yes. It is only a cent a ticket, and that will get you a reserved seat.”

“Then I must take a reserved seat.”

Aunt Stanshy told the boys she would come whenever they notified her that the pammerrammer was ready. A lively shout of announcement soon came from half a dozen heralds up in the barn window, and Aunt Stanshy dropped her sewing.

“All ready, aunty! Come now,” shouted Charlie.

Aunt Stanshy quickened her steps into a run.

“There goes Stanshy,” said Simes Badger, watching her from Silas Trefethen’s grocery. “Runnin’ t’ a fire, I guess. She only needs an engine behind her t’ make the thing complete.”

Flying through the yard, Aunt Stanshy rushed up the barn chamber stairs. Passing the “sentinel” with the powerful aid of a cent, she looked around upon the chamber. In its center there was a stout wooden post, and between this post and a closet, at one end of the chamber, there had been suspended a dirty, ragged sheet, which the governor’s aunt had taken from the attic and given to the club. Across this sheet stretched a panoramic strip of paper which Aunt Stanshy at once recognized as Charlie’s handiwork. It took two boys, Sid and Wort, to stand at the two ends of the curtain and manage the “pammerrammer.” As Sid unrolled the glorious succession of artistic beauties that Charlie had sketched, Wort at the other end pulled them along and rolled them up. In front of the curtain was ranged a plank. A carpenter’s bench that bordered a wall of the barn supported one end of the plank, and a barrel the other end. This elevated roost was denominated “reserved seats,” and all cent admissions secured “one of the most eligible chances in the Hall,” so Sid declared. There was a string of sweet little beauties on the bench, girls from the neighborhood, and among them was little May Waters, her face one of wonderful vivacity, a kind of panorama in itself, where the most varied emotions chased one another in rapid succession. Aunt Stanshy found a sled to sit on, and the performance began. Gov. Grimes wished to try his hand first at explaining the pictures. He began, grandiloquently,

“This—this—is a building, no, Faneuil Hall. The next is a picture of a ship. That is a—”

“Don’t roll her so tight, Wort,” whispered a voice behind the curtain.

“Monkey!” said the governor, finishing his sentence, but unfortunately chancing to look toward that sensitive soul, Pip Peckham.

“I aint,” said Pip.

“Who said you was?” inquired Wort.

“You!” charged Pip, turning to the governor.

“I didn’t.”

“You looked at me.”

“Silence in the audience!” shrieked Sid to the now jolly spectators.

“You’ve got your end all twisted up, Wort,” said the governor.

“O dear!” groaned the president.

The straightening out of the last difficulty was effected after a while, and Gov. Grimes began again: “Here are some big, black dogs in a melon-patch.”

“Bears, bears!” eagerly whispered Charlie, alarmed for the reputation of a club that could not tell the difference between dogs and bears.

“Well, bears, then,” said the governor petulantly, “and I aint going to be it any more.”

The discomfited lecturer insisted on resigning, and Charlie took the floor. He knew his old and beloved “pammerrammer” by heart, and he began promptly where the governor left off.

“Here are some bears in a melon-patch. There’s a picture of Westminster Abbey, and here’s a boy lifting a girl over a fence, and here’s a flag from Europe, and here’s one from some part of Asia or some other place.”

In the midst of Charlie’s glib description there was a crash. The plank, *alias* the reserved seats, did not have a firm support. Its weakness had been noticed, but not remedied.

“Who’s the one to fix the bench?” inquired Sid.

“The governor,” replied Wort.

But the governor was not one who believed in Aunt Stanshy’s motto, “Do to-day’s things to-day.” She was trying to impress it on Charlie, but she could not be expected to stamp every mind in the club with the necessity of the injunction.

“One boy is enough for me,” she would say.

The plank had remained firm as long as it could, but several wriggling children were too much even for the patience of a plank, and—down it went! Little May Waters dropped at the feet of Charlie as he was busily “splaining.” He gallantly picked her up and tried to comfort her, and various members of the club rushed to the rescue of other ladies. It was concluded now to adjourn the “pammerrammer.”

“Man down in the yard!” called out Wort, who was “sentinel” when he had nothing else to do. Wort looked over the edge of the window-sill. About all he could see was an old hat, and a very bad hat at that.

“Let’s sprinkle him! We can say we only saw a hat,” and immediately scraping up with his foot a quantity of hay-seed, he liberally sprinkled the seedy hat. It was like unto like.

“Now look here,” said Sid, “that was mean. If your father wore an old hat, how would you like to have a feller sprinkle hay-seed on it?”

Sid had a good deal of the gentleman about him.

“There he comes! There he comes! Put!” said Wort. A foot-step could be plainly heard on the stairs, and Wort started for the closet, again saying, “Put!”

“I am not going to run,” said the governor, with his usual resoluteness.

“Nor I,” said Sid.

“Nor I,” said Charlie.

“Nor I,” said Billy.

Others declared the same. They all stood their ground, or floor, rather. The noise on the stairs was continued, and soon a seed-strewn hat appeared in sight, and then a big head of hair, and then a man’s body. The boys clustered closely together, and when the man turned toward them, they saw that the roughly-dressed man had a roughly featured face, but its expression was kindly.

“He will eat uth up,” whispered Pip, trying to get behind Billy Grimes. The stranger was not a cannibal though. He took off his hat, shook it, and said, “If that was an accident, it’s all right. If any one did it, meaning to do it, was it just the thing?”

The boys felt the appeal and shook their heads.

“We don’t justify it, and I’m the president,” said Sid, with a look of importance, “and no one of us that you see did it.”

“I hope not. Sometimes folks are not lucky, and if any of your fathers went trampin’ round and couldn’t get work, you wouldn’t like to have any body throw hay-seed on him.”

“No, that’s so,” said Charlie. “It’s too bad!”

The man turned to go down stairs.

“I—I guess my aunt could give you a job. She wanted somebody this morning to saw her wood.”

“Did she? Where is she?”

“I’ll show you,” and Charlie’s obliging drumsticks followed the man down stairs. Then he went into the kitchen and made an appeal for the stranger.

“Well, I’ll give him the job,” replied Aunt Stanshy.

In a minute more the man was at the wood-pile driving Aunt Stanshy’s saw rapidly through a stick of pine.

The club had been looking out of the window while Charlie interceded for the man. When he joined his clubmates some one exclaimed, “What’s that?”

It was a noise from the closet into which Wort had plunged, or, rather, a noise that started there, for it was continued down into the story below, even as the noise of a rushing snow-slide along a roof begins at the ridgepole, but ends on the ground beneath the eaves.

“It’s Wort!” said Charlie, excitedly. “O dear! he’s gone.”

“Gone where?” inquired Sid. “Into the bowels of the earth?”

Charlie’s answer was to rush down stairs, followed by the club in a very hasty and undignified way. There, at the end of a long spout that terminated eight inches from the floor, was a couple of good-sized legs squirming to get out. Then Wort’s voice was heard, coming from the interior of the box, “Let me out! Let me out!”

“Can’t you *get* out?” asked the governor.

“No, no! Let me out! Let me out—quick!”

It was even so. Wort must be *let* out.

“O, Aunt Stanshy, Wort—Wort—is in the fodder-box, and can’t get out!” shrieked Charlie at the open kitchen window.

“What under the sun—” And, without a word more, Aunt Stanshy left the clothes she was washing and rushed into the yard.

“Come here, mister, and bring your saw,” she said to the man at the wood-pile, “and, Charlie, bring a hammer from the nail-box on the entry-shelf!”

The man at the wood-pile rushed after Aunt Stanshy, saw in hand, while Charlie hurriedly brought the hammer.

“Now saw into that box and knock away with the hammer, mister. You see, Silas Trefethen wanted to hire my barn last winter, and thought he would put in what he called a fodder-box running down from the closet above to this floor, and then intended to knock the closet away when he had carried the box down here, thinking he might save some steps that way, but he was taken sick and the closet was left there; and that closet floor, I suppose, wasn’t left just right.”

Aunt Stanshy was talking while the man was sawing and hammering away. He plied his tools vigorously, and soon let Wort out into the full light of day once more. The boys shouted and laughed also as Wort wriggled forward into liberty. He looked up, but seeing that his liberator was the man he had seeded, he dropped his head, and, refusing to look again, slunk away with an air that indicated a strong desire to find another box where he could shut himself up for the present.

The man concluded who his enemy was, and he said, “I guess we are even now.”

CHAPTER V.

THE NATION'S BIRTHDAY.

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“The great thing on the Fourth is to have a good time,” said the president.

“No, the great thing,” said the practical governor, “is to be sure and wake up in season.”

“That’s so,” chimed several voices in chorus.

“How shall we fix it?” asked Pip.

“Tie your toe to the bed-post,” said some one.

“Put a lot of stones in your bed,” said Sid, “and then you can’t sleep easy.”

“Two sleep together and tie their toes to one another,” said the governor.

Objections were found against all these plans, as they had been ineffectually tried by various members of the club.

“Go and holler under every boy’s window,” said Billy Grimes, with the air of one who had made an important discovery. “I will holler under your’s, Pip,” was his magnificent offer.

“But who will be the feller to go to your window?” asked Sid.

“Why—why—you.”

“Well, who will holler under my window?” said Sid.

“I,” said Wort.

“And under yours?” continued the president.

“I,” said Juggie.

“And who under Juggle’s?”

“I,” said Tony.

“And who under Tony’s?”

“I,” said Charlie.

“And who under Charlie’s?”

That was a problem.

“Aunt Thanthy,” suggested Pip.

“Aunt Stanshy is going out visiting,” remarked Charlie.

There was a very sad pause. Despair was on the faces of the club. A happy thought came to Charlie. “Some one has got to sit up and wake the next one, and I will. I can take a nap the next forenoon, you know.”

“Three cheers for Charlie!” called out Wort, and they were cordially given. It was arranged on the spot that Charlie should sit up. If Aunt Stanshy had been at home she would have vetoed the plan, but, purposing to be absent the night before the Fourth she had engaged Silas Junkins to stay with Charlie and guard the premises. Charlie had no difficulty in obtaining Silas’s consent to the plan, and not only his consent, but also his co-operation. In the main entry of Aunt Stanshy’s house was a tall, old-fashioned clock. It was an aged household servant, and had done duty in the entry many years. It always stood in one place, one particular corner in the rear of the entry. It is a wonder its voice did not show any sign of collapse, as it had called off the hours so many years. It would not have been strange if it had lost its patience. But uncomplainingly, even cheerily and without any sign of weakness, it told you what time it was. Charlie sometimes heard it in the night, and then it sounded like, “Cheer up! cheer up!” its pleasant voice halting on the “cheer,” and then emphasizing the “up.” It divided all its peals into two such notes, and when Charlie heard it strike one o’clock the effect was quite enlivening as he lay there in his dark little chamber. At an hour earlier, when it sounded twelve “Cheer ups,” what a joyous procession of notes that was! It was like a watchman’s voice ringing out “All’s well!” twelve times. It occurred to Charlie that he might occupy a chair in the entry, and, if at all inclined to go to sleep, the striking of the clock would keep him awake. Silas Junking moved a table into the entry for Charlie, and set a lamp on it. At nine Silas, who enjoyed very much a large quantity of sleep, went to his rest in a little bedroom on the same floor with the entry.

“You can step into my room and wake me, Charlie, if any thing happens.”

“O, I sha’n’t need to,” was the watchboy’s very emphatic reply.

“Well, good-night!”

“Good-night!”

“Now all I’ve got to do,” soliloquized Charlie, “is just to keep awake, and it is a great deal better than to go to sleep with a string tying your big toe to the bed-post. Hark, there is some one firing off a gun! Wont I wake ’em with a blow on my horn!” Here he saw himself, as he visited house after house, arousing boy after boy. It would be like the falling of a row of bricks, where the only need is to push over the first one and the whole set will follow. Every thing, though, depended on the fall of the first brick. Would Charlie do his part?

“I’ll take this story-book about Indians, giants, and fairies,” he said, “into the entry, and that will keep me awake splendid.”

It was a book startling enough, and the trouble was that it was too startling.

After looking at the book a while, Charlie’s mind was so peopled with ferocious giants, Indians on the

war-path, fire-breathing dragons, and ghostly genii, that he transferred them to all the corners of the room, and especially to that receptacle of shadows, the space under the table, the very place where his legs were—ugh! Charlie did not like to look at the book, and, dared not, at the forms under the table! He shut the book and he shut his eyes. Hark, the clock was saying “Cheer up!” and somebody in the lane fired a pistol that seemed to say, “Wake up!” Yes, yes, that was all right, Charlie thought, but—but—he guessed he would close his eyes just this once—and close them just this once—and close them just this once—and in a few minutes the champion watchman was fast asleep! In an hour the clock struck again, and its voice seemed harsh, as if saying, “Young man, young man, wake up!” The notes had no startling effect on Charlie. Indeed, he heard them only as a very sweet, musical voice. The pistols and cannons going off in Water Street reached his ear as mild little pops. Things went on in this way till morning. About five Charlie dropped on the floor the book of Indians and dragons, that patiently had been resting in his lap all night. It roused him. He partially opened his eyes. Before him was an opened door that led into the parlor, and, sitting in his chair, he could see the parlor windows, whose curtains were up and whose panes were brightened by the light in the eastern sky. What did he see at those windows? Had some of the Indians, imagined to be under Charlie’s table, gone to the outside of the windows, there to look in, grinning at him and shaking their head-feathers at a boy stupidly sitting near a table on which was a lighted lamp? Charlie rubbed his eyes for a better look, then rubbed again and again, and—and—were those Indians shouting, “Charlie, how are you?” He now sprang to his feet, fully awake, and there were several members of the club, their faces streaked with red chalk, their caps ornamented with all kinds of feathers, their—Charlie did not take another look at their decorations! He only glanced at the clock, exclaimed, “Five o’clock! Whew!” seized his cap, and rushed out-doors.

“Wake up, Charlie! Wake up, Charlie!” was the greeting of his comrades.

“Whew, fellers, aint this cheeky?” inquired Charlie.

“I should think it was—in you. Did your nap refresh you?” asked Sid.

“Why didn’t you come round and wake me up?” said the governor.

“And me?” said Billy.

“And me?” said Pip.

“And me?” said Tony.

“You see—you see,” replied Charlie, “I overslept.”

“That is,” said Sid, “you slept over the table. Three cheers for Charlie, our faithful watchman! I nominate Charlie for *honorary* sentinel.”

The cheers were delivered, and Charlie was declared by the president to have been unanimously chosen honorary sentinel.

“You see, boys,” said Sid, patronizingly, “I don’t know what would have become of you if it hadn’t been for *me*. My big brother Nehemiah was out banging away all night, and he got tired and came home about three, and said to me, ‘You in bed now? I thought you were going to get up several hours earlier than the lark.’ Well—after a while—I dressed quick, I tell you, and then I went and woke our governor, and Billy,

and so on.”

Sid omitted to say how long that “after a while” might be, and that his brother aroused him several times, and finally he got into his clothes. Nobody, however, was disposed to ask questions, as every one had slept later than he intended.

“Knights of the White Shield!” suddenly shouted Sid, “three good ringers on your bugles for our honorary member, Miss Stanshy Macomber? Here she comes!”

Aunt Stanshy was now returning from her visit, having concluded to make an early start for home, feeling somewhat anxious for its safety on “the glorious Fourth.” The club separated into two ranks, and, as Aunt Stanshy passed along, each one of the “knights” touched his feathery head-gear, while every horn sent out as ringing a blast as possible.

“Massy!” cried Aunt Stanshy. “My ears!” Then she retreated to her home as quickly as possible lest another salute be tendered her.

What a day that was! What liberty! It seemed as if those patriots in the Up-the-Ladder Club had been oppressed by a terrible yoke of bondage, domestic especially, but it was all lifted and thrown off that day. There was freedom—to blow horns, freedom to fire crackers, freedom to “holler,” freedom to crack torpedoes, freedom to buy pea-nuts, buns, ancient figs and dates and abominable cheap candy, freedom to make one’s self as dirty, tired—and cross the next day—as possible! O, blessed liberty to boys who had patiently borne the yoke three hundred and sixty-four days, ever since the last Fourth! After a forenoon of miscellaneous and multiplied joys, the club planned to spend an afternoon in the woods. Emptying their pockets, they found that, altogether, they could raise eleven cents, and this was laid out in the judicious expenditure of as many buns as possible.

“It is proposed, White Shields,” said Sid, “this afternoon that we spend a little time playing, a little time in bun-lunching, and then we will have a raft-race on the water near the railroad track.”

This programme was carried out in part successfully. The games concluded with success, there was a successful time in eating, as far as the number of buns would permit. Then there was a little speech-making.

“I understand,” said the president, as he concluded his remarks, “that the rights of one of our number have been interfered with. He has been forbidden to fire off any more crackers, and must confine himself to caps.”

This announcement was followed by groans and hisses, even as thunder and lightning come after the black summer cloud. The person who had lost his freedom and been compelled to return to slavery was Charlie.

Aunt Stanshy had said to him at the dinner-table, “I don’t want you to fire any more crackers to-day.”

Charlie’s chin went down.

“Why?”

“Because there is danger of setting fire to something. The wind is warm and dry.”

Charlie's chin now went up.

"It was warm and dry, but the wind has just changed, and it is coming in from the sea, and it is damp and misty."

"But, that wont put out fires."

Charlie's chin now dropped again and dropped to stay. He went up stairs and, having a knack at rhyming, wrote a string of lines and put them in his pocket. Sid had found out the contents of Charlie's pocket when it had been emptied in behalf of the bun fund, and at the "collation" in the woods, he concluded his speech with these words: "I learn that the Hon. Charles Pitt Macomber, who has been forbidden to fire off crackers, has some poetry, and I will ask him to read it I would only add that freemen must stand for their rights." Cheers were now given for "the poet of the day." Charlie stood up and read these lines, which were subsequently found by Aunt Stanshy in the pocket of his pants, for these needed the help of her needle after the great and fatiguing duties of the Fourth. The name and age of the author, Charlie had been particular to place over the poetry. We give the lines exactly as they appear in the original now in our possession.

THE GLORIOUS FOURTH.

By C.P. MACOMBER, (nine years.)

"Hurrah for the Glorious Fourth of July,
When sky-rockets mount to the sky,
When fire-crackers are whizzing so fine,
And all is Majesty Grandeur an' sublime.

"If I could have the whole day to myself,
I would fire off crackers all day like an elf,
The Giant Torpedoes would fall to the ground,
And all would come down with a terrible sound.

"What good are little paper caps?
I would not give two ginger snaps,
They do not make a noise worth hearing,
But fire-crackers, the ladies are fearing."

If Charlie should write this again, he would change the above, but it is too late to alter now, and we give it as preserved in our note-book. Furious applause followed this ebullition of poetic genius.

The collation was followed by the raft-race. The ditch that ran beside the railroad embankment widened in one place to forty feet. Half a dozen logs were here floating. The keeper of the great seal had brought with him a hammer and a handful of nails, and seeing on his way several strips of board, he had picked them up and now nailed the six logs together in pairs, making three rafts.

"There will now be a race between our first treasurer, our sentinel, and the keeper of the great seal," pompously announced Sid. "This will be the first race. I expected Tony and the governor would compete, but they have gone home. The Fourth was too much for them."

They both began to be sick after the collation. Rick, with his usual pertinacity, wanted to “stick it out,” but his feelings overcame him, and he adjourned. He and Tony had eaten too much green-tinted candy. The participants in the raft-race were preparing for the contest, Charlie having already boarded his craft and pushed off into position, when a cry from Pip arrested the attention of all and made them think of something besides rafting.

“Down-townieth!” he shrieked, and pointed up the railroad embankment. There stood a stout boy whom Charlie recognized immediately as one of the evil force that raided on the club the day of the grand march! It was Tim Tyler, one of the hardest boys in Seamount, aged fifteen. Back of him was a smaller boy, but a competitor in vice, Bobby Landers. How many others might soon show themselves, no one could say, but the down-townies were clannish and loved to turn out in crowds, and to the club the probability appeared to be, that others would speedily rise up and charge along the railroad track. Sid Waters, who had urged freemen to stand for their rights, was now turning on his heel. He headed for a fence that separated the railroad lot from the woods. It was evident that the first club race would be, not on the water, but the land, and that Sid Waters’s legs would take an unexpected but active part in it. Other legs followed his, and this race of freemen for their rights became a general one. At first, it was not positively certain who would reach the fence first and so beat in the race, but Sid’s alacrity in starting was so great that he gained the prize, or would have taken it, had any been offered. The others though made very good time, and showed what freemen could do when hard pushed by their oppressors. Charlie, alas! was too far from shore to share in their good fortune, and, besides, Tim Tyler was on hand to object to any such movement.

“Don’t be in too much of a hurry to leave,” he said provokingly to Charlie, and seizing a pole left by one of the retreating club, pushed off the raft that Charlie had shoved near the shore.

“Leave me alone,” growled Charlie.

“I have, haven’t I? I don’t see how any one could be much more aloner than you are off there.”

Charlie looked like a jar of pickles, a keg of gunpowder, and a small thunder-cloud combined. He was so angry that he could now say nothing. When Tim had repeatedly pushed Charlie’s vessel back from the shore, Charlie as obstinately pushing toward it again, Tim cried out, “Say, I will make you an offer. Do you see that?”

He pulled out of his pocket a dirty bottle and held it up.

“There, some of the best beer made anywhere is in that. If you will take a swaller, I’ll let you come ashore.”

Charlie could hardly contain himself now. He was scarcely able to sputter out this defiance, “When you catch me tasting that stuff, you’ll know it!”

“O jest hear him, Bob!” said Tim, mockingly. “I s’pose this young sailor, who don’t know enough about sailin’ to get his craft ashore, has jined a temperance society.”

“Yes,” said Charlie, “I belong to Mr. Walton’s at St. John’s.”

“What saint is that?”

The wrathful Charlie gave Tim a look of contempt and turned away.

“O, so he wont turn his pretty face this way, wont he?”

Having said this, Tim changed his tone and shouted fiercely, “You’ve got to look this way, sir. Bob, you get on that other raft and I will take this one here, and we will catch that young saint.”

The two unoccupied rafts were immediately brought into service. Never did an innocent merchantman fleeing from two pirates make a harder exertion than did Charlie to get away from Tim and Bob. They gained on him, though, rapidly.

“There they come,” thought Charlie, giving one look back at the dirty, saucy buccaneers. Tim had now reached the middle of the little pond when a thing greatly in his favor proved to be a serious thing against him, and that was the strength of his push. The fastenings of the log-raft were not equal to any violent pressure upon them, and suddenly they gave way and the logs separated. Tim’s legs separated with them till they could part no farther, and then he tried to spring from one log to the other. Alas for him, he put his foot in the wrong place, and that wrong place was the water! Down he went into as thorough a bath as ever a young rascal got in this world. The water was not over his head, and he was soon on his feet, but the dip had been complete enough to satisfy the most vindictive members of the Up-the-Ladder Club, and Tim was spitting and sputtering, then spitting and sputtering again, trying to clear month, eyes, nose, ears, of the unwelcome, dirty ditch-water.

“Give—us—a—hand, Bob,” he gasped.

Charlie did not stay to see any further developments, but pushed for the shore, safely reaching it, and then made his way to the fence, climbing it and gaining the wood-lot. In the meantime, the other members of the club had halted and were consulting together. It was Juggie who arrested their flight. “It is too bad,” he said, “to leave Charlie.”

That remark detained Billy, and then Sid, Wort, and Pip stopped.

Sid laughed and said, “My father has been in the army and he would call this the flying artillery. So you see it is all right.”

“I’m afraid it’s all wrong,” said Billy, “to leave Charlie behind.”

“Yes,” said Wort, “to run away from a member of the club.”

There was now a general feeling of indignation toward any member of the club that had deserted Charlie, if that member could be found, as each one’s motive had not been to desert another, but the prudent impulse to save himself.

Sid was among the fiercest to shout and the most furious to propose. “Charlie deserted!” he said. “Who’s deserted Charlie? That wont do! Back, fellers, to the rescue!”

A brave, sympathetic shout arose. A few minutes ago Sid would have been afraid of it as something that might attract the enemy’s attention, but he calculated that they must now be at a safe distance from the down-townies.

“Let’s make a flank movement on the enemy,” said the president.

“What ith that?” asked Pip.

“Why, not so much to go *at* them as to go about them and take them unawares in the rear.”

This mode of attack, which did not necessitate the actual facing of the enemy, was very popular and took wonderfully with the club. To Sid, in particular, it was a very agreeable mode. He boldly headed this movement. He intended to go off in a direction where no enemy would ever be met, but in his ignorance of the woods, he took a course that would have led the club back to the pond, and it was an agreeable thing for Charlie that he did, as that fugitive from the pirates soon was met.

“Hullo, there he is!” shouted Wort.

“Who?” asked Sid, trembling, and fearful that it might be Tim Taylor.

“Here I am, boys,” shouted Charlie.

“Ho, to the rescue!” cried Sid, now taking long leaps forward. “Charlie, I rescue thee!”

“We are coming to fank de enemy,” said Juggie, anxious to have a hand in winning the laurels now coming so rapidly to the Knights of the White Shield.

“Going to surround the enemy,” exclaimed the warlike Sid, “and also rescue Charlie, but—but—we might as well go back now. Did you have a hard time, Charlie?”

“I did have a time, I tell you,” and Charlie eagerly told the story of his adventures.

“How we will go back, boys,” said the president, “and go round home through the woods.”

“No, sir,” declared Billy, who had somewhat of his cousin’s resoluteness; “I’m going home the way we came, and if any body stops me, it is his lookout.”

The heroic sentiment was loudly applauded, and the club returning valiantly stormed the railroad fence and carried it—a remarkable feat considering that there was nobody on it to oppose them.

Billy Grimes in his earnestness even brought down the top-rail with him.

“Stop, fellers!” warned Sid. “The enemy!” Lifting their eyes to the top of the high railroad embankment, they saw Tim in the act of chastising Bob. It was afterward ascertained that Tim was rewarding Bob for not helping him more efficiently at the time of the raft accident. Tim completed the bestowal of this reward, and then noticing the club, he shook his fist at them. He did not linger, but followed sullenly by Bob, passed down the other side of the embankment. The club did not find out whether this was an intended retreat, or simply the taking of a convenient route to reach home. They put their own construction on it, and the movement was judged to be “a shameful retreat by the enemy.” Billy led off in a brave, determined charge up the embankment—Sid shouting, “Hurrah! Glory for us! Those getting the battle-field are victors, you know!”

Nobody disputed this, and the valiant knights continued their triumphant advance to their very homes.

The Fourth was drawing to a close. The sun was breaking out through the clouds that had covered the heavens, and so brilliant was the outburst of colors, it seemed as if the folds of an immense star-spangled banner had been suddenly let loose in the western sky. It very soon paled though. The clouds thickened everywhere and the easterly wind that had been blowing all the afternoon, bringing occasional mist, now drove to land a blinding fog. Finally it began to rain, and yet gently, as if reluctant to spoil any festivities of the Fourth. Gathering up all their pyrotechnic resources, it was found that the club boys could muster a few pin-wheels, five Roman candles, and a "flower-pot." Most of these had been stored in the barn, but were now moved out-doors and taken to the shelter of a stout leafy maple by the side of the lane.

"The rain wont trouble us here," said the president. "Where is Charlie?"

"He has gone to get his fire-works," replied Billy Grimes. "He left them in the house and it is locked, for his Aunt Stanshy has gone out, and he's waiting for her, I guess."

"We had better begin, fellers, and he will come soon. The rain is coming," said Sid, warned by a big drop that glancing through the branches smote him on the nose. Pin-wheels, candles, and the other attraction were pronounced a success, though their discharge was hastened on account of the thickening rain.

The boys separated, tired and sleepy, sorry to part with the Fourth, and yet secretly glad that there was such a thing as "bed."

"Whar's Charlie," asked Juggie, as the boys separated. No one knew. "Good-bye, Charlie!" shouted one after the other, and all hastened to their homes.

Charlie was where he had been the last twenty minutes, occupying a seat out in the porch at the back door and waiting for Aunt Stanshy. He had fallen asleep, so thoroughly tired was this patriotic young American, and the day for him was ending as it began—in a chair. Aunt Stanshy came at last, feeling her way through the shadows in the porch and striving to reach the back door, whose key she carried.

"What's this?" she said, running against the sleeper. "If it isn't that boy! And here the rain has been working round into the porch and it is coming on him! If you don't take cold, Charles Pitt Macomber, then I am mistaken! Wake up, wake up!"

CHAPTER VI.

A SICK PATRIOT.

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The next morning, Aunt Stanshy was stirring at the usual hour, and her usual hour in summer was five. She did not generally expect to see Charlie down stairs until half past six. This morning, Aunt Stanshy; looked up at the clock on the high mantel-piece and saw that it was seven, then half after seven, then eight, and half after eight; but all this time there was neither sound nor sight of Charlie.

“Massy, where is that boy? I thought I would let him sleep, he was so tired, but he ought to be around now,” reflected Aunt Stanshy.

She opened the door that led up to his chamber and slowly mounted the steep, narrow, yellow stairs, turning to the right into Charlie’s sanctum. A turn to the left would have taken her to her own room. Peeping into Charlie’s room, she saw the boy fast asleep on the bed. Stealing softly across the bare floor and reaching the red and yellow home-braided rug before his bed, she looked down on the sleeping Charlie. A smile parted his lips, and he murmured something unintelligible to Aunt Stanshy. Then she laid her hand on his head, giving a little start.

“That boy took cold last night, and is a bit feverish. I’ll let him lie here a spell longer.”

Saying this, she was about to turn away, when Charlie’s eyes opened.

“That you—you, aunty?”

“Yes; why?”

“I thought it was a dream. I had a dream, and thought we gave the down-townies an awful scare.”

“You did? Was that what you were smiling at? I mean just now.”

“I guess so. And then I believe we were going to give three cheers.”

“Well, do you feel like getting up?”

“Y-e-s.”

He rose on his elbows, but sank back again.

“I guess, if you have no objection, aunty, I will lie a little longer.”

“I guess you had better, for you took cold last night out in the porch. Would you like to take your breakfast in bed, and have my little table that I lend to people who are sick in bed?”

“O, yes.”

“And would you like to have a piece of toast, a little tea, and an orange?”

“O, yes. You are the best aunty in the world.”

“Am I, dear?”

Aunt Stanshy was not very demonstrative, so that this “dear” was exceedingly precious to the warm-hearted Charlie, as was also a small hug that she gave him. While she was preparing his breakfast Charlie lay quietly in bed, and heard the sound of the rain on the slanting roof. To a tired boy in bed, and longing to have some excuse for absence from school, what music is sweeter than the sound of rain on the roof? Let it be a real north-easter sweeping in from the sea, pushing along a fleet of many clouds packed with a heavy cargo of rain, and, as it advances, let this wind sound many big, hoarse trumpets all about the houses and barns, up and down the streets! An organ in church played by Prof. Jump-up-and-down is nothing compared with such a north-easter; Charlie heard the grand music of the wind. By and by he heard Aunt Stanshy’s step on the stairs. She came slowly up, up, and then Charlie saw her turning from the entry into his room, bringing the sick-table and Charlie’s breakfast. She bolstered him up in bed, putting two or three fat pillows behind his back. Then she put the little sick-table before him. One side had been hollowed in, so that an invalid could draw it close about his body. Charlie was now the invalid to do that thing. What tea! what toast! what an orange!

“Now that you have some strength, do you want to dress and then come down and sit with me in the sitting-room and see me iron?” asked Aunt Stanshy, after breakfast.

“O, yes, and not go to school?”

“No school to-day, when that cold is on you.”

Charlie crawled into his clothes and went down stairs to the sitting-room. Aunt Stanshy was ironing. She generally did her ironing in the sitting-room, as the kitchen was very small, and, on a hot day, it was so hot there that one felt like sizzling at the touch of water.

“Here are some picture-books for you.”

“O, thanks, thanks, aunty!”

“One of those picture-books is about Indian wars.”

“Did you ever see an Injun?”

“Not the raving, tearing, tomahawk kind.”

“I shouldn’t want to see that one.”

“Several years ago sort of tame ones used to come round and have baskets to sell. My great-great-grandmother had quite an adventure with the real kind once.”

“O, tell it to me!”

Opening his eyes to that peculiar width appropriate to the hearing of an Indian story, Charlie intently listened.

“My great-great-grandmother was all alone one day in the house, for the men-folks had gone to market or somewhere. She happened to be looking out of the window, when she saw an Indian looking over the fence. What a customer! He was an ugly-looking crittur, I don’t doubt. What could she do, for he might be tomahawking her in less than no time? Wimmin folks, in them days, were not like Miss Persnips, that keeps the little thread-and-needle store on the corner, without any snap to ’em. My great-great-grandmother just tore round that room at a lively rate. She slammed the shutters, she banged about the chairs. Then she pretended that there were lots of men-folks in the house, and she kept calling to Tom, Bill, Jerry, Nehemiah. O, she had a string of ’em, all on her tongue’s end! I don’t know but she pointed a gun out of the winder, man-fashion. What did that crittur do but gather up his traps and walk off as harmless as a bumble-bee when his sting is gone. I’ve heard with my own eyes my grandmother tell that story about her grandmother.”

“Heard her with your eyes?”

“Of course not! With my ears, ears. Where are yours, for pity’s sake? There is an old garrison-house on the other side of the river, and I will show it to you some time, or I will show you what is left. They have built over the garrison-house and back of it, making a farm-house of it, but there is something still to be seen.”

“What a blessed old aunty!” thought Charlie. And the wind, what grand music it made! The chimney seemed to be a big bass-viol that this north-easter played on.

At noon Aunt Stanshy said, “What will you have for dinner?”

“May I order it, the way I did at a saloon in Boston last summer? May I write what I want on paper, and put it on the table?”

“Yes, if orderin’ will make it taste better, and it seems to affect some folks’ vittles that way.”

So Charlie and Aunt Stanshy “played saloon.” He wrote his order on a slip of paper, and left it on the table for her inspection while he went up stairs. Directing her spectacles toward it, she read, with some amazement, this request:

“Please bring me for dinner, a pickle Aunt Stanshy, would be what you know nice to toast.”

“Toasted pickle!” exclaimed Aunt Stanshy, in alarm.

Charlie had now returned to the sitting-room.

“You don’t mean, Charles Pitt, a toasted pickle!”

“Why, no; ha! ha! There are two things on that paper. I said, ‘Please bring me for dinner, Aunt Stanshy, what you know to toast.’ That is on one side, and on the other, ‘A pickle would be nice,’ and I see now that you could read the words straight across, and it would mean what you say; ha! ha! I don’t expect a pickle, of course, for I am sick, you know.”

“O!”

She did not laugh. She was rather mortified to think she had not read the order aright. The noblest natures

have their infirmities. Afterward, being ashamed of herself because she did not take pleasantly this unintended joke, she manifested her penitence by getting up an extra dinner for Charlie. There was more toast, and even of a finer quality. There was another orange, and there was some jelly that Aunt Stanshy took the pains to buy at Miss Persnips's store. This was a sweet but thin-voiced little woman, who sold a variety of things in a store on the corner of the lane and Water Street.

"It is nice to be sick, Aunt Stanshy."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, just a grain sick."

It was so pleasant to be in the warm, comfortable sitting-room and watch the dreary weather out in the lane. The back side of the house butted on the lane, no fence intervening. Aunt Stanshy had no objection to such a close contact, but rather liked it, declaring it to be "social." She did not favor, though, the sociability that drunken sailors manifested several times when going from the saloons on Water Street down to their vessels at the wharf in which the lane ended. They would stagger against the house, pushing one another and bombarding it. Aunt Stanshy was on hand, though. A pail of freshly-drawn water, Arctic cold, and from an upper window, administered freely to the offenders, had been known to produce a healthy effect. Aunt Stanshy's remedies for various troubles might be vigorous, but they were generally effective. There was not much passing in the lane, that stormy day. A fisherman, in an oil-skin suit, went by, trundling a wheel-barrow of fish to a store in town. At noon, somebody else appeared.

"There's Mr. Walton," said Aunt Stanshy.

"And there's Tony with him," said Charlie.

"Where's his father?"

"Tony says he is in Europe."

"He the one that people say is an Italian, and—and—nobody knows what he is up to?"

"That's the one, aunty."

The minister and Tony, hand in hand, passed out of sight.

"This is the kind of day when Mr. Walton's mother will be watching the weather, looking up at the vane. People say that she has a great deal to say about the sea, and takes a great interest in sailors."

"What for?"

"Because they say she has a son somewhere at sea."

"And don't any one know where he is really?"

"No; and they have hinted and suspected and guessed and done every thing, except ask old Miss Walton right out, but they can't find out a thing. She's close as a clam in this matter."

By and by there appeared in the lane a drunken man. As he staggered along he was exposed to all the pitiless pelting of the wild north east rain, and moved away like a dark, forlorn shadow.

“Poor fellow!” the sympathizing Charlie exclaimed. “Who’s that, I wonder?”

“Where?”

“A drunken man in the lane.”

“If people would only take the water inside and the rum outside, sort of turnin’ things round, it would be much better, better,” said Aunt Stanshy, going to the window. She gave one look and came back to her ironing. Charlie thought he heard her sigh. He had already noticed that Aunt Stanshy never made fun of drunken people.

“Who is it?” he asked.

She did not answer, but taking up her flat-iron again, pounded the clothes with it vigorously, as if trying to call attention from herself to her work.

“Is she crying?” thought Charlie.

As if wet with her tears, her spectacles gleamed sharply. The muscles of her arms swelled as she pounded the innocent sheet before her, and Charlie was reluctant to ask again. For some time there was silence, the only interrupting sound being Aunt Stanshy’s pound—pound—pound. Charlie sat in his chair, looking steadily out upon the somber, dripping rain.

“Don’t you want to play something?”

It was Aunt Stanshy speaking. A troubled look on her face had passed away and she was ironing quietly again.

“Yes;” said Charlie, “you—you sick?”

Aunt Stanshy gave no answer to this, but asked again, “Don’t you want to play?”

“Play what?”

“Boat.”

“Boat! how!”

“O make believe, you know.”

Charlie thought in silence.

“You lend me a box, aunty?”

“Yes, certainly.”

“And that little broom you sweep with?”

The amateur ship-carpenter went to work.

“There is my mast,” said Charlie, securing the broom to the bottom of the box which he had turned over. “Now I must have sails. It is going to be a monitor, too, like what I read about in a book the other day.”

After some effort, and more tribulation, there appeared a splendid piece of naval architecture, a monitor with a turret, the deck bordered with a twine-railing, two sails hanging down from Aunt Stanshy’s small broom.

“That broom makes me think of what I learned at school when I was a girl.”

“What was that?”

“I am not much of a scholar, but I remember this. Admiral Tromp was a Dutchman, and commanded a fleet that went against the English. Tromp was so successful that he tied a broom to his mast-head and went sailing over the waters, and that meant he had swept his enemy from the sea, and if he hadn’t, he would certainly do it and make clean work of it. Over the blue waters he went skipping along, feeling dreadful big, with that broom at the mast-head. The English boys, though, came at him again and whipped him, and poor Tromp was finally killed in a sea-fight. I don’t know what became of his broom. You had better call that an English and not a Dutch broom.”

When Charlie went up stairs that night, the *Neponset* as he called the monitor, was still sailing in the sitting-room, its sails all set, its broom at the mast-head. He thought it was splendid to be sick.

“How long do you think this sickness may go on?” was the last question he asked Aunt Stanshy that night.

“O, if it is a slow fever, it might last several weeks, but I don’t want to discourage you.”

“Discourage!” It was magnificent. Two or three weeks of toast and jelly and oranges and many soft words, and not a few hugs! That night he was dreaming of boxes of oranges he was emptying, and of glasses of jelly big as hogsheads, out of which he was taking jelly by the shovelful! The next morning he felt—though unwilling to confess it—much better. At noon keen old Dr. Pillipot happened to come along, and Aunt Stanshy referred Charlie’s case to him. Old Dr. Pillipot bent his sharp, gray eyes down toward Charlie and made up a horrid face as he growled, “Let me see your tongue, young man. Hem! Looks quite well. Let me feel your pulse. So! Quite good. The weather has changed, and as it is mild and sunny, he might walk down to school this—afternoon.

“O dear!” groaned Charlie, when the doctor had left. “I wish I had scared his horse off when I saw him coming down the lane. You and I, aunty, did have such a nice time!”

O, the trials of this life!

Charlie, though, had a dose of comfort from Aunt Stanshy. She told him he need not go to school until the next day, and when the morning came, she said:

“I believe the *Neponset* took a cargo on board in the night.”

There in the shadow of the mast-head was a column of doughnuts!

“You may take them all to school with you, Charlie.”

Now he was glad that he was not sick. He disposed of six doughnuts that forenoon, and as these, if tied together, would have made good chain-shot for the monitor, and yet did not affect him unfavorably, it was proof that Charlie was restored to health.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NAILED DOOR AND WINDOW.

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Charlie made a discovery in the barn. In that side toward the river there was a door on the first floor, and there was also a window in the chamber above. Not only was the door closed, and closed also was the wooden shutter of the window, but over each iron hook dropped in its staple and securing the door and window were two nails stoutly driven. All this Charlie had noticed before. He now traced these half-obliterated words in chalk on the door: "This is not to be opened." He was standing before this prohibition, wondering who put it there, and for what purpose, thinking how nice it would be to have the door open that the club might have a chance to get down that way into the dock. Then he thought how pleasant it would be, also, to have the window open that the club might have a lookout upon the river and off toward the sea, on whose blue rim, a mile away, could be seen the white tower of the light-house, where Simes Badger and his assistant served their country alternate days. Suddenly, Charlie heard a thick, hoarse voice behind him: "Your Aunt Stanshy in, sonny?"

Charlie turned, somewhat startled, and there was Simes Badger himself.

"She has gone out, I guess, sir."

"What are you looking at that door for? I don't believe your Aunt Stanshy wants you to open it."

"O, I was not going to open it."

If, after the half-effaced chalk-marks, Charlie had seen a written threat, "On pain of death," he could not have been more determined to let that window alone.

"Do you know, Mr. Badger, who shut and nailed that window?"

"Aunt Stanshy herself. I saw her with my own eyes."

"You did?"

"Yes. You see—there, I don't know but I'm telling a secret—but then you won't say any thing."

Having made this prudent remark, and not waiting for any promise from Charlie, Simes, who dearly loved to tell a thing, and especially any thing that might astonish a hearer, began his story.

"You see, Tim Tyler is your Aunt Stanshy's second cousin."

"Tim's father?" said Charlie, in astonishment.

"You mean young Tim Tyler's father? Ginerally old Tim is young Tim's father, sartin as the sea is father of our river. But this old Tim is young Tim's uncle. Then you didn't know it? Well, you are young, and I spose nobody told you. Well, Stanshy and old Tim were brought up side by side in this neighborhood and were good as chickens to one another. Some folks say they'd been better friends still, if their parents

hadn't set their faces agin it, and so they were never married to one another. They were never married at all. Did you ever see old Tim?"

"I don't know as ever I saw old Tim, but then I've seen *that* boy, and he is rough," said Charlie, recalling the afternoon of the Fourth.

"Tim Tyler don't live in this part of the town, and it's no wonder you never saw him. He hardly ever comes down this way now, though he often did once. Well, the wust lookin' old drunkard you ever see about town, spot him for Tim."

"Then I guess I have seen him," remarked Charlie, recalling the drunkard he had watched the afternoon of his severe sickness, and remembering, too, Aunt Stanshy's singular conduct.

"Tim looks poorly enough now, but it wasn't so once. Straight and smart, and bright as the blades of a new jack-knife, was Tim. His face was blushin' like a posy, and his beard was long and handsome, like Moses the prophet's. He was nice as a pictur till rum got the better of him, and then he changed, I tell ye. For many years he had the privilege of fishin' from this barn. From the stairs on the 'tother side of that door, he would get down into his fishin' boat in the dock. He would bring his fish in here, split 'em and prepare 'em for market. Sometimes Stanshy kept a horse and cow below, and then Tim would hist his fare into the upper window and clean his fish there. But one day Aunt Stanshy cleaned him out, and when Stanshy starts on a cleanin' tour, she makes thorough work of it, and puts things through promptly. And she did clean out old Tim! But I must go back and hitch the horse into the cart, and say what you know as well as I, that your Aunt Stanshy is a great teetotaler, a leetle too much I think." [Simes liked his nip.] "But seein' how her minister's in favor of it, she is wuss than ever. Now to go on. Your father, boy, let me say, had a hand in this trouble, though not meaningly, and it was this way. Tour father came to live with your Aunt Stanshy, and one day Tim took him out a-fishin', and not only tipped a jug to his own lips, but sot it to your father's also. When they came back home, it was plain they had been up to suthin' besides fishin'. Well, Tim might as well have touched a lion's whip—what do you call it?"

"Whelp. I was reading about lions to-day."

"Yes, touched a lion's whelp as touched your father; for didn't Aunt Stanshy pitch into him! I heard it all. It was when he was a-splittin' fish, and Aunt Stanshy came out, and didn't she walk into Tim! I never see an eel skinned more purtily than she dressed Tim for temptin' a poor, motherless boy, as she called your father. 'Don't!' your father would go, tryin' to pacify her; 'don't!' It had no more effect than tryin' to fan out of the way a tornader. Indeed, jest because she and Tim had been on good terms with one another and understood one another so well, I think for that reason she was all the hotter. You know when brothers do quarrel, they go it wuss than other folks. Well, Tim at fust would say nothing but he was orful mad. He was that kind of mad that you see in the sky when a thunder-storm is brewin', and yet no rain has fallen; only the flash is there, and the thunder is there a-rumblin', and the lightnin' is there a sawin' up and down, but nary a drop of rain! At last Tim spoke, and he declared it was the last he'd ever have to do with her, and afore he'd ask a favor of her, he took a horrid oath, he'd see hissself a-drownin' in that dock fust. I hated to hear him swear that way, for, sez I, 'Young man, you may get there yet, and you may be glad to have Stanshy's help.' Then he took a barrel of fish he was fillin', and he was so mad he rolled the whole mess into the water, sayin' he would have nothin' to do with any thing that had touched Aunt Stanshy's barn. I asked him why he didn't then throw himself over! That touched him up, and he grabbed his knives and pitched them into the dock. It was a queer sight to see them fish in that barrel floatin' away. But then the rum was in him and maddened him. When he had left, it was Aunt Stanshy's turn to do suthin'. I heard

it all, for I was in the yard doin' a few chores for Stanshy. Fust, there was a slam in the barn chamber. I jest slipped up them stairs and peeked over the edge of the floor. Stanshy had pulled the shutter in with a vengeance. Then she hooked it and drove the nails over the hook as tight as bricks. O she is a woman of 'mazin' vigor, Stanshy is, when she gets agoin'. She came down stairs and she fastened up this door, and then I seed her fumblin' in her pocket, and, pullin' out a piece of chalk, she began to write. When Stanshy had finished, of course, I was at my chores agin very busily engaged. Well, since that day, there has been silence between Stanshy and Tim like that round the old tombstones in the church-yard. I hope some day it will be different."

With this benevolent wish, Simes closed.

"A bad scrape," remarked Charlie.

"Yes, people ought not to drink so much," said the abstemious and ascetic Simes. "They ought to stop this side of a drop too much."

"They ought to stop this side of any drop at all," stoutly affirmed the young member of Mr. Walton's temperance society.

"Pre—pre—haps so," replied Simes.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENTERTAINMENT.

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Aunt Stanshy, as she looked down upon the sitting-room table, saw Charlie's curly head bending over pen, ink, and card-board. He had cut the card-board into strips three inches long and two inches wide.

“What have you there?”

Charlie was too much occupied to notice this remark.

“What are you doing?”

“Making tickets.”

“Tickets?”

“Yes, will you buy one?”

“I want to see first what I am going to buy.”

“You may.”

Aunt Stanshy then read these lines on a slip of card-board:

<p style="text-align: center;">Ticket to the Up-the-Ladder Boys' ENTERTAINMENT. Admission, 2 nails. Seat, 10 nails. Elders' admission, 1 cent. Seat, 2 cents.</p>

“O, that is it I Could I go in for nails, or a cent?”

“For a cent.”

“Then I'm an ‘elder.’”

“Yes, aunty.”

“Well, I'll engage a seat.”

“Goody! That will be two cents. We did think of breaking up the club, but this will cheer them up. Wouldn't it be too bad to give up? Our new silk badges that our teacher promised, we have this week.”

“The shields?”

“Yes, spick and span new.”

“I hope my two cents will encourage them to be good knights.”

“O it will. You will be on hand this afternoon, after school?”

“Certainly.”

After school, Aunt Stanshy was on hand promptly, and she judged by the noises issuing from the barn that all the others were on hand also. She climbed the stairs and was about stepping into the chamber, when Pip, the assistant sentinel, came forward. He looked very formidable. A scarlet cap was on his head, a white belt tied round his body, and red flannel epaulets decorated his shoulders. He bore a terrible broom, and Aunt Stanshy recalled the fact that it had served as mast for the *Neponset*.

“Who goeth there?” cried the valorous Pip.

“Aunt Stanshy,” said a feeble voice.

“Advanth and give the counterthign?”

“I can’t.”

Pip leveled his broom at once. Poor Stanshy, how she wished she had made her will.

“Bang!” he shouted.

Could she survive this?

“Thay pertatoeth!” he whispered.

“Pertatoes,” she fortunately shrieked.

“All right,” said Pip, and she was spared a second shot.

“I’m thankful to get through safe, and now I have not to pay, after all that risk?”

“Certainly, madam,” politely replied Charlie, the treasurer, who now met her. “I’ll take your ticket and punch it.”

Having punched her ticket, he retired. Aunt Stanshy looked about the chamber. She noticed that an old thin sheet served for curtain, as before, and another was strung across a corner and separated it from the rest of the chamber. This second curtain not being long enough to reach the desired distance, was pieced out by a strip of wire netting in one corner. Looking over this corner curtain, Aunt Stanshy saw eight pieces of carpeting on the floor, each member of the club having furnished a piece. Inside this sanctuary were a barrel and a saw-horse.

“What is this for?” asked Aunt Stanshy.

“O for meetings,” said Charlie. “Only the four principals can go in there.”

“Who are they?”

“The president, the governor, the first treasury, and the keeper of the great seal. We stand on the barrel and saw-horse, and make laws to the other members of the club, who stand outside.”

Aunt Stanshy now turned to inspect the other parts of the chamber.

“This is our whipping-post,” said Charlie, calling attention to a post against which leaned the ladder that sloped up to the cupola.

“Have you whipped any one?”

“Yes; Pip deserted once.”

Aunt Stanshy read three notices nailed to the post: “First, no cross words; no swearing and vulgar words; nobody but the treasurer to climb this ladder to go up into the cupola, unless the club say so.”

This was in Charlie’s handwriting.

“Why not go?” asked Aunt Stanshy.

“O we keep our funds up there in a dipper.”

“It looks unsafe to me, for somebody climbing up there might reach into the cup and steal the money.”

“O no, I guess not.”

Sid Waters now stepped forward. “Ladies and gentlemen,” he said, “two more individuals having arrived”—these were nail patrons—“we will begin our entertainment. First is the dialogue called ‘The Spy.’”

The curtain rose and there stood the inheritor of the warlike name of Jugurtha. He was rather sober and melancholy, and was dressed in a semi-military style that betrayed not in the least the fact to what flag he might possibly be attached. Sid was crouching down, hiding behind a barrel.

“What am I?” Juggie now asked in low tones, “American or British?”

“Of course,” Sid was heard to say, “you are an American, or ought to be. Hush up!”

Juggie now strode over the floor, an exiled broom-handle resting on his shoulder. Suddenly a step was heard. From the rear of a box crept out the governor. He wore a farmer’s dress, and was half smothered under his father’s tall hat.

“Advance!” shouted Juggie, “and gib de count—count—”

“Countersign!” whispered the prompter behind the barrel.

“Count-de-sign!” shouted Juggie, pompously, at the same time presenting the broom-handle threateningly.

“George Washington!” answered the farmer.

“All right. Go ’long dar!”

“No, no!” whispered Sid. “Let me see your papers, friend!”

“Let me see your papers, friend!”

The farmer reads his pass.

“Is dat all?”

“All.”

“Knock off his hat,” whispered Sid.

“What’s de matter wid your hat?” and as Juggie shouted this, he fetched the governor’s hat a merciless rap, one that would have been serious had not the governor’s head luckily been in the first story of the hat. As the hat dropped, Juggie seized a paper that fell out, and exclaimed, “A spy, a spy! A note to de British commander!”

“Seize him! That is the next thing,” suggested Sid, in smothered tones. But the British spy was too much for Juggie, and the defender of the continental name was obliged to resort to severe measures. Presenting the broom-handle, he shouted, “Aim! Fire! Bang!” but the spy was not considerate enough to fall.

“Drop! drop, why don’t you?” whispered Juggie. “You’ve been shot.”

The spy, *alias* the governor, showed his usual firmness, and continued to stand.

“Drop!” besought Sid, in a suppressed voice. “Shoot him again, Juggie!”

But the spy did not care to be riddled again and he prudently fell.

“Drag him out, Juggie!” was the prompting of an unknown voice. Juggie seized one of the spy’s fat legs, but pulled in vain. It was an impossible *feet*. Sid and Charlie now appeared as continentals, supposed to be armed with guns, and were helping Juggie, when the cry was raised, “The British army is coming!” At the head of the stairs appeared Wort Wentworth, his head decorated with a red paper helmet, and carrying on his body various insignia of war. He now made a fierce charge across the floor.

“Into the fort!” shouted Sid, rushing toward the closet, and, as usual, striving after the first chance to retreat. “Into the fort, my men!”

After him scrambled Charlie and Juggie, the dead “spy” manifesting an unusual energy and scrambling after them, forgetting that his friends were in his rear and not in the closet. The next moment all heard an ominous descent from the second to the first story.

“Massy!” shouted Aunt Stanshy. “Somebody has gone down that fodder-box agin!”

She rushed down stairs, followed by the “British army,” and all the members of the Up-the Ladder Club that could move one leg before the other.

“I know those legs! I guess they will stand it,” said Aunt Stanshy, as she reached the lower floor and caught a glimpse of the fodder-box. It was the British spy, whose stout pedestals were sticking out, and he only needed to be once more seized and dragged forward by Juggie and the other “continentals” to give proof of his vigorous, embalmed condition.

“Sakes, boy!” said Aunt Stanshy. “I thought you were shot, but you manifest an immense amount of vitality for a dead man.”

“I came down rather sudden,” said the governor.

“Yes, and it’s the last time,” exclaimed Aunt Stanshy, “that thing is going to happen. I will go up myself and fix that floor, and do it thoroughly.”

In a few moments her hammer was heard vigorously pounding in the closet and securing the club against future harm.

“We didn’t do all we intended,” said Charlie. “We were going to have a reconciliation, aunty.”

“Between whom?”

“The British and Americans. We were going to have the President of the United States and Queen Victoria walk arm in arm up and down the floor, and never have war any more.”

In the confusion attendant upon the fall of the “spy,” the programme was not carried out as planned, and the shadows of those two eminent rulers never darkened the floor of the barn chamber.

“May war never happen, just the same!” said Aunt Stanshy.

Amen! so say we all of us.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CUPOLA.

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Aunt Stanshy was reading one day the list of prohibitions posted up against the post in the barn chamber.

“Charlie,” she said “I like what is said here, that no cross words and no bad words must be spoken here; but what does it mean when it says *no one* but the ‘treasury’ must climb the ladder and go up into the cupola? Does that apply to honorary members? and did you think that I might want to go there?”

Charlie’s mouth opened into a crack from ear to ear. “Why—why, the money is up in the cupola!”

“The money is up there in the cupola? Yes, I knew that; you told me that before. What holds your money?”

“A tin dipper.”

“Well, now, if you don’t look out, somebody will steal your money. You may be assured that honorary members won’t trouble it.”

“Ho!” shouted Charlie. “There goes a man and a hand organ and a monkey.”

The dignity of the club was not sufficient to restrain Charlie and several others from an almost headlong rush for the out-door attraction, and they quickly surrounded the organ-grinder. He owned a remarkable monkey, the boys thought, especially when he mounted by a spout to the window of Aunt Stanshy’s chamber, and, entering it, soon re-appeared shaking in his hand Aunt Stanshy’s spectacles!

“Put ’em on!” cried Sid.

“He can, he can!” said his master. “Me taught him.”

The next moment the spectacles appeared on the monkey’s nose!

“He look like *her*,” said the organ-grinder.

But the monkey did not have time to continue his resemblance to the fair owner any longer, for the shadow of a broom fell over him, and if he had not made a very nimble spring for the spout, something besides a shadow would have fallen upon him, even the broom itself. This was now seen at the window, and Aunt Stanshy behind it. It was Tony who gallantly ran forward and rescued Aunt Stanshy’s spectacles as their wearer was about quitting the spout for the ground.

“We think that monkey is very smart, Aunt Stanshy,” said Sid.

“I expect you will make him an honorary member the next thing.”

“He’s bright enough,” said Sid.

“I wonder how bright one must be to be an honorary member if—if—a monkey is the standard?” thought

Aunt Stanshy.

This visit from the monkey was not the only unusual thing happening that day. The club heard with sorrow of the unexpected and total loss of their money! Charlie, as “treasury,” had gone up the ladder, but returning, he reported that the dipper, the safe of the club, was missing.

“How much money was in it?” inquired Aunt Stanshy.

“Ten cents.”

“I said you might lose your money.”

This was entirely true, but it was poor consolation. Indeed, it was quite aggravating.

“Did you have any mark on the dipper?”

“Yes; a shield on the bottom, though—though—‘twas not a very good one.”

No, to that day it remained uncertain what the device really was, and its character had been hotly discussed in the club.

Charlie had discovered the theft on his return from school at noon. Swallowing a potato and a few mouthfuls of steak, he then rushed from the house to report the loss to the club. In a short time all the white shields had heard the news, and quickly gathered.

“Well, boys, what is to be done?” asked the president.

Nobody knew.

“Let’s climb the ladder and all take a look,” suggested the secretary.

Exceedingly nimble were the legs that went wriggling up the ladder, and very curious eyes were directed toward the depths of the “cupelo,” but the only result was a succession of “My!” and “That’s so!” and “Too bad!”

“I’ve got it!” shouted Sid.

“He’th found it,” said Pip.

Every sad face brightened.

“No, I haven’t, Pip!” exclaimed Sid.

“But you thaid tho.”

“No, I meant that I knew what had become of it.”

“O! O!” said Pip. “But what hath become of it?”

Sid here looked about him, to make sure that no one outside of the club was listening.

“Well, boys, I think Tim Tyler took it”

“What makes-you think so?” inquired the governor.

“It has just come to me that I saw Tim Tyler go down the lane after school, and a tin dipper stuck out of his pocket.”

“You did?” asked several.

All eyes opened wide in wonder and indignation.

“With my eyes I saw him. That’s where the dipper has gone.”

It did not occur to the club that there were more dippers than one in the world, and then they did not care to think of it. They had not forgotten the Fourth, and they wanted to believe something bad of Tim.

Another point for discussion came up at once, and Charlie suggested it.

“How shall we get the dipper away from Tim?” he asked.

“I move the president go,” said Wort.

“I thecond the mothion,” cried Pip.

“Aint you good,” was Sid’s scornful notice of the intended honor. “Presidents don’t do that, but the police of the club. I preside.”

“The sentinel is the police, and that is Juggie, but he is not here now; he went home a moment ago. Then, of course, his assistant must do it;” and he here turned toward Pip.

“Yes, Pip,” said boy after boy.

Poor, trembling Pip! Didn’t he wish he had been born in the previous century! No amount of coaxing could prevail upon, him to approach the dreadful dragon that had carried off the tin dipper, and every body else declined the same honor.

Finally Wort made this offer:

“I’ll go down to-Old Tim’s boat, and Tim may be hanging round, and I’ll see what I can see.”

This was a relief to the club, and entirely safe for Wort.

“I’ll go at once,” he said, and away he went.

Charlie went up to a store on “Water Street at the same time, and chanced to meet Miss Bertha Barry.

“We’ve met with a loss,” said Charlie, with a sober face.

“Any one dead?”

“O no; but the club has lost its tin dipper.”

“Tin dipper?”

“Yes, teacher, where we kept our money.”

“O!”

“All our money has gone.”

“How much!”

“Ten cents.”

“Hem, hem; sorry.”

“We think we know who did it.”

“You know certainly.”

“No, but we think we do, and the feller is just bad enough to do it.”

“It’s pretty hard to have people think you are bad; and then, if you are thought to have done something you were never guilty of, that is worse still. I don’t think it fair to charge a wrong thing on any body unless we know pretty certainly. It is not just.”

Charlie had not thought of it *that* way before.

“I guess you are right, teacher.”

Bidding her good-bye, he was moving off, when she said: “Stop one moment. Whoever that boy is, I wish you’d get him out to Sunday-school.”

“What an idea!” thought Charlie. “Tim Tyler’s going to Sunday-school!”

In the meantime Wort had been prosecuting his bold investigations. He strolled down the lane, passing several cottages, and then a fish-house, where several men were splitting and salting fish. All these were on the left side of the lane. On the right was a long dock, and in it were several boats.

“There is Tim Tyler,” exclaimed Wort, “and there is his boat. There is young Tim, the thief!”

It was an old boat that Wort looked into as he stood upon the stairs leading down into the dock. It was a boat badly battered, like its owner.

“If the red paint could be got off Tim’s nose and put on his boat, it would be better for both,” thought Wort.

Old Tim was fixing a net in the stem of his boat. Young Tim was in another part of the dock, hunting amid the muddy flats for relics.

“There she is!” said Wort to himself. He had detected a dipper in the bottom of the boat. “Now is my chance,” thought Wort. He reached down to the coveted dipper. It was a venerable piece of tinware.

“That’s too old to be ours,” reflected the daring Wort. “Let me turn it over and see if there is a mark on the bottom. Bah, an old worm! That is not our dipper.”

“Here, you thief! what are you meddlin’ with that property for?” roared a voice.

It was Old Tim. His face was red as a boiled lobster, and as he crooked his bare arms and rested them on his hips, they looked like the claws of a mammoth lobster ready to crawl out and seize any offender.

“Guess I’ll go,” thought Wort, and off he hurried to tell the club his ill-success, and that their detective in search of a thief had been called one.

A few minutes later Juggie exclaimed to the disconsolate circle, “Dar’s de organ-grinder.”

It was indeed he hurrying along the lane and turning a troubled face toward the barn, for no monkey came with him. Had he lost his friend from the far South?

“He gone!” said the grinder, as he reached the boys. “You sheen him?”

“Seen your monkey?” asked Sid.

“Yes, yes! You sheen my leetle mun-kee?”

“Why, no.”

“You—you—you,” and the grinder swept the circle to find out if any one had seen the lost favorite. No one had seen him.

“O, O dear!” lamented the grinder excitedly.

Poor organ-grinder! his face was wrinkled as badly as that of his missing assistant when attempting to pick a very bad nut.

“You go—find—my—mun-kee?”

“O, yes,” said the president, “we will hunt. Come on.”

They scattered, tumbling over fences, climbing shed roofs, diving into corners, shouting, yelling, and stirring up the neighborhood thoroughly. It did no good. “My munkee” refused to be found.

The boys went to school and returned, meeting in the barn chamber once more.

“There’s some business to be done, Mr. President,” said the “securtary,” in a very formal way. But where was the president? He was no more to be found than the monkey. A little later, Wort Wentworth was looking out of the window.

“Here comes Sid,” he shouted.

Sid was running through the yard, when, seeing the boys at the window, he stopped, and shouted excitedly:

“O, fellers, I have made a discovery! It’s all out now. Come!”

What was out he did not say, but turned and speedily was out himself in the lane.

“Come on, boys,” called the governor, and down the stairs they went, rushing, shoving, tumbling, just in time to see the last of Sid’s legs disappearing round the corner of the house. They hurried after him, down the lane, then up a little passage-way between two buildings on the left. Then they turned aside to the rear of a barn, and there the panting, confused group halted.

“There!” said Sid, solemnly, pointing as he spoke. “The mystery is over. Poor feller!”

Dangling from the roof by a cord that was twisted round his neck, swung the dead monkey! In the grasp of his rigid paw was the missing dipper.

“I see the shield!” sang out Wort. Yes, there was the mark identifying the stolen property. Poor little child of the tropics, swinging in his leafy, native haunts from bough to bough, gripping the branches with paw and tail, he little anticipated that his last swing would be by the neck, like that of a murderer from the black, unsightly gallows! He had strayed away, carrying with him the cord binding him to his master’s wrist. In his peregrinations over various roofs, he had examined the cupola, and reaching a paw through an opening where a slat chanced to have been removed, he had abstracted the property of the club. Whatever money was in the dipper had been spilled hopelessly as marbles in the sea. Attempting to come down by a spout from the last barn-roof visited, he was entangled in the cord that had caught about a nail in the roof. Finally, the cord was twisted about his neck and twisted the life out of him. The thief was holding out the dipper as if asking for more, and showing that the ruling passion was strong in death. There were many sighs from the tender-hearted, sympathetic boys. All were ready to pity and forgive, but pity and forgiveness could not bring the little creature back to life.

“Let’s bury him!” said a tearful voice. It was Tony, who said little generally, but he was now moved to speak in his secret sympathy for this wandering child of the sun. The organ-grinder was notified, and then a grave was dug for his dead property under the leafiest apple-tree. Charlie furnished a box, and Wort brought fresh straw from his stable. The box with its occupant was laid in the grave, and the pitiful face of the monkey was then covered up forever.

CHAPTER X.

AUNT STANSHY'S BOARDER.

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Aunt Stanshy had often said she would never have boarders, and she would “go to the almshouse first,” yes, she “would.” One day, though, there came to the house a frank, lively, irrepressible young man of nineteen.

“I am a stranger here,” he said, “but my name is Somers, Will Somers, and I have come here to be a clerk in Tilton’s apothecary-store; been in Boston, you know, with Tompkins & Thomas, Tilton, when he was up the other day at our store, said that he wanted a clerk and offered me the chance, which I concluded to accept. I want a boarding-place, marm; but what a town this is? Do I look like a tramp, and if I don’t, what is the matter that I cant get a boarding-house? Do I look like one?”

Here he looked at Aunt Stanshy, making such an appeal with his frank, blue eyes, that Aunt Stanshy could not well do otherwise than say, “Why, no!”

“Then wont you take me?”

“O—I—I—said I never would take boarders,—and—and—I am unprepared,—and—and—”

“O this room will do first-rate. I shouldn’t want one any better, really. I know”—here he gave a very approving glance about the room. “Now come, do! It would please mother very much.”

“Have you a mother living?”

“O yes, and she is one of the best mothers, too, and I think you look like her. There are four of us brothers. How much your little boy looks like my little brother Willie at home! Come here,” he said to Charlie, who had opened the door to ask Aunt Stanshy a question, “come here and see what apothecaries carry in their pockets. Some folks think they only carry drugs and such things, but you see if it is so?” Here he put into Charlie’s fat hand a long and toothsome piece of checkerberry pipe stem!

“He is not my little boy really,” explained Aunt Stanshy, and then she went on to say who Charlie was, and also told about other things, finally saying so much concerning the Macomber family that he ceased to be a stranger and seemed to become a relative, a species of long-absent son, and consistently what could Aunt Stanshy do but let Will Somers—an arrival in Seamont only a few hours old—have that sacred apartment—her front room?

“What a fool I am!” soliloquized Aunt Stanshy. She watched Will Somers go down the street after the interview, and heard him whistling “The girl I left behind me.” Did he mean Aunt Stanshy? “I’m a nat’ral-born fool, I do believe,” she exclaimed, “letting a perfect stranger have that room; but there, it will be sort of nice having him round. I s’pose he will want to stick a lot of things into that room.” And didn’t he stick up “things” and make changes? Down came the two yellow crockery crow-biddies that had roosted on the mantelpiece the last twenty years, never having paid for the privilege with a single crow. Down came two vases of dried grasses. Down came a flaming red, yellow, orange, and green print of an American farm-yard. Up went various things. Over the mantel-piece was suspended a picture of Abraham Lincoln,

garnished with American flags, and along the mantel-piece was ranged a row of photographs, principally of young ladies, several fans coming at intervals, while about the room, on various brackets, stood more photographs, mostly feminine, and more flags, all American. It ought to be said in fairness that, while several of the young ladies did not have at all a family look, others did, and were introduced to Aunt Stanshy as Will's sisters. He had a flag over his mother's picture. Then there was a red-hot chromo of a fire-engine, and a cool one of two white bears on a cake of ice.

"O dear, what a boarder!" said Aunt Stanshy, going into the room twenty-four hours after it had been very orderly arranged by her. "Things are stirred up now. It looks like a tornader."

That was the way it generally appeared, and yet Will Somers, impulsive, careless, thoughtless, but frank, enthusiastic, generous, dashing, and honorable always, was very popular with Aunt Stanshy and Charlie. In Charlie's eyes he was a marvelous being. Such wonderful fires in the city as he told Charlie about! And then, what did Aunt Stanshy's boarder do but join the "Cataract" engine company in Seamont! He made a stir generally in the old place, starting a gymnasium and organizing a "reading circle," and putting things generally in a whirl. He had a "voice," and he had a guitar, so that his "serenades" were famous; and he set Aunt Stanshy's heart all in a flutter one night when, awaking about twelve, she heard his well-known voice leading off in a serenade, while he twanged his guitar to the tune, "O dearest love, do you remember?" Will Somers was popular in a very short time with every body. In the club-circle he was the object of an open, undisguised admiration. They quickly made him an honorary member, and he quickly set them up a "pair of bars," put in proper position the ladder, and suspended swings, that they might practice gymnastics every day. Every mother who had a boy in that club expected almost any day that her idol might be brought home stretched on a shutter or bundled up in a wheelbarrow. No limb though was broken, and there were some wonderful developments of "muscle" (so the club thought). One day the new honorary member made an offer.

"Boys, I can have the next Saturday afternoon that comes along, and Aunt Stanshy says there is a garrison-house on the other side of the river. Come, I'll hire a boat and take you over."

"O good!" "Yes, we'll go!" "Three cheers!" "Hurrah for Will Somers!" were some of the outcries greeting the proposition.

"I think, boys, all the honorary members ought to be invited."

"Certainly," said Sid, and Aunt Stanshy was invited.

"See me going! The idea!" she exclaimed.

"What if the minister should see me going off with a parcel of boys!"

"He would say you were a very sensible woman," said Charlie, and Aunt Stanshy went.

The club admired the rowing of Will Somers as he performed with bare arms and showed a "fearful muscle." The boat was a very large one accommodating all-the party, but the oars-man refused to have any help, and progress was slow. At last the other side of the river was reached in safety. They walked through a ship-yard, and then, turned into a country road, sweet with wild flowers, nodding on either side. Beyond this they came to a piece of road, bordered with stiff, stout pines.

“There it is!” said Aunt Stanshy. “It is that block-house.”

“What! the garrison-house?” inquired Sid. “Big as that? I thought they were smaller.”

“The real garrison-house is in the corner, this way, and makes one room on the first floor. People that came to live in the garrison-house built above it and built beyond it, turning the garrison-house into a single room in a big, old-fashioned building. Mr. Parlin, may we take a look at the garrison-house?”

“Sartin, sartin. Step in. I guess Amanda is there, washin’ the baby; but she’s used to children, and wont mind you more than flies,” said a stout, broad-shouldered farmer, passing through the yard, a hoe resting on his shoulder. “Let me go with you.”

Amanda, who was washing the baby, and at the same time trying to keep in decent order six other children, gave them a hearty welcome, and showed that she did not mind them more than “flies.”

“Aunt Stanshy, how d’ye do? Are these all your children?” asked Amanda, laughing.

“Yes,” said Sid; “she is our mother to-day, and we are proud of her.”

The white shields all smiled their approbation of Sid’s ready gallantry.

“And this is the garrison-house?” inquired Will Somers.

“Yes,” replied Mr. Parlin; “we are between its walls, and solid walls, too, they are. See that feller overhead stickin’ out from the ceilin’. There is a beam for you, all of oak, too, and it measures eleven inches by thirteen. Now step outside. There, boys, in that corner, the clapboards are broken, and you can see what was the original style of the walls. They were laid in this way: big, square sticks of oak were laid one upon the other, the ends dovetailed and secured by pins, the cracks being filled with mortar. You see, no Injun bullet could go through that wall, and there would be little satisfaction in building a fire against it, unless an immense one.”

Will Somers was here striding over the ground, pacing the length of the garrison wall.

“About twenty feet,” he said.

“Yes, twenty feet hits the mark,” replied Mr. Parlin. “The sticks are a foot wide, and measure six inches through. It makes a pretty good wall. Step in and I’ll show you where they went in and out. There, it was that narrow door over in that side, and that openin’ up there, about two feet square, they say, was the winder, and they used to fire out of it. At night they fitted a block into it and fastened up the door-way with logs.”

“Did they have any Indians about here, any real ones?” asked Charlie.

“There is only one kind, sonny, when you talk about full-blooded Injuns, and I guess our fathers found it out. Injuns! Thick as pizen any day. Why, down in that place just beyond here a woman was goin’ along one day, and she was carryin’ an earthen pot. The Injuns just whooped out on her, and it was the last time the poor thing was seen alive. The pot was found afterward, and is kept by one of our families in town to-day. Injuns! I guess so. Of course, when they were about here the alarm was given, and the people came flockin’ to the garrison-house, and they were safe enough here.”

How the eyes of the club projected! The governor informed Pip that his orbs stuck out far enough to hang a mug on.

The party slowly made its way back to the boat.

“How foggy it is!” said Aunt Stanshy.

“It has all come up while we were gone.”

“Don’t worry,” said Will. “I’ll row you across.”

“I hope you wont row us anywhere else, I’m sure.”

“Don’t worry,” again remarked the young apothecary, and in a very confident tone.

“Let me pint you first right for Peleg Wherren’s fish-house, for there’s a good landin’ place at his wharf,” said Aunt Stanshy.

Standing on the pebbly shore, she bowed to the level of the boat’s rail, and then aimed her as if an enemy directing a columbiad at Peleg’s fish-flakes, eel-pots, and other articles, promising to let a cold shot drop in their midst.

“There, I’ve pintoed her; now go right across.”

“All right,” sang out Will, cheerfully.

Like a great, gray, woolly blanket, the fog rested on the river, and Seamount was as effectually hid as if fifty miles away.

“Look—out!” screamed Aunt Stanshy. Something big was now looming up directly before the bow of the boys’ boat.

“Don’t run that ship down,” said the president.

“I wont,” replied the apothecary, “if they’ll get out of the way.”

“Ship ahoy!” he shouted.

“Aye, aye!” came from the vessel.

“What ship is that, and how many days out?”

“The Dolphin, and one day out from—”

The remaining words were lost.

“This is the ‘Magnificent,’ ten minutes out from t’other side of the river!” shouted Will.

The coaster disappeared as if smothered under the gray woolly blanket that had settled down on every thing.

“Why don’t we come to the wharf?” inquired Pip.

“Because we haven’t got there.”

Will’s reason was received with laughter, but Pip persisted in his questioning. “What if we shouldn’t get there at all?”

“O we will.”

Gov. Grimes and Wort had been very anxious to pull an oar, and Will gratified them. But the governor could not row. Will had urged him to stop. The governor’s resoluteness sometimes ran into obstinacy, and it did now.

“Just see me row—away,” cried the governor, refusing to stop, but as he was about to say “away,” his oar slipped out of the rowlock, and he finished the sentence, his feet going up into the air and his head going down into the bottom of the boat!

“Caught a crab, governor?” shouted the president.

The boat stopped in the midst of the commotion that followed the governor’s tumble, and when Will started his craft again, he did not appreciate the fact that its bow had shifted its aim.

“Where *are* we goin’?” inquired Aunt Stanshy.

“Home,” answered Will. “I’m all right. A few more strokes must fetch us all right to the wharf,” and he pulled lustily on his oars.

“It is my fear that we are all wrong,” said Aunt Stanshy. “I know something about this river, and about fogs, and about people rowing round like fools and getting nowhere.”

The members of the club now looked serious, and Will was provoked at Aunt Stanshy’s remark.

“Halloo there!”

This was an unexpected shout from the heart of the fog, and after the shout came a black boat, and in it was a man dressed like a fisherman. He wore a “sou’wester” and a striped woolen shirt, also big cow-hide boots that came above the knees of his pants.

“Where are we?” asked Will. “Anywhere near Wherren’s wharf?”

“Where are you? Wal, it is safe to say in a gin’ral way that you are in the river.”

“I know that, friend,” said Will, “but are we headed for the shore?”

“That depends on the shore you want to find. It’s my opinion that if you young folks keep on just as your boat is headed, you’ll strike Europe if you have good luck.”

“Pshaw!” exclaimed the apothecary, “we can’t be that much out of the way.”

“Try it and see.”

“Well, just where are we and which way ought we to go to reach Wherren’s wharf?”

“We are now down near Forbes’s Island, and—”

“Forbes’s Island!” screamed Aunt Stanshy. “Did you ever!”

“And my compass says if one wants to get up river, he must go in a direction directly opposite to that which you are now taking!”

The apothecary’s face fell several inches, Charlie thought.

“When you are out on the river, you are always safer to have a compass, for fogs may come up and you don’t know where you are. I’m goin’ up the river and I should be happy to show you where Wherren’s wharf is, for you might as well hunt for a clam inside of an iceberg as to hunt for the wharf down here.”

“Thank you,” said Aunt Stanshy.

“Haven’t I seen you before, marm?”

“I dare say.”

“I was at your place and you gave me a job, sawing wood, this summer.”

“O, is it you, mister? I see now.”

“The same one. One good turn deserves another; so let’s go along together.”

All in the club were glad to see the man, excepting Wort.

Up the river they slowly but safely went, the fisherman guiding his party through the fog to the place of landing. A part of the way he had towed them along, throwing them the painter of his boat.

“Whenever John Fisher can do you a favor, marm, let me know it,” said the man.

“Three cheers for John Fisher!” shouted the club. Wort joined in this, and he also said to himself, “I wish I had told him not to mind my seeding him. I will, the next time; see if I don’t.”

Peleg Wherren’s fish-house was a neighbor of the lane, and from the boat the party passed to Aunt Stanshy’s. As Charlie went along, he noticed a woman in the lane.

She wore a rusty black hood, a faded red shawl, and an old calico dress. Her general look was that of poverty. She turned as she heard the sound of steps, and, turning, chanced to face Aunt Stanshy. Thereupon the two women both swung round and looked away, like neighboring vanes struck by opposite currents of wind. Aunt Stanshy started and went ahead rapidly. In a moment Charlie heard some one crying. Looking back he saw it was Pip, who had fallen and hurt himself. The woman in faded clothes was quite nigh, and immediately running to Pip, helped him up, saying, in a pitying, motherly way, “You poor little fellow!”

“She has a pleasant face,” thought Charlie. “Who is it?”

He asked Simes Badger, who came down the lane.

“That? that is Jane.”

“Who is Jane?”

“Tim Tyler’s sister.”

“Old Tim’s?”

“Yes, and young Tim’s mother.”

“Where does she live?”

“O the Tylers all live in the same nest.”

“Jane and Aunt Stanshy, then, do not speak to one another,” reflected Charlie.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CLUB IN SPLINTERS.

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There is such a thing as a club breaking, going to splinters even. This sad end of a club was experienced by the Up-the-Ladder Club. It was not a strange thing, as all human organizations have their ups and downs, and many have their downs especially.

It happened in this way.

“Boys,” said the president one day, “let’s play school. I’ll be teacher. No; let’s have a public declamation—pieces, you know, and so on. Then we can charge something and perhaps get a little money—nails, I mean.”

The real cash was scarce, and nails became a necessity.

“And not play school?” asked the literary governor. “A school is real interestin’, you know.”

“Yes, we might play that afterward as a sort of rest.”

“Agreed,” was the general sentiment. The old sheet that had done service so many times was once more brought out and strung across one corner of the barn chamber. An audience of three was secured, the governor’s youngest brother, Pip’s little sister, and Sid Waters’s young cousin from the country. The members of the club gathered behind the sheet for action, but the auditors, all of them plump children, were ranged in a row upon a window-blind supported by blocks of wood. The first piece was a song by Sid. He strutted out pompously and began, “How beau—” He stopped. He had forgotten his bow. Executing this, he started once more, “How beautiful the cow—”

He was halting again.

“How beautiful the cow—”

He hesitated once more.

“O beautiful cow,” sang out the roguish Wort behind the sheet.

“Shut up!” shrieked the infuriated vocalist, rushing to the bed-sheet. “Don’t interrupt me!”

He resumed his recitation:

“How beautiful the cow-slip
Upon the verdant mead,
How diligent the sower
Who drops the tiny seed.”

He continued and finished the piece amid great enthusiasm on the part of the boys behind the sheet, who

applauded tumultuously. There was little movement on the part of the butter-tubs. They opened their eyes and stared wonderingly. Then they opened their mouths and grinned.

Charlie now appeared, announcing as his selection "Independence Bell," a subject which he commenced to treat vigorously. The reference was to the bell at Philadelphia, rung at the Declaration of Independence, and somebody behind the sheet now began to shake a cowbell, a device which it was thought would heighten the effect of the performance.

"'Taint time!" called out Charlie, turning in despair to the curtain. Here Wort's round, beaming face appeared at a rent which was growing larger every few minutes.

"Tell me when," he whispered.

Charlie resumed his recitation. Soon he whispered, "Go it!" Didn't Wort do his duty! No bell-ringer in Philadelphia could have been more enthusiastic, and no cow astray seeking after home ever wagged her bell so continuously. It was afterward found out that every boy behind the curtain had a chance to swing that bell, a fact accounting for the popularity of the piece and for the tumultuous applause following it. The applause came from brother-performers, but was none the less gratifying to the speaker.

The final piece was by Wort, "The Last Rose of Summer." If given, no one can say how successful it might have been, but while the subject implied a compliment to Wort and those preceding him, the adjective "last" was ominous. There were several boys struggling to look through the curtain, one through the old rent Wort had used, and the others through new rents that they had ingeniously made with their fingers. But what curtain could hold up against the continued pressure of three stout boys? There was nothing that such a curtain could do but come down; and this it did, the three boys sprawling at the base of the stem of the Last Rose of Summer—in other words, at Wort's feet! Wort, in turn, was ignominiously night-capped by the sheet, for it completely covered him. The butter-tubs now gave way to their sense of the ludicrous, and clapped and laughed merrily. This did not please the four boys in or on the floor, who angrily rubbed their shins. Sid declared that it was too bad to act as disgracefully. All this was poor preparation for the serious duties of school-keeping, to which the president now directed his attention. With how much pomp and dignity he took up the duties of school-teacher, confronting a row of uneasy boys occupying seats on a green blind, each one wearing his cap!

"Hats off!" shouted Sid.

"Where are my books?" asked Charlie.

"They are probably where they ought to be, young man, in your desk."

Each boy then proceeded to take an imaginary reader out of an imaginary desk. Wort, though, had a book.

"All properly supplied with readers? Open them. Read, 'Merry Gentlemen,' read. Wort may begin."

There was no response.

"Read, I say."

There was silence still.

“Do you mean to disobey me?”

“You haven’t told us what to read,” replied Wort.

“Yes, I have.”

“You haven’t,” stoutly reaffirmed Wort. “You said, ‘Merry gentlemen, read.’”

“I mean the piece called ‘Merry Gentlemen,’ on page—well, you know. We have read it in school enough times to know it, and then scholars ought to know their readers well enough to be able to turn to any place and read without a book even. Who is that speaking? Tell me. Haven’t I told you a thousand times that there must be no speaking in this school? I see the guilty scholar. Richard Grimes, come this way!”

“I didn’t.”

“No trifling, young man. Come this way,” and collaring the refractory Rick, Sid led him into the closet. The governor was not to be wholly suppressed, and kept protruding a red pug-nose into very plain sight.

“Teacher,” called out Wort, “I see a red sugar-plum sticking out.”

“Richard, come this way. You’re looking out.”

“No, sir; it was my nose.”

“Hold out your hand. If you flinch, sir, you will receive another.”

The punishment was moodily received, and the governor went back to the closet. Charlie and Wort were soon consigned to the same spot for disobedience. Pip was noisily moving about.

“Say,” whispered Sid, “Be good, and take your seat properly.”

“Take your seat properly!” he then roared.

“Pip, you may read about the ‘Caravan,’ on the fifth page. Take Wort’s book.”

“Jutht thee—” began Pip.

“Juggie and Tony, you may both go into the closet for giggling,” sharply interposed the teacher. “Go now!”

There were now five boys inside the closet, five restless immortals with ten restless legs and ten restless arms.

“Read, Pip, about the caravan.”

“Jutht thee, the wild beathth—”

In harmony with this thought came a loud roar from the closet.

“Now you’ve got to be better,” said Sid, turning to the wild beasts, “or I will resign and I won’t teach.”

“Let me be teacher,” squeaked Pip.

The principal, though, did not resign; but, advancing to the closet or cage door, was about to make an appeal to his infuriated caravan. They anticipated him.

“Teacher, Charlie is pinching me.”

“Ow! somebody’s on my foot.”

“There isn’t room! I can’t breathe!” declared a third.

“It is disgraceful, boys, how you act,” said their aged teacher. “You can’t play school worth a cent. Pip, come here!”

The only scholar now on duty had disgraced himself by making up faces behind his teacher’s back, and as Sid suddenly turned, the culprit was detected.

“Pip, hold out your hand. There, take that!”

“Ow! you hit too hard.”

“He will cry. Don’t hit too hard!” shouted a warning voice from the closet.

“Booh-ooh-ooh!” went Pip.

“I didn’t hit you hard,” explained the “principal of the academy,” as he had several times called himself. “You mustn’t be a-foolin’ in school. If you were in a real school you would get worse whippings than that.”

Pip’s only answer was, “Booh-ooh-ooh!”

“Wort, come here. You are not presenting a respectful face to your teacher. I caught you, sir. Hold out your hand.”

“I don’t want to.”

“Do you rebel?” and the principal swelled as if ambitious to puff himself into a giant.

It is not pleasant to put it on record that Wort did rebel. He refused to hold out his hand, and when Sid seized him he resisted. Then a tussle set in, and it was doubtful whether the teacher would floor the scholar, or the scholar floor the teacher. But they drew off and scowled at one another like two thunder clouds.

“There,” said the principal of the academy finally, “I am not going to be teacher any more. Who wants my chance may have it.”

“And I won’t belong to this old club any more,” said Wort, smarting under the castigation he had received. “Who wants my chance may have it.”

“‘Tith an old club,” sobbed Pip, “and who wantth my chanth may have it.”

“O, fellers, let’s not get mad,” said the president.

“Pooh!” exclaimed the governor. “You can say so, who gave all the lickin’s.”

“And not had one yourself,” said Charlie.

“O, fellers, don’t get mad,” besought Sid once more. “You know it was for your good.”

This last remark was greeted with sneers, showing that Sid’s labors for the welfare of youth were not appreciated. There was not only a determination to get mad, but to stay mad. Besides, the offended ones were moving toward the door, and this in a quarrel always looks bad.

“Let it go,” said Sid. “I did not mean to hurt you. Come, let’s march down stairs. I was going to have you march down stairs properly, just as we do at school. Come, let’s form a line.”

“Yes, and you be cap’n,” sulked Wort.

“You may be, then,” said Sid.

“I aint goin’ to march,” sobbed Pip.

That feather was too much for the camel’s back, especially as the camel in this case was a two-legged one, and a boy like Sid, and he made no further attempts at reconciliation.

“Go it as you please, then,” he said, angrily, and it was, indeed, a go-it-as-you-please column that rushed down stairs.

“I’m going home,” said Wort.

“O, don’t!” pleaded Charlie.

“Let him go!” shouted Sid.

“And me, too,” squeaked Pip, and a second sullen knight passed out of the yard.

“It’s of no us staying here, and I guess I’ll go off and find Billy,” observed the governor, and he left to hunt up his absent cousin.

“My mother wants me, and I might as well go, for the club is broken up,” said Sid. He sauntered out of the yard with a reckless air, his hands in his pockets.

Charlie, Juggie, and Tony were now the only ones left, and they looked at one another sorrowfully.

“Charlie! Come!”

It was Aunt Stanshy calling. Tony and Juggie now moved off, and Charlie went into the house with a heavy heart.

“What *is* the matter, Charles Pitt Macomber?”

“Club has broken up,” and Charlie’s lips quivered.

“Mad?”

Charlie did not speak, but moved his head up and down like a saw.

“Who? Sid, Rick, Wort, Pip?”

Each time the saw went up and down.

“Are you mad?”

“I was, but I am not now.”

“I’m sorry. I guess it’s a pretty bad case, and the club has all gone to splinters.”

The club in splinters! All that day the chamber was deserted. It was forsaken the next bright summer day. A mouse came out of his hole, and, looking timidly about, gave a faint, surprised squeak. The flies buzzed in the sunshine, and had all the time they wished to hum through their tunes. The only other noise was the wind that murmured about the door and the window that Aunt Stanshy had closed up so resolutely.

Nobody came to climb the ladder, and it did have such a forsaken look. Nobody troubled the sheet, or the closet, or the various relics strewn about.

Alas! alas!

The club was in splinters!

CHAPTER XII.

THE CLUB MENDED.

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“Then the club is all broken up?”

“Yes,” said Charlie, mournfully.

“How did it happen?”

“You see, Will”—every body called the apothecary’s clerk Will—“we had a school and Sid kept it, and he licked the fellers, and they couldn’t stand it.”

“I see.”

“But I think Sid wanted to make up.”

“And it was easier for him to make up than for the boys who had got the lickings, was it?”

“I guess it was,” said Charlie, laughing.

“Too bad to be broken up!”

“Yes,” and Charlie’s laugh was turning to a cry.

“You didn’t think of the notice stuck up on the post, ‘No cross words?’”

“Why, no! I know I forgot all about it.”

“I don’t believe your teacher, Miss Barry, will be pleased to know of the quarrel, as she is a kind, good-natured lady, and makes folks kind to one another.”

“I ’spose she wont like it.”

“Wouldn’t you like to have your broken club mended?”

“Yes, yes,” replied Charlie, excitedly. “How?”

“There is one way to do it and fix all things right again.” As Will spoke he also attended to his breakfast, interjecting his words amid sips of coffee and mouthfuls of Aunt Stanshy’s flaky biscuit. He was hungry, as he had been out before breakfast in answer to a furious alarm of fire.

“You see, when a club is in pieces, that it may be mended again, each piece must resolve to do what it can toward a coming together again. Will you?”

“Yes, I will.”

“There’s one. Who is the next one to bring round, the next piece of club to make willing to be joined to the rest?”

“I guess Wort feels about as stuffy as any one. There he is out in the lane now.”

“Is he? Go, get him.”

The “stuffy” splinter of the club was brought in. Will had disappeared, but soon came back to the table, bringing from his room a neat, white package of—Charlie’s curious eyes could not guess what.

“Art you Wort Wentworth?” asked Will.

“Yes.”

“I have some candy for you.”

Here the apothecary displayed various long, dainty sticks of candy, exceedingly toothsome in their looks. There were checkerberry-pipe and licorice-pipe and sassafras-pipe, and—how Wort’s eyes did glisten and his mouth water as he imagined the different kinds there!

Will did not forget, to Charlie’s joy, that another boy present had also several sweet teeth. Having sweetened up Wort’s disposition, Will said,

“You and Charlie will now do me a favor, won’t you?”

“I will,” said Charlie, eagerly, who had great admiration for the apothecary, but might possibly have been moved also by great love for his candy.

“And I will,” said Wort, determined not to be outdone by Charlie.

“Well, now, the club that has been broken is going to be mended, and you two will forgive and forget, wont you?”

“I will,” declared Charlie, promptly.

Wort hesitated.

“Take this while you are thinking,” said Will, pressing into Wort’s hands an extra large piece of rose-pipe.

As he took it, Wort growled, “Sid began it.”

“But will you end it if Sid is willing to make up? You wont hold out?”

“N—n—o.”

“There is Sid!” said Charlie.

“Where?”

“Going along the lane, that boy with a blue cap on.”

“You two stay here, and tell Aunt Stanshy, Charlie, that I’ll be back soon to finish my breakfast,” and away went Will, without a hat, a cake of bread in one hand and a piece of cheese in the other.

“If that fellow isn’t the greatest! He would leave a funeral in just that way if the impulse took him,” declared Aunt Stanshy, watching him from the window, and secretly admiring him. “What a boy! He makes lots of trouble for me, O dear!”

“Aint he funny?” asked Wort.

“Funny?” replied Aunt Stanshy, who did not intend that any one else should depreciate her idol. “Funny? of course not.”

All this time Will was chasing Sid, who was heading up the lane and was about entering Water Street. Sid was in a hurry, and unaware that he was wanted by any one in the lane, had broken into a run; but Will had run to so many fires that he was equal to this emergency and overtook Sid, laying a hand on his shoulder.

“What do you want?” asked Sid. “I want to catch that man ahead there and borrow his clam-digger.”

“Come back to the house with me a little while.”

Any of the club boys would do any thing for Will, and Sid turned.

“Good-morning, Mr. Somers.”

Will turned his head, so covered with wilfully curly hair. In his hand were the bread and cheese still. He blushed as he said, “Good-morning, Miss Barry.”

“Whew,” he said to himself, “the teacher has caught me now!”

Several people indeed “caught” Will Somers, in that way, that morning, and wondered what he was doing, running bare-headed. He carried his point, though, captured Sid, and led him back to the house.

“Now, Sid,” exclaimed Will, on his way to Aunt Stanshy’s “there has been trouble in the Up-the-Ladder Club, I learn, and I want to fix it up, and you will help me, will you not?”

“O yes,” replied Sid, whose nature was not a hard and implacable one.

“Wort is at the house, and you are willing to say you are sorry you hurt him, and you want to make up and be good friends?”

“O yes.”

When Will entered the house with his prize, the two met Wort face to face.

“I want these two knights to make up and be good friends again, because it is all foolish and wrong, you know, holding out against one another,” said Will.

The two boys eyed one another, Sid grinning, Wort looking sulky and foolish.

“Wort,” said the late principal of the academy, “I am sorry I hurt you. I didn’t mean to do it, but I suppose I was too anxious to keep up the discipline of the school, and I got agoing, you know. Let’s shake hands and be friends.”

Wort hesitated.

“You ought to do that,” said Will. “Shake hands, Wort,” and as he spoke he carelessly but effectively waved a stick of sassafras-pipe in Wort’s sight. It is one of the most potent sticks that can be used for a boy’s *“licking.”*

“Well, I will,” said Wort, “and I didn’t mean to hurt you;” unwilling that Sid should be the only one thought able to inflict an injury.

“I now announce,” said Will, “that soon as possible, I shall take every boy down to Sandy Beach for an afternoon’s fun; that is, every knight who makes up.”

This had a magical effect. All the disaffected knights followed the example of Sid and Wort, “making up” and joining the beach-party. The excursionists had a capital time on that occasion, and returned in such a frame of mind that it could be considered as settled that the club, once in splinters, was now mended.

The boys, on the subsequent Sunday, told Miss Barry that there had been a quarrel, but, added Sid, “It is all fixed now.”

“I am very glad there has been a reconciliation,” replied Miss Barry. “If there had been none, I should have felt that you were going down and not up the ladder. In our play we can be moving up, and reconciliation is a round in the ladder.”

CHAPTER XIII.

A KNIGHT GOES TO SEA.

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“And do you want to come to my launching?”

“You going to be launched?” asked Charlie.

“Not exactly,” said Skipper Wentworth, Wort’s father, “but my schooner is, and if you come to Raynes’s ship-yard next Saturday, you will see her. You can tell any of the other boys to come if they like. Wort will be there.”

Charlie went down to the yard the day before the launching. The schooner seemed to be an ant-heap where all the ants were stirring, and all were on the outside, so many men were at work. The club boys were quite numerously represented through their friends. Sid’s father was flourishing a paint-brush high up on a staging. Pip’s father and also Juggie’s cousin were swinging their hammers about the cook’s quarters. Pip’s grandfather, a blacksmith, was inspecting some of the iron-work of the vessel. A tall cousin of the governor was driving oxen. The clanking chains of the oxen hauling timber for the building of another vessel, the pounding of hammers, the shouts of the bosses ordering the workmen, made a lively compound of sound. The next Saturday, every thing was ready for the launching.

With eager eyes Charlie noticed all the movements of the workmen. He saw them drive the wedges under the schooner, and heard blow on blow as the wedges went in farther and farther. He saw them knock away the props holding the schooner in place, and along the ways, or planed timbers, well greased for the schooner’s ride, he watched the vessel slowly then swiftly moving. Down, down she went, lower and lower, so deep into the waiting arms of the blue river, that the waters threatened to go over her, and then up she came gracefully, bringing a bridal-veil of snowy foam with her, and exciting the admiration of all the spectators, who vented their feelings in an uproarious “Hurrah!” One of the fortunate party that had permission to be in the vessel at its launching was Wort Wentworth, the skipper’s boy.

“I must see every thing that there is,” thought the inquisitive boy, and he turned, finally, into the state-room which the skipper himself expected to occupy as his quarters in the cabin. “Nice place,” he said, climbing into his father’s berth, and there curling up into one corner.

The day had been an exciting one, and yet tiresome, and Wort’s next movement was to gape.

“Sort of sleepy,” he said. The wind murmuring at the open window of the state-room had a drowsy sound, and—and Wort’s head gave a sudden fall. He opened his eyes, and said, “This won’t do; I mustn’t go to sleep,” But the wind continued to hum its drowsy tune as if saying, “Go to sleep, go to sleep, tired boy, tired boy; there, there!” Wort’s head rose and fell several times, and each time he made a remonstrance. But the remonstrances were feebler one after the other, his eyes refused to open, and there in the captain’s state-room was a boy fast asleep!

It was the latter part of the afternoon, and one of the men at work on the new vessel came to Wort’s father, and said, “Cap’n, shall we let the schooner lie off in the stream to-night, or do you take her to her wharf?”

“No chance for her at the wharf, and she must stay here till Monday, and I don’t think any one need stay with her and watch. She is so heavily anchored she can’t very well run away. We will all leave. But where is my boy?”

“I think, cap’n, I see a boy like him going off with your brother.”

“All right. My brother Nathan was here, and he will look after Wort. Now we will go.”

When Skipper Wentworth reached home his wife told him that “Nathan” had said something about taking Wort home with him to spend a day or two at his farm, three miles away.

“Then Wort has gone with Nathan, wife?”

“I think he must have, as he has not come home.”

“He is with Nathan. All right.”

The good folks went to bed, and nobody told them where Wort was. The little waves rippling about the schooner may have known, and a bright, inquisitive star looking in at the cabin window may have known, but neither wave nor star told the secret. Toward morning Wort woke up. Where was he? He put out his hands expecting to feel the soft feather pillow that Mother Wentworth daily laid upon his bed. It was only a hard board that he felt above him and back of him. Where was he? He rubbed his eyes wide open, and little by little it came to him that he was in the cabin of the schooner. What if the vessel should break away from her moorings and drift off to sea? What if it had gone already, and this craft with a crew of one were actually on her voyage? His heart thumped hard in his fright. He crawled out of the cabin, making his way along as well as he could over pieces of board, running into a carpenter’s saw-horse provokingly left in the door-way, and stroking his legs, he stepped outside. The wind from the water swept cool across the vessel. Where was he? Adrift? He turned toward the sea. The light at Simes Badger’s lighthouse was still blazing, but far away above the dark, angry sea, there was a faint glow in the heavens.

“Good!” thought Wort. “Father’s vessel hasn’t broke loose, for there is the light-house where it was yesterday, and that’s morning over there. She’s coming!”

He turned toward the town. He saw one light shining from a house window, and thought it must signify a sick person or an early riser. Then he heard a cock crowing.

“Never knew a rooster had such a pleasant voice before,” he said. All that he could do was to wait until Simes Badger’s light went out, and day filled the eastern sky, and not only roosters but human beings were stirring in Seamont.

“Then some one will come and get me, I hope,” thought Wort.

He patiently waited, watching the dark gurgling river and the brightening sky.

About six o’clock Simes Badger pushed off his boat from the light-house dock, leaving his assistant in charge.

“I must get my breakfast,” he said.

He leisurely rowed up the river.

“Ah,” thought Simes, “there is Skipper Wentworth’s new craft. She sets easy in the water. She will make as trim a fore and aft as ever left this harbor.”

He was now opposite the newly-painted black and green hull.

“Massy!” he exclaimed, resting on his oars, “What’s that on deck? A hen there? Somebody is wavin’ suthin’. Something must be wrong there. Let me take a nearer look.”

He rowed close up to the vessel’s side, and there detained his boat in the still, sparkling stream, raised his weather-tanned face, and saw a very fresh, boyish face looking down.

“O, Mr. Badger, come and get me!”

“Wort Wentworth, is that *you*?”

Simes knew that Wort had a reputation for scrapes, but was not prepared for this appearance under the present circumstances.

“What are you doin’ there? You all alone?”

“I got asleep in the cabin, and they left me here.”

“And you been here all night? It is a wonder the sharks didn’t eat you,” said Simes, who had a very vivid imagination.

“The sharks?”

“Well, no matter about them things. I s’pose now you want to go home?”

“Yes, if I can get down into your boat.”

“I’m willin’ to take you if you can get down.”

“Couldn’t I shin down the chain-cable?”

“O no! Look round and find a piece of rope and make it fast to something up there, and then drop your rope down here and come that way.”

“What, drop myself down like the rope?” said Wort, grinning.

“Tut, tut, boy! come down the rope! Didn’t I say so plain as day? and if I didn’t, I will now.”

Wort found a rope, made one end fast to the rail, and then, throwing the other end down to Simes, safely lowered himself into the stern of the light-keeper’s boat. In fifteen minutes more Wort was at home, to the surprise and joy of his parents.

The club boys heard about Wort’s experience, and had a word to say concerning it.

“I say, Wort,” asked Charlie, “how do you like going to sea?”

“Did you catch any waleths?” inquired Pip.

“What did the mermaids say to you?” asked the governor.

“It is the last of your going to sea, Wort. You will have to be a land-lubber,” said Sid.

This last remark touched Wort.

“No, sir! See if I don’t go to sea.” And go he did. Skipper Wentworth thought it would be pleasant to have Wort’s company the first voyage, which would terminate the latter part of the year.

Mrs. Wentworth had every thing in readiness for her boy’s comfort by the time the vessel sailed.

“What is her name?” he asked his father.

He only replied, “I want to surprise the club you belong to.” One day, to the delight of the boys, he showed them the name painted in conspicuous letters on the stern, “White Shield.” It was a mild autumn day when the “White Shield” went to sea. The club boys gathered on a wharf at the foot of the lane, and watched the vessel drifting down the river. They waved their handkerchiefs to Wort, who waved his in return. Then they stood and followed with their eyes the vessel in its flight. She passed Forbes’ Island, passed the light-house, passed Rocky Reef, passed—out of sight.

That day, at twilight, Charlie went to Mr. Walton’s house. The clergyman’s mother received a message which Charlie brought from Aunt Stanshy, and asked him to come in.

“Sit down here,” she said, and placed a chair before the open fire kindled on the edge of the autumn evening. “Sit down, and rest.”

“‘The ‘White Shield’ has gone to sea,” he remarked, anxious to give the latest news.

“The ‘White Shield’?”

“Haven’t you heard about her?”

“No.”

“Why, I thought every body knew about the ‘White Shield.’”

And did she know that Wort Wentworth had gone to sea in the “White Shield?” No; she was ignorant of that important fact. How narrow the circle of her knowledge was!

“I know one thing, though, little boy,” said the old lady, “that the sea, which fascinates so many young people, may prove to be a very hard master. O, I don’t like to hear it roar on stormy nights!”

Then the old lady went to a picture of a ship at sea hanging on the wall. There she stood and sighed. Charlie wondered what it all meant.

“But there is one thing we can do on stormy nights,” she added. “We can pray. And I sometimes think, nights when the winds are roaring, how many souls all along the coast must be kneeling while the sailors at sea are up in the rigging, climbing, or furling the sails.”

CHAPTER XIV.

SETTING A TRAP.

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Ring, ring, ring!

The bell of St. John's was busily swinging, flinging notes of gold and silver down upon the town, and in response, how many people came out into the streets as if to pick up the gold and silver shower. The bell was ringing for a temperance meeting. Many were immediately interested in the subject of temperance; but whether all would go, was a question. It was a serious doubt whether those that the meeting wanted would feel that they needed the meeting. There were several very important cases.

Case one—who?

Tim Tyler? He needed the meeting, but that is not the case here intended, but Dr. Tilton, the apothecary. Dr. Tilton? Yes. For some time it had been known he was in the habit of indulging in a glass, "only a glass." As a result, he had been helped home drunk from his store. He did not feel desirous to attend the temperance meeting.

Case number two, Tim Tyler? Not yet, but—Will Somers! Ah, that was sad. If you could have seen Aunt Stanshy, you would have thought it was the saddest thing in the world.

"O, Miss Barry," said Aunt Stanshy, bursting into tears, "I'm awful afraid I made an idol of that young man—so nice, you know. I've seen my idols break one after the other. I shouldn't have said a word about it, but he was seen on the street, and it became town talk, and it's all out and round. Dreadful, dreadful!"

"It is, and I'm afraid my uncle is responsible. It is bad every way. There is need of a temperance work here. We are all asleep," replied Miss Barry, who was calling at Aunt Stanshy's, the two women opening their hearts to one another during the call. Dr. Tilton was responsible for Will Somers's fall. One day, when Will was complaining of an ill feeling, the apothecary had proffered wine as a remedy, and had offered it several times when he was tired, and Will had fallen under the influence of a seemingly innocent ally. People began to talk about Dr. Tilton and his clerk. Then they began to shun the store. Not all, though, for a line of red noses and trembling hands and unsteady knees filed into the store, and not the sick people sent orders, but old toppers frequented the place more and more. Dr. Tilton noticed the change, and was alarmed. Still he did not change that habit of taking "only a glass." Will Somers was unhappy. He saw his mistake, and knew that the community frowned upon him. He rarely whistled now. As for the musical instrument he once loved to perform upon, it was a silent piece of furniture. He had some fine qualities of character, and his vulnerable side was his susceptibility to outside influence. The enemy had found a weak wall on that side of his character, and there successfully assaulted him. Will knew that his misconduct grieved Aunt Stanshy. The club felt it, for by degrees the bad news reached them. It seemed as if each one was burdened by a load of guilt—as if having served in Dr. Tilton's store, Charlie, Sid, Tony, and the rest had there sinned, and, in consequence, each had been seen tipsy on the street, and each carried a load that bowed him.

It was Charlie who happened to be at home when his teacher was calling on Aunt Stanshy, and he

accidentally overheard a fragment of the conversation. When Miss Barry was fairly out of the house, and Aunt Stanshy was returning through the entry to her kitchen-work, sighing by the way, Charlie ran to her and excitedly said, “We—we—will get up a meeting!”

“A meeting about what?”

“Why, why, temperance.”

“Who get it up?”

“We—we boys—our club.”

Aunt Stanshy guessed at once the occasion and object of Charlie’s remarks, that he had heard the conversation between her and her caller, and that this proposition for a temperance meeting was to meet the grave necessities of the hour.

“Yes, yes,” he said, “let’s go and see teacher about it”

“What, go now?”

“Yes, you and she can talk it over.”

In a few minutes Charlie and Aunt Stanshy were hurrying down the street as if suddenly summoned by the pressing sickness of a friend.

“O, let’s get Sid,” suggested Charlie, as they neared Sid Waters’s house.

“Well,” replied Aunt Stanshy.

Sid, whose appetite never failed him, was eating a lunch, but he responded at once to Charlie’s invitation to “Come out.”

“What’s up, Charlie? I am the man for you,” replied the president, who had an abundance of resources at his command, and was prepared—in his own opinion—for any emergency. “What is up? Down-townies round?”

“We want to have a temperance meeting. Come down to teacher’s.”

“All right. Temperance meeting? The club get it up?”

“I don’t just know, but we can talk it over.”

“If they want a meeting, we can give ’em one,” said Sid, confidently.

Thus re-enforced, Aunt Stanshy and Charlie presented themselves at Miss Barry’s door.

“Come in, come,” said the teacher. “I have just got home myself.”

“We—we have come,” exclaimed Aunt Stanshy, “to see if we couldn’t have a temperance meeting! You

know we need it.”

“O, I see; and the boys?”

“The boys,” said Sid, proudly, “think you could rely on them to—to—pull an oar.”

He felt it might be prudent not to propose to do the whole of the rowing, and offer the town a meeting managed wholly by the “Up-the-Ladder Club,” but modestly—to—pull an oar.

“Splendid!” said the teacher, her enthusiasm charming the boys. “Among us all, I guess we can manage it.”

“I don’t know as I can do any thing except to get people out,” said Aunt Stanshy, fearful that she might be called upon to speak in the meeting.

“Let us go and see Mr. Walton,” suggested Miss Barry.

“It would be the very thing,” declared Aunt Stanshy.

Very soon Aunt Stanshy, Miss Barry, Sid, and Charlie started for the minister’s. On the way, Juggie and Tony were secured as new members of the column, and thus augmented, this eager temperance band appeared at Mr. Walton’s door. Ushered into the study, Miss Barry told her errand.

“We need a temperance meeting very much, and we will have it at St. John’s, and I want you boys—the club, Miss Barry—to do the most of the singing,” said Mr. Walton.

“We will,” said Sid. “I know I can speak for them.”

“And Miss Barry will teach them what to sing, perhaps?” asked Mr. Walton.

“Yes sir,” replied Miss Barry.

“I’ll have my choir to help, but I expect the ‘Up-the-Ladder Club’ to do the most.”

The boys were eager in their interest. To encourage them, Miss Barry said, “I’ll make a little blue cross to go inside each white shield. A little blue cross—that is a temperance sign—will look pretty on the white silk.”

“There, there, won’t they be proud of it?” said Aunt Stanshy.

“Of course we will,” declared Sid. “Knights, we must give three cheers for teacher when we get to her door.”

During this conversation they were passing down the street, and when Miss Barry’s door was reached, be assured that three hearty cheers were given for her.

“Now three for temperance!” cried Sid. Then they cheered for temperance.

“I feel that my boys are, indeed, mounting the ladder of the true and noble,” was Miss Barry’s thought, as

from her window she saw the ardent young knights pass away.

The next day Aunt Stanshy met Miss Barry. “Miss—Miss—Barry,” said Aunt Stanshy, nervously clutching her companion’s shawl, “we must—pray for our meeting.”

“O, we will, we will!”

There were earnest prayers going to God in behalf of that meeting. As step after step might be proposed, prayer went up from the altar of those two women’s hearts especially, beseeching God to recognize and bless each step that might be taken. O in what a cloud of prayer that enterprise was enveloped!

Aunt Stanshy and Miss Barry were talking about the meeting one day.

“I wish, Miss Barry, we could make sure that every body would go to the meeting. Will Dr. Tilton go?”

“That’s what I am wondering about, and Will Somers?”

Aunt Stanshy shook her head sadly: “He says, No.”

“They must be there,” said Miss Barry, “and—and—we must set a trap for them.”

“A trap?”

“I’ll ask my uncle to help the choir sing, and—of course, he won’t refuse. I don’t suppose he cares to come to the meeting because he needs it, but if others go he won’t want to be left out, and if he can sing, that will give him a chance to attend. He is my uncle, you know.”

The “trap” for Dr. Tilton worked successfully. He scorned the idea that he might need the meeting. This he said to himself. However, he would help the choir sing, he said, to his niece. But a trap for Will Somers! Who could make that?

“Won’t you come to the meeting to hear us sing?” asked Charlie, with a sad face.

“O, you don’t want me, Charlie,” replied Will. “O, I can’t go.”

Aunt Stanshy made no remark. She sat silently, busily thinking, while Charlie and Will talked about the meeting. Aunt Stanshy was making a “trap.”

The day before that appointed for the temperance meeting, she went to her pastor.

“Mr. Walton, the meeting will begin at half past seven. If—if—say about quarter after seven—you should let Charlie and the other boys go down to the church door and sing one or two of their pieces, it might draw folks in.”

“Why, that’s a good idea, and I wish you would ask them.”

At a quarter after seven the next night the White Shields, each carrying a neat cross of blue on his badge, appeared at the church door and began to sing. It was the night when Dr. Tilton was accustomed to close his store earlier than usual, if customers did not appear; and at a quarter after seven Will Somers was

accustomed that night to pass the church door on his way home. Would he fall into the trap that Aunt Stanshy had ingeniously set for him? The club began to sing their hymns. There was the touching plea containing the lines:

“O what are you going to do, brother?
Say, what are you going to do?
You have thought of some useful labor,
But what is the end in view?”

Tony sang this. It seemed that night as if some of Italy’s sweet singers must have lent him their notes. The people began to gather about the club. Aunt Stanshy was there on the watch, eager to see if Will Somers might be coming down the street. Tony’s voice warbled away. Now it was an exultant note that he touched, and then his voice sank to a plaintive appeal:

“Is your heart in the Saviour’s keeping?
Remember, he died for you;
Then what are you going to do, brother?
Say, what are you going to do?”

As Tony sang, there was a young man leaning against the fence adjoining the church door. It was somebody listlessly leaning, lifting to the light of the street lamp a face on which rested the shadow of a great sadness.

“It’s he!” said Aunt Stanshy, excitedly.

Charlie heard her. He guessed that it was some one out on the sidewalk whom she had discovered, and he stretched his small head beyond the ring of singers, anxiously looking out into the shadows. His sharp eye saw that form leaning against the fence. He could not wait until the song was finished. He ran out upon the sidewalk, and Aunt Stanshy followed.

“Do come, do come,” pleaded Charlie, as he seized Will’s hand and gently drew him toward the church.

“Yes, yes,” said Aunt Stanshy, “We all want you.”

And Will Somers irresolutely yielded to the gentle hands that were drawing him, and entered the church.

What a meeting that was!

“Never seed the beat of it in my life,” said Simes Badger, who was off duty at the lighthouse that night, and having attended the meeting, reported it soon after to a band of his old cronies. “Why, when the pledge was offered that meetin’, it seemed as if every man, woman, and child would go for it at once. No matter if they was as innocent of liquor as a baby a day old; they jest walked up and took that pledge. And Dr. Tilton, he couldn’t stand it, and he hopped down and he jined the pledge. And his clerk, that Will Somers, he did write his name handsome. O, it was a meetin’, I tell ye!”

Yes, it was a memorable evening. Dr. Tilton and Will Somers kept their word faithfully, and society recognized the fact and liberally patronized the doctor’s store, afterward.

“Got a new ’pothecary in our town,” said Simes Badger. “At any rate, he’s good as new, and new things

draw. A 'pothecary can do amazin' sight of harm if he aint jest the right sort of man in his business."

Society, outside the store, recognized the new life that Dr. Tilton and Will had begun. They were received cordially by their old friends. The club gathered about Will, treating him after the fashion of the old enthusiastic friendship.

"He's singin' once more and a playin'," Aunt Stanshy said to a neighbor, "jest as nice as can be. It does me good to see him."

And Tim Tyler—where was he?

His sister Ann did hope he would be reached, but she folded her old shawl about her shoulders and went away from the meeting, saying sorrowfully to herself, "Tim didn't come."

No, he was not at the meeting. He did not show any interest in the movement.

"But—but we can't give him up," some of his praying friends whispered.

And when our prayers refuse to let the angel of blessing go, was that angel ever known to forsake us?

CHAPTER XV.

THE FAIR.

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Poor Charlie! His life did not seem to him to be altogether agreeable.

Being fat and good-natured, the boys were rather disposed to pick on him. Then a standing vexation at school was his arithmetic. In addition to these things, he had a special trouble one day to grieve him. His class was reading a selection called the “Miller.” The teacher, Mr. Armstrong, permitted the members of the class to remain in their desks and there read. Charlie abused this privilege by clapping his head below his desk, and while the boys in another part of the room were reading, he was doing his best to pack away a corn-ball.

“Time enough,” he had concluded, “before it is my time to read, to have something good to pay for my old arithmetic.”

His mouth was full of corn-ball and preparing itself to take in more, when his teacher, watching the long detention of Charlie’s head in such a humble posture, and suspicious of the real reason, stole softly up behind Charlie and, looking over his shoulder, was puzzled to decide whether the corn-ball was going into Charlie or he into the corn-ball. He quietly stole back to his desk and there abruptly shouted, “Macomber, you may read about the ‘Miller’ at once.”

The shot struck. Charlie bounded up in great confusion, his month full of corn-ball!

“Hold, Macomber!” said the master, in a very sarcastic way. “It must be evident to you that a man cannot successfully read about the grinding of corn, and yet be grinding corn in his mouth at the same time.” Then he broke out into a roar, “Stand out in the floor! You may do any further grinding there. Stop after school, also!”

Unfortunate Charlie! When he went home at a late hour Aunt Stanshy was disposed to rebuke him for his tardiness. This was too much for Charlie. He broke out into a whimper: “I think I have a sad life, only scoldings at home and scoldings and arithmetic at school.”

“O, no!” said Aunt Stanshy, soothingly, guessing that the little fellow had had some trouble that day, and had been sufficiently punished for any fault; “O, no! not so bad as that! Haven’t you a pleasant home?”

“Yes—you—you are kind, I know, real kind.”

“Well, don’t think any thing more about it. Here is a big piece of mince pie.”

He had not eaten more than one half of his lunch when he felt very much comforted, and the outside world brightened very perceptibly. To comfort him still further Aunt Stanshy allowed him to go after several boys and bring them to the barn, and it was in connection with this gathering that a new and important enterprise was suggested by one of the boys.

“It’s something that will pay,” said Sid.

Every body wanted to believe it and was willing to help it along. Soon Charlie came running from the barn into the kitchen.

“Aunt Stanshy, will you please lend me your scales?”

“My what?”

“Your scales for weighing, please.”

“What on earth is it now?” exclaimed Aunt Stanshy. It was a—so the placard on the barn door stated—it was A FAIR!

Charlie did not have much to say about it, but through the remainder of the day often hummed, or smiled and chuckled complacently. When Aunt Stanshy had lighted the kerosene lamp that had a big lion’s claw for a base and boasted a yellow shade covered with green shepherdesses and blue sheep, then Charlie sat down at the center-table and for an hour was exceedingly busy. About eight he held up an object to Aunt Stanshy.

“What is that, Aunt Stanshy?” he asked.

“A rag-man,” she replied, promptly.

The artisan’s face dropped and a pout came out. A smile though quickly smoothed down the pout, and he exclaimed, in triumph, “Santa Claus! He’s a friend of our club! We thought we would be in season for Christmas, and people could buy their presents of us, and—and—will you buy?”

“I will—buy—that.”

“You will? I’ll give you a kiss for that,” and Aunt Stanshy’s young lover came up to her and in his delight gave her a kiss. Of a tuft of cotton Charlie had made a head. Another tuft furnished a body; two more supplied arms to work with, and two more supplied legs to stand on. Charlie put a three-cornered hat on Santa’s head and tied together the parts of his body with a girdle of pink worsted. A card on Santa announced the fact that he could be bought for TWO CENTS.

Charlie trembled when Aunt Stanshy’s eyes were directed toward the price lest she might not think it worth the money.

“What’s that?”

“Two cents,” replied Charlie, in fear.

“O! Well, I’ll give that.”

“You will?” said Charlie, in delight. “I’ll give you another kiss.”

“Charlie,” said the blushing Constantia, “you’ll make a fool of an old woman like me.”

In the night the lips of the sleeping Charlie parted as he said, with a smile, “Two cents!” When this good news of the first sale was announced to the club in the morning, it threw the members into a feverish

excitement.

“First-rate opening, fellers,” declared the president, “even before we have opened any thing.”

“We don’t open,” said the governor, “till school is out to-night.”

“Let’s open now,” said Billy Grimes, in the excitement of his enthusiasm over the news;

“What a booby!” said the governor, in plain language. “We have got no things here yet, and there are no buyers, and we must all clear out to school in ten minutes.”

The governor’s massive logic crushed the foolish Billy at once.

“Let’s open in good style,” said the president, “and do it to-night.”

By fifteen minutes after four, just as soon as a lot of scampering, shouting boys could get to the barn, bringing pockets stuffed with “articles,” the fair was declared “opened.”

“But how dark it is!” said the president.

So it was. The boys had forgotten how early the sun was setting in the November days.

“Let’s postpone it till to-morrow afternoon, when there’s no school,” said Charlie.

“Who’s agreed?” asked the president.

“Me!” responded the club, vociferously. They all had prudently concluded to wait for the advent of more daylight, and, withdrawing from the barn, went down the yard talking as busily as if they were a lot of hens cackling after a successful venture at egg-laying. It had been left to Charlie to put above the notice, “FAIR,” the word “POSTPONED.”

“That will prevent any rush till morning, and save folks from being disappointed,” Sid had declared.

In the afternoon every thing was under way, and Aunt Stanshy went out to see the fair.

“I should never know the place, I must say,” remarked Aunt Stanshy, as her eyes swept the spot. There were several so-called “tables,” such as an old window-blind and a disused shelf propped up by various supports like boxes and barrels. These tables were covered with pieces of the old curtain, now doing service for the last time.

“Here is the confectionery table,” shouted Juggie. There were now on the table three pieces of molasses candy made by his grandmother. He had had twelve to start with, and, as he had sold none, the disposition of the missing nine pieces was a matter of grave suspicion.

“Here’s the toy table!” called out Charlie. He had a few paper dolls and a few “hand-painted” shells, the decorator being Sid, and prominent on the table was the cotton image of that friend of the club, Santa Claus.

“Buy a corner-copier stuffed wid candy!” shouted Juggie, holding up a brown paper tunnel into which he

was about dropping a solitary piece of candy.

The governor had the “harvest table,” which was groaning under the weight of three pears and two papers of seed.

“What’s this?” asked Aunt Stanshy, stopping before a discarded mantel-piece resting on a rabbit-box and a coal-hod. On this “table” were autumn leaves, sprigs of hemlock, a few ferns, and one chrysanthemum blossom.

“Thith?” replied Pip, who, like all the others, had put on a “Sunday smile” to attract customers. “Thith ith a flower table. Will you buy a flower?”

“If I can see one,” said Aunt Stanshy, laughing.

“There,” said Pip, triumphantly holding up the lonely chrysanthemum. “One thent only! Thomething rare!”

“I’ll buy it, and here is the cent.”

“Cath!” sang out Pip, in tones of command, addressed to a supposed cash-boy.

No one responded.

“Cath!”

“Why, you are the cash-boy,” said the president, “and you bring the money to me, for I am the cashier.”

“I tend a counter,” squeaked Pip. A serious misunderstanding as to positions in the fair here threatened to arise, but it was all averted by the obliging Tony, who undertook to transport all bullion from the tables to the cashier’s office.

There now appeared the president’s little sister, “Callie Doodles,” as she was familiarly called.

“O, boys, she’s got a cent, for mother promised it to her! She isn’t a nail-one!” shouted her brother.

Nail-ones belonged to an inferior caste. This class included those who had been about the streets and yards, back of barns and in old corner-lots, picking up nails or cast-away bits of iron. Their currency was the more common. A hard-cash customer was about as common as bobolinks in December.

“Callie, come here and buy some fruit!”

“Don’t you want some candy, Callie?”

“Buy a toy, Callie!”

“Flowerth! flowerth!” were the various shouts greeting the cash customer. She was saluted eagerly, as hack-men hail the arrivals in the trains at a city station. Callie made no reply, but stubbed in a demure, dignified way, from table to table, finally halting where children’s strongest passion is sure to take them, at the candy table. Here she traded away her cash.

“And wont you try a piece?” said Juggie to Aunt Stanshy, displaying his stock of two pieces of candy. “Try dese goods.”

She graciously took the sample.

“How do you sell candy?”

“Cent a stick.”

“Well, I’ll take it.”

“Two cents,” said Juggie, prudently charging for the piece given on trial also.

As Aunt Stanshy left this enterprising trader, she heard a vigorous summons:

“Cash! cash!”

At the supper-table that night Charlie asked, “Aunty, what do you suppose we are going to have now in our club? Something at our fair, I mean?”

“A tornado.”

“No, a refreshment saloon; and the boys said they knew you would be in every day to buy something.”

“O dear!” groaned Aunt Stanshy, inwardly.

“We are going to have ice-cream, too, may be. We couldn’t afford it in summer.”

“Not in summer? Why, that’s the time when people want it most.”

“But we make ours out of snow, you know, and could only have it in cold weather.”

“Then I hope, for your sake, we may have some snow, and I see that the clouds look like it. But the weather is getting colder nowadays, and if you have your snow, and so can make your ice-cream, it may be so cold that you will have no customers.”

“We will risk *that*. Ice-cream always pays. Ours does, at any rate.”

“Snow is coming, I guess, for it looks like a change in the weather.”

A change, indeed, was setting in. The river indicated it. It was as smooth and glassy as if Aunt Stanshy’s flat iron had been over it and pressed every wrinkle and ripple down. The air was light. The smoke from the houses and the steam from the only tug that the commerce of the town could afford to support fell, and fluttered downward in thin veils. Overhead there was a mass of gray cloud halting directly above the town, and looking too lazy ever to stir again.

“Storm comin’!” declared Simes Badger to all his cronies at Silas Trefethen’s store. “Wind is sou’ already.”

It did not stay “sou’,” but swung around to the east, then worked into the north-east, and then all through the night the wind was sifting cotton-wool down on all the streets as if carpeting them, on all the roofs as if blanketing them, into all the cracks in the walls of houses and barns as if it would chink them up and make them tight for winter.

Chancing to look out of the window as soon as he was awake the morning after the storm, Charlie shouted,

“Ice-cream!”

“Yes, all you want,” said Aunt Stanshy, who, leaving her coffee-pot, her pan of fried potatoes, and batch of biscuit on the kitchen stove, had mounted the stairs to wake the sleepy Charlie.

“Boys will soon be here to make it.”

“I warrant you! They will make their ice-cream before shoveling the folks’ paths at home.”

It looked so, for half a dozen boys were out in the yard by eight o’clock, shouting “ice-cream” to Charlie, who had not finished his breakfast.

With the help of Aunt Stanshy’s “essences” enough snow was flavored to meet the demands of customers, who, quickly notified, quickly appeared, bringing the contents of all the nail-boxes at their homes. Even Aunt Stanshy was prevailed upon to buy a dish, and she consistently paid cash for it.

Her boarder, Will Somers, was induced to promise more extensive patronage.

“Will, we all think you a first-rate feller,” said the artful president; “and just to help us out at the fair, couldn’t you take your meals at our restaurant? Our mothers say they will cook us things—steak, you know, and so on.”

“Y—e—s, I will try it for—the present.”

For some reason the “things” said to have been promised—“steak, you know, and so on,” did not arrive. Will gave out soon after noon the first day.

“Aunt Stanshy, I shall starve if I stay there,” said Will, appearing at her pantry door; “and if I didn’t starve, they would kill me with their abominable ‘cream’ that they make me buy, though they say it is at a reduced price.”

The restaurant was given up very soon. The president said that people had left the sea-side for the city, and they could hardly expect enough home trade to make it pay.

Pip thought he could make his table pay if he had some flowers to set it off. But that was not all; he was envious of others’ success. The fair had been characterized by the usual amount of “human nature” displayed on such occasions, and Pip now exhibited his peculiarities. For ten cents he bought a few white flowers at a hot-house, and then thought he would get ahead of the boys and be at the barn at an early hour, making sure for himself any possible customers.

“To give all an equal chance,” declared the president, “to make it the same for those who get up early and

those who lie abed, the barn will be open at nine o'clock, except on holidays, when we will accommodate the public at an earlier hour."

Pip thought he would be on hand by eight one morning. He would then be sure to catch any "nail custom," as that was a class apt to be astir early, hunting up currency before other people had a chance at it. But the weather had stiffened since the storm. It was too cold to be agreeable, and even the nail-customers, usually so early at the barn, were now at home hugging the kitchen stove. Pip stood alone at the grand flower table. His blossoms lay unsought upon the table.

"Pip! Pip!"

It was the governor down in the yard.

"We are going to see them skate on the pond back of the mill. Come, go!"

Pip could hardly be coming and going at the same time, but he left his table and left his flowers. That day, the cold increased steadily.

"It is nippin' cold," said Aunt Stanshy to a neighbor, and what did Jack Frost do but take out his nippers and clap them on Pip's flowers! The next morning, Pip found a little heap of frozen petals on the "flower-table." He could no more make them into flowers than if they had been petals of snow!

That day, "owing to the weather," the "Fair" was closed. The boys divided the little heap of cash and the large heap of nails, and each knight took his share. The club now ceased to have an active existence. It became like any other stick that is laid aside and set up in the corner. It seemed as if the knights had forgotten that they belonged to a club whose expressive title suggested energetic movement.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FIRE.

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Will Somers belonged to the “Cataract,” which was not a “steamer,” but a hand-engine. To belong to the “Cataract” it was necessary to own a red flannel shirt, a good pair of lungs, and a nimble pair of legs. The shirt—did that mean fire? The lungs enabled one to do all the “hollering” that might be necessary. The legs were still more essential, that the engine might move with proper speed to a fire, and this was at a neck-breaking pace. As the engine company had many alarms to answer, some of them purposely raised to enable the company to “show off”—so Simes Badger said—the legs of a Cataract-boy were not the least valuable of his fire-apparatus. And then it did seem as if the company all took a fiendish delight in going “like mad” by the homes of old women and all single ladies like Miss Persnips, tossing their red helmets—I omitted this essential piece of property—directing at the windows defiant glances, and all the while their sharp, cracked engine-bell went up and down, over and over, as if it were an insane acrobat.

“Fire! Fire!” screamed a female voice, one afternoon. The screamer was Miss Persnips.

“Where, where?” shouted Simes Badger.

“O, there, there! I know it must be,” was the answer.

That was all Simes wanted, and especially as Mr. Walton was holding a service at St. John’s. If Simes could excite a neighborhood, and also create a sensation in church, he was happy. He now rushed into the church-vestibule, and then into the bell-tower, and seizing the rope pulled it as if the small-pox had broken out and attacked every other person in the community. Simes being the one to make the bell boom, “Danger!” he gave evidence that this one person certainly was not afflicted with the malady.

In just two minutes from the first rap on the bell, Will Somers, leaving behind him a caldron of boiling herbs, was at the door of the engine-house, and unlocking it, had seized the long rope attached to the engine. There were enough who joined him to rush out into the street the clumsy machine. There they received large re-enforcements.

“Where is the fire?” bawled the foreman.

Nobody knew.

“Where is the fire, Simes?” the bell-ringer was asked as the engine rattled toward the church-door.

“Miss Persnips!”

Simes meant not the place of the fire, but the source of the information.

“Miss Persnips’s house is afire!” shouted the engine-men. It was enough. They rushed for that lady’s place, and seeing a column of smoke above her roof, concluded that its source was directly below, and stopping at a pump this side of her house, ran their hose down into the well. They were working the brakes at a lively rate and preparing for a thorough bombardment of the building, when fortunately she

appeared, screaming, "Fire is over there, beyond the woods!"

The smoke had now shifted its coarse, and rolling away from Miss Persnips's, hung in a dark, sullen cloud above the forest but a little way off.

Away went the engine and its allies, sweeping along men and boys, and also every able-bodied member of the Up-the-Ladder Club whose legs could carry him. Down past shops and houses and farms rushed the crowd, pulling along several fat men who had grasped the rope. By and by they came to a farmer in a red shirt who pointed his spectacles at them across the top-rail of the fence at the right of the road.

"Where's the' fire, squire?" excitedly asked the foreman.

"Fire? I don't know of fire," replied the farmer, coolly, "at leastways, any fire that is worth puttin' out. I have got a bonfire in back here, and it was purty big, and its smoke you may have seen in the village. If you want to stretch your muscle and soak your hose—and that is about all you engine-people do—you may come and play on my bonfire."

"Come and play on *you*" shouted an angry voice.

"Put out *him*" screamed another.

"Play away, One," bawled a third, giving the number of the engine as known at fires.

There was now a half-joking, half-angry comment on the "squire," and there were enough there desirous of wetting down, not his bonfire, but its builder. The foreman quieted the strife and the "Cataract" started for home. A willingness was expressed to moisten "Miss Persnips's place" because she had misled them, though it was unintentional on her part.

Some one sang out, "She can't tell about smoke. She has only one good eye, and t'other one is a glass eye."

This put them all in a good-natured mood, and the "Cataract" went home.

Soon there was a fire serious enough to satisfy the most ardent of the company. A milder style of weather had been prevailing after the late snow-storm. The sun had put extra coal on its fires and melted all the snow. Then came a wind that blew continuously two days, drying the grounds and the buildings.

"I notice, Somers," said Dr. Tilton, "that you did not have good luck in finding a fire that last alarm, but if one is sounded now, I guess it will amount to something. Fearful dry, it is getting to be."

The doctor was a true prophet. The next alarm did amount to something. One morning about half past seven, there echoed in the narrow streets of Seamount a cry that plain meant bad news. Will Somers heard, and might be said to have *seen*, that cry. He had taken down the shutters of his employer's store, and was hanging in the windows two very gaudily lettered placards, "A balm for all, Jenkins's Soporific," "The need of an aching world, Muggins's Liniment." Will heard that magic cry, "Fire—re—re!" He turned and saw a man coming down the street. He was not only coming, but running, his hat off, and his mouth open wide enough to take in a ten-cent loaf of brown bread, Will thought.

"Woolen mill on fire!"

“Woolen mill!” gasped Will, and his first thought was, “glory enough for one day.”

The woolen mill was in a pretty little hollow, a nest whose walls were spreading elm-trees. The mill was a relic of the old industries of the place and represented a vain effort to make Seamount a “manufacturing center.”

“Then the fire is down in the hollow,” thought Will. He saw somebody approaching who he thought might be a customer, but he quickly decided the question whether he owed a greater duty to one person or to many—the public—by turning the key in the lock of the door. Then he hurried away. As he rushed to the house of the “Cataract,” he stopped at the door of Dr. Tilton’s home.

“There,” he said to Biddy Flannigan, who answered, “tell the doctor there’s a tremendous alarm in town, and I thought he might want me to go, as he is an owner, and here is the key.”

“What?” said Biddy.

“Woolen mill’s afire, tell him.”

“Woolen Mill Sophia! Who is she?” wondered Biddy, and she went to report to the doctor.

“Faith, sir, yer clerk says there is a tremenjus ’larm in town and it’s about Woolen Mill Sophia, and here is the key, sir.”

“Woolen-mill what?” asked the doctor. “I am an owner up there.”

“Indade! It must be that Sophia works up there.”

“Sophia?” the doctor asked, and then stared at her and exclaimed, “It is ‘woolen mill’s afire!’ My! Where are my boots? Quick! Bertha, bring down my boots, please.”

This last request was shouted up stairs to his niece, Bertha Barry, who was making a brief visit at the doctor’s. Bertha quickly appeared, boots in hand, her blue eyes looking bright and fresh as the spring violets just gathered from the fields.

“Bertha, it’s the old mill that is afire. Will Somers has left the key of the store here and gone to the fire. I can forgive him this morning, though I did think his duties as a fireman began to interfere with his duties as an apothecary. Let me see! I’m all ready, I believe—guess I must go up to the fire. Tell your aunt I have gone to the fire and I’ll be back—when I arrive.”

Off went the doctor. Bertha delivered the message to her aunt and went down stairs. Then she looked out of the window and watched the people on their way to the fire.

“Guess I’ll go to the fire, too,” said Bertha, “if aunt is willing.”

“Och,” said Biddy, as she watched the departing Bertha, “we’ll all be fur goin’ up to see Sophia. The saints defend us!”

The fire had started in the waste room of the old mill. Somebody had once insisted on isolating this quarter as much as possible, and brick partitions had been put up that happily interfered with the spread of

the fire and allowed all the operatives a chance to escape. The fire finally reached an elevator. It then darted with startling rapidity to the top of the building, shooting up like an arrow sent by a destructive hand below. The flames were now spreading every-where in the highest story. People gathered from the town, and the engines soon were working.

“Get every body out of the building!” said a commanding voice, owned by a man who had just arrived.

“Of course! That’s what we have just been doing,” said a second.

The cry now arose, “Two boys in the mill!”

Some one said that the boys had made their escape with the other operatives, but had gone back into one of the lower stories after their overcoats.

“Boys in the mill!” rang out the fearful cry.

The owner of the commanding voice rushed forward into the lower entry of the mill, swinging an ax. Will Somers found him at the door trying to cut round the latch.

“What’s that for?” asked Will.

“Want to get ’em out, you fool!”

“Have you tried the door?”

“N—n—o.”

Will seized it, pulled it, and open it came!

Will was brave, and, in such an emergency as the present, generally took his wits with him. The room was full of smoke. He stepped in and shouted, but there was no response. While at the door of the first room, he heard some one behind saying, “Boys in the next story, they say.” Will turned and sprang up stairs. Just ahead was the person who had recently spoken. The proprietor of the commanding voice was now retreating, his ax over his shoulder, stepping proudly out in the consciousness that he had done a memorable thing. Up the stairs went Will and his companion, the smoke thickening about them. Reaching the second floor and pushing open the door of the adjoining room, they saw—was it a boy on the floor? He had evidently striven to gain the door, but when he had almost reached it, had succumbed to the suffocating smoke, falling with arms stretched out toward the goal he desired to secure. And who was it running toward them, boy or man, the smoke parting about him as he advanced, then closing up again? It was a boy rushing for the door, trying to make his way through the smoke which, light as it was, proved too heavy a burden for him, for down he dropped, felling flat upon his face. It was the work of a moment apparently to seize the boys and carry them out into the entry.

“Thank God for strong arms!” said Will Somers, lifting one boy and starting off with him.

“Yes, thank Him for every thing good,” answered his companion, shouldering the other prize. They descended the stairs. How the smoke had increased! They had been absent longer than they thought, and in that time the fire was rapidly advancing toward them. They heard a loud noise without, a shout rising above the crackle and roar of the flames. Then voices were heard at the foot of the stairs: “Come this

way! Quick! Hurry!” As Will passed through the lower entry, he chanced to glance into the room whose door had been left open by the knight of the ax. A draft had been created, and Will could see that the flames were springing toward the outer air.

“This way! Hurry!” people were shouting, and through the almost blinding, bewildering, suffocating smoke, Will and his companion bore the trophies they had snatched from the flames.

“Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!” went up heartily from the dense, black crowd below. The rescued boys were laid upon the grass at a safe distance from the burning mill. The people began to gather about them.

“Ah, poor Tim, poor Tim!” said a woman, bending over one of the boys.

“That’s Ann there with Tim Tyler,” said Charlie to Sid Waters, these two enterprising knights having made good use of their legs and quickly reached the spot.

“Who’s Ann?”

“It is Tim’s mother.”

“I recognize the other boy. It’s Bob Landers.”

“Will Somers, this you?” asked Charlie.

“It will be when my face is washed. Dirty work at fires.”

“Why, Mr. Walton, is this you? What a ’ero! Did you save one of them boys?” squeaked Miss Persnips to Will’s companion.

The minister’s face was not very clean after his fight with the sooty enemy, but as Will thought, “Love sees through all disguises.”

“Yes, here I am, and if some of you good people will carry these boys home, the rest of us will soak down those tenement houses opposite the mill and see if we can’t save them.”

“The dear man! So disinterested, and before he had got his face washed,” said Miss Persnips, pressing nearer to gain a better look at the object of her admiration.

“Miss Persnips, excuse me,” said the foreman of the “Torrent,” the great rival of the “Cataract,” “but unless you withdraw, we shall be obliged to wash you out of the way with the hose. Play away, Three!” he roared.

“O, massy!” screamed the shop-keeper, retiring to a safe place.

Will Somers went back to his place at the brakes of the “Cataract.” As he passed the door of the mill he looked into the entry, “What a blaze!” he said.

It was not surprising that the flames had swept forward with such rapidity. Up those old wooden stairs drying for years, greasy with the oil drippings of the mill, the fire leaped and flew even rather than leaped. The flames were reaching out like long, forked arms, vainly clutching after the two boys that had

been snatched away. The building was now the plaything of the flames. Through it and over it, now climbing to the highest point of the old-fashioned roof, then searching down into the cellar, scorching, raging, roaring every-where, went the fire. In places unexpected the flames would show themselves, looking out like the faces of firefiends. Then they would retire a moment, only to come again and burst out with a fury that nothing could resist, a fury that raged and rioted till beams, rafters, flooring, and stair-ways were a black, ashy heap, sputtering and hissing toward the sky—a snake heap full of hot fangs.

“I wonder how that fire started,” was a frequent exclamation. “Don’t know,” said every body save one poor, old tobacco-ridden man who confessed that he had been smoking in the waste room, the place where the fire started.

“When you see a man shoving a lighted pipe into sich a place,” said Simes Badger to the gossippy circle at Silas Trefethen’s store that night, “send in a bucket of water after him.”

“What for? to put out the fire, or to wash him?” asked a hearer.

“Both,” said Simes, “one to protect the place and the other to purify him.”

The wise men all laughed, and there was some sense in the laugh that applauded the oracle.

Tim Tyler and Bob Landers had both been carried to their homes. Bob escaped serious injury, but it was found that Tim was badly burned.

“I felt it a good deal at the very first,” he told Mr. Walton one day, “when, in going after my coat, I happened to open a door where the fire was, and it darted at me. You see the pain stopped, but now it has started up.”

“Yes, I understand that while the first contact with the fire is painful, then what you might call a paralyzing of the nerves takes place, and feeling is benumbed. When the action of the fire ceases, and the attempt at healing sets in, the nerves try to do their duty and the pain starts up once more. I have thought that the old martyrs who were burned at the stake, while they smarted terribly at first, had an easier time after that. Bad enough to step upon the hot round of such a ladder to heaven, but it was easier climbing after that. You got confused, Tim, didn’t you, in the mill, when trying to find your way back?”

“O yes; and as I said, I opened a door where the fire rushed at me. It was so smoky I wonder I ever got out at all. It seems I had some good friends.”

“Yes, and God was your best friend, and he helped you, and if you are not a martyr, you can try to bear your pain as patiently as you can, and some people in bearing pain stand more than the martyrs even.”

Tim looked up. “Could you—could you—say a small prayer for me? I don’t want to knuckle under, but grin and bear it best I can.”

When Mr. Walton came out into the kitchen where Ann was she said: “I heard Tim ask you to pray. That was a good deal for him to do. Afore, you did it without the asking, but I was glad to have him just speak up for himself. O, he has been a softenin’ since the fire, a comin’ round a good deal.”

“Where is your brother?”

“Mine? Tim, you mean?”

“Yes.”

She only shook her head, and looked sad.

As Mr. Walton was walking home he met Tony, one of his favorites.

“Well, Tony, how is the club? Have they all got the shields Miss Barry gave them?”

“I think so, and you were very kind to promise what you did; but we don’t have any meetings now.”

“Don’t you?”

“No, sir.”

“Won’t you come in and see me?”

Tony followed his friend into the clergyman’s study. Then Mr. Walton found his mother and brought her into the study.

“This little fellow is one of my Sunday-school boys, and his name is Tony.”

“Why,” said the old mother, looking into his face, “I have seen him before.”

And Tony lifted his eyes—large, lustrous, black—to the old lady’s face rimmed with silver hair, and said, ingenuously,

“I don’t think you ever did. I have never been here.”

“But I have seen you, and I want to see you again; and you will come when you can, won’t you? Where do you live?”

“At Mr. Badger’s, and I came from New York with a Mr. Blanco.”

“Where is your father?”

“He is in Italy.”

“And that is over the sea, over the sea!” she murmured, as she returned to her sitting-room. There she stood looking at the picture of a ship, and, glancing up at the church vane, which could be seen from her window, she wondered if the weather would be easterly and rainy that day.

When they were alone, Tony said to Mr. Walton, “Do you see Tim Tyler often?”

“Pretty often.”

“And they are real poor?”

“O yes.”

On his way home Tony met Charlie.

“Mr. Walton says they are real poor at Tim Tyler’s, Charlie. I wish I had some money to give him.”

Charlie thought a minute, and then he spoke up, eagerly, “I say, Tony, let’s get up a fair for him.”

“That’s the very thing I wanted to ask you about. Now it’s strange we should both think of it.”

“That’s so.”

“Let’s shake hands on it, Charlie.”

Tony and Charlie, standing on the sidewalk, shook hands cordially. “What next? The shaking of hands would not bring a fair.

“Let’s go and see Miss Barry,” suggested Charlie. This was in accordance with the boys’ custom to refer all their troubles to this sympathetic teacher.

“We want to get up a fair for Tim Tyler,” said Charlie, enthusiastically.

“Yes, yes!” cried Tony. Miss Barry looked down into the boys’ eager faces.

“Tim Tyler, that boy burned at the fire?”

“Yes,” said Charlie.

“That would be splendid.”

“But—but,” said Tony, “we want you to help us. Could—could you?”

“Yes, I’ll help.”

The boys were in raptures.

“Have you asked the other boys?” asked the teacher.

“No,” replied Charlie; “but there go Sid Waters and Rick Grimes down street now. We might ask them.”

“You tell them, please, I want to see them.”

When Sid and Rick arrived, their assent, at first, was readily given to the teacher’s proposition for a fair by the boys in behalf of Tim Tyler.

“Only,” said Rick, “won’t it go to old Tim, his uncle, for rum? I don’t believe in that.”

“O, Tim’s mother wouldn’t allow that.”

“But, you see, Tim had a fuss with Charlie Macomber, and imposed on him,” exclaimed Sid.

“Charlie is willing, for he has said so,” replied Miss Barry. “You are not going to hold on to an old

grudge. Your name is ‘Up-the-Ladder Club,’ and not *down* the ladder. You go down when you hold on to a grudge, boys.”

“We won’t go down!” cried Charlie.

“No, no!” said the boys.

The different members of the club signified their willingness. Will Somers said he would assist.

One other person must be consulted, the older “honorary member” of the club, Aunt Stanshy. Knowing her very just and positive opposition to drinking habits, Miss Barry thought she might refer to old Tim’s, and throw out a sharp opinion that the uncle ought to help the boy, as he lived in the family of the boy’s mother. Charlie, too, thought his aunt might object, but she did not. She only put on that look of sadness Charlie had noticed when old Tim was in the neighborhood that rainy day, and to Will’s remark that old Tim ought to do more, she said, with a sigh,

“I suppose the boy is not responsible for other people’s failings, and they say his face is very white, and his hands are real thin, and he behaves better than he did. Yes, I’ll—help.”

It was easy to decide when to hold this fair, but “where” was a difficult problem.

“Take the barn chamber,” said Sid.

“It’s too cold,” replied Will, “and this is to be quite a grand affair.”

It was like Aunt Stanshy to offer her front room and sitting-room for Tim’s benefit, provided Will could spare his quarters, and spare he did.

“We will scatter some posters,” said Will. “I will see that they are printed.”

“We can do it ourselves with pen and ink, and then people will think more of it, you know. Besides, as we scatter them, we may have a chance to solicit donations, as they call it,” said Sid.

“Splendid!” replied Will.

“And we will call on the apothecary,” shouted Charlie.

“Yes, but if it be candy, I must put an extra string round the package to make sure that it all gets to the right place and is not troubled on the way.”

The members of the club who had met to “consult” were in excellent spirits, especially when Will said, in reply to the governor’s proposition to ask friends to contribute refreshments, “I see you know how to do it. Your experience at your fair fitted you to go right along with this thing in splendid style.”

Tony thought he could bring some pictures that had been forwarded from Italy, and Charlie said, “I guess I can get up a maginary.”

“A maginary?” asked Will.

Charlie only chuckled over his proposition, and made no explanations.

“I propose,” said Will, “I propose, Mr. President”—here he bowed to Sid, which caused that dignitary to stick his thumb into the lowest button hole of his jacket and swell out with pride—“I propose that we call our affair a ‘Helping-Hand Sale.’ You know there is a good deal in a name, and it sets people to thinking, and sets them to helping, too, and I think Miss Barry will like the name.”

This was agreeable to the club, whose members now separated to their homes.

“Aunt Stanshy,” said Charlie, that night, “do you know where my rabbit is?”

“I don’t know. Now I told you, when Miss Persnips came down here, that thing in her arms, and she smilin’ and blinkin’, as if she had an armful of gold, that she was givin’ you an elephant rather than a rabbit. Nobody knows where the critter is or what it is up to.”

Charlie found the white pet, and asked Will what he thought the rabbit looked like.

“Looks more like a rabbit than any thing else, Charlie.”

“Aunt Stanshy called it an elephant.”

“Well, you might say elephant, the white elephant of Siam—sort of a distant cousin. Why, what do you ask the question for?”

Charlie grinned, but made no reply.

Every thing was made ready for the sale. Aunt Stanshy’s two rooms were the scene of much bustle, and while the boys were at their tables, Miss Barry in a tastily-draped corner was ready for a reasonable sum to serve out refreshments to every applicant.

The Helping-Hand Sale had various attractions. Among them was Charlie’s “maginary.” It was a box covered with white cloth, a piece of workmanship at which Charlie had been secretly tinkering for two days. It was labeled “A Distant Cousin of the White Elephant of Siam. Price to see, three cents, and don’t tell when you’ve seen it.”

This attracted great attention.

“Miss Persnips,” said Charlie to the shopkeeper, who came to patronize the sale, “do you want to see my maginary? Only three cents, and don’t tell.”

“Your menagerie? Yes. What have you got there? Some dreadful animal! I’m afraid to.”

Charlie lifted the cover of the box, and there, fat and sleepy, was—Miss Persnips told the rest.

“Did you ever! That darling, sweet pet I gave you. Quite an idea, really, and here’s another cent.”

The white elephant’s relative was a conspicuous character—after the lifting of the cover—that evening.

The next morning Charlie appeared before Will, hanging out a long, dismal face, and speaking with

difficulty.

“She’s gone!”

“Who, Aunt Stanshy?”

“No, Bunny!”

“Your rabbit? How?”

“I don’t know. I left her all right in the maginary, last night.”

“Let me go out and look round. But where did you put your box?”

“Well, Aunt Stanshy thought it would do just as well if I put the box out into the wood-shed—and—”

“Was the door left open?”

“I saw it open this morning.”

“I will look about.”

Will went into the wood-shed, and there before the door he saw two cats licking their chops, and their guilty eyes seemed to him to say, “Rabbit stew for breakfast! Keep dark!”

“Charlie,” said Will, entering the house again, “I think two cats out there took your rabbit, and we will catch them and box them and exhibit them.”

“As my maginary?”

“Yes, and I’ll tell you how to label them.”

The cats were caught and boxed, and this was the label their cage bore on the second and last evening of the “Helping Hand Sale:” “Destroyers of the Distant Cousin of the White Elephant of Siam.” This device took, and many pennies were put by the neighbors into Charlie’s hands. When the boys summed up the profits of the sale, they had for Tim Tyler’s benefit the sum of thirty dollars, which Mr. Walton promised should be judiciously expended.

“It all shows,” remarked Miss Barry to the club, “what we can do when we work in earnest, and also how much small sums amount to.”

Simes Badger’s comment on the affair was that Aunt Stanshy had shown herself a Christian, “knowin’ as I do,” said Simes, “the story of the Tyler affair way back.”

Mr. Walton and his old mother had something also to say about the sale, and it was in connection with one of Tony’s Italian pictures that Mr. Walton bought.

“A house, mother, in Naples, not far from the water, you see.”

The old lady was silent awhile. Then she murmured, “I have seen it, haven’t you, somewhere?”

“Why, yes—no. What is it?”

But the old lady herself was confused about it. She looked at the fair home by the sea, and then looked again, but she could not seem to positively identify it.

“And still I have seen it before,” she affirmed.

To identify the spot was like trying to get hold of the exact form of a ship that partially breaks through the fog and then recedes, ever coming yet ever vanishing.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO MUD-TURTLES.

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“There goes a man drunk, Aunt Stanshy.”

Aunt Stanshy said nothing, but continued to thump away on her ironing-board.

“He is going down the lane, aunty.”

Aunt Stanshy heard Charlie, but she said nothing, only ironing away steadily as ever. Charlie heard her sigh once, or thought he did.

“Did you speak, aunty?”

“Me, child? Why, no!”

Charlie continued to look out of the window that fronted the narrow lane. The drunken man was not a very attractive object. Then it was a dark, lowery, and rainy day in the latter part of November. The streets were muddy, fences damp and clammy to the touch. Over the river hung a gray, cheerless fog. To such a day a staggering drunkard could not be said to contribute a cheering feature, and it was no wonder that Aunt Stanshy cared little to see him. Soon after this, Charlie went out into the barn. It had a deserted look, especially up in the chamber.

“No White Shields here now,” he said, mournfully.

That fastened window, too, the nail driven securely above the hook and staple, had a mournful look to Charlie’s soul. He remembered the story that Simes Badger had told him about this window and the closed door below.

“I wonder if they will ever be open,” thought Charlie.

He remembered the river view that was possible from the “cupelo” above, and he said, “Guess I’ll climb up and see what the weather is.” Charlie was not a very experienced weather-observer, but he thought he would like to obtain a wider outlook than the lane window had afforded him. He planted an eye between the slats of his watch-tower and then looked off. The view was neither extensive nor varied, mostly one of mud-flats. A thick fog had come from the sea and stretched like a curtain across the mouth of the dock in the rear of Aunt Stanshy’s premises. The low tide had left in the dock a stretch of ugly flats, out of which stuck various family relics like pots and kettles, then pots and kettles again, and finally a dead cat. Charlie saw several tall chimneys in the neighborhood, but the buildings they decorated had been covered by the fog, and the chimneys looked like a vessel’s masts from which the hull had drifted away, leaving them standing in depths of river-mud. Toward the sea it was only mist, mist that looked extensive enough to reach as far as London, whose fog-lovers would have welcomed it. Did the dock, the tall chimneys, the mist, notice that curious eye up in the “cupelo” looking through the slats and watching them?

“Guess I’ll go down,” said their owner.

The mist continued to wrap Seamount all that day and far into the night.

Will Somers was preparing to leave Dr. Tilton's store that evening. He had sent off medicine to quiet the last earache in town that had been heard from. He had also given powders to make poor Miss Persnips sleep quietly. She was sick with a nervous fever. Will now closed the store, turned the key in the lock, and went up the street, whistling "The Star-Spangled Banner." It was half after ten. One by one the house-lamps had been extinguished, and it was "dark as a pocket" in the lane. Still whistling, Will neared Aunt Stanshy's. He ceased his tune suddenly for he caught an outcry.

"Where does that come from!" asked Will. "Back of the barn, I guess. There it is again! It is from the dock, I know, sure as I'm born."

He sprang across Aunt Stanshy's garden and then leaped a fence which separated her estate from an open piece of ground bordering the dock and used for various purposes. Fishermen dried their fish here on long flakes. Around three sides of the dock went a stone wall, against which the tide washed and rippled, mildly grumbling because the wall was stubborn and would not budge an inch. On the stone wall bordering the upper end of the dock rested that side of Aunt Stanshy's barn in which were the fastened door below and the fastened window above.

Will, having leaped the fence, ran past the fish-flakes to the edge of the stone dock-wall. It was so dark that his running was neither rapid nor straight.

"Somebody is down in the dock," thought Will. "Don't worry!" he shouted, "I am here."

He now heard a series of noises, some of them distinct and quite human. Others were confused outcries.

"It's time for low tide," thought Will, and, without further reflection, down he dropped into the dark, dismal dock, landing in a bed of mud soft as ever a flounder slept on. He was conscious at once that this bed was a very yielding one, but he could not stop to calculate how far down he might sink, shouting at once, "Where are you? Sing out there!"

"M—m—moo—moo," replied the person, as if a cow in distress. "I'm hic—here—hic!"

"Drank as a fool," thought Will. "Where?"

"Hic—here—hic!"

"Hie—haec—hoc, more likely," said Will, recalling his Latin. "Stay right where you are."

"I'll stay—hic."

"Let me feel for you. O, here you are."

Will now felt of some one crouching against the stone-wall of the dock, "How did you come here?"

"Dunno—hic—but I spect I did."

"You must have walked off the wall, and the great question now is how to get back again."

“Yes—hic—that—is the question—hic—afore the house.”

“Afore the dock, I should say. Whew, I believe I’m up to my thighs in mud, and if that isn’t water I’m splashing in! The tide is coming in, certain. Come, friend, we must get out of this!”

“Yes, we must all—hic.”

“Must all hic? We must all get out, you mean.”

“Yes, all get-hic.”

“Let me think. There are stairs out of this old bog somewhere, and where are they? I declare! down at the other end, and the water is three or four feet deep there when it is dry up here. Then put on top of it or under it two or three feet of mud and you have five to six feet in all, and that is an interesting state of things to wade through. We must stay at this end of the dock; and back of Aunt Stanshy’s barn, I believe, are steps. I must work him up there, and do it myself somehow, for my shouting don’t bring any one.”

Will had called several times for help, but there was no response. He now addressed his boozy companion:

“I must get you up out of this somehow, and work you along where the steps are. The wall is too high to boost you up here. If this isn’t interesting, nigh eleven o’clock, pitch dark, down in this old dock blundering with you, drank as a fool! I feel like laughing.”

“Yes—hic—you’re drunk—as a—fool—and I want—to—hic—laugh—he—he—he!”

Will did really laugh now. It seemed so funny there at that hour in that place.

“But it’s no laughing matter, friend, I’ll tell you. O whew! Here’s the water half a foot deep all around us! Come now, lift up your feet and come with me. Make an effort now.”

The man rallied his strength so effectively to make this effort that he lost his balance, and stumbling against Will, pitched him over.

“Look—look out—friend!” roared Will, as he floundered in mud and water. “Can’t you do better than that?”

“Besht—hic—I can do for you. Might try it again—hic.”

“O, thanks—thanks. Be contented with that trial. There is my boot, stuck fast in the mud, and let her go. Come, friend, make an effort to get along. Stick close to the wall and work your way on, and lean on me. There, you did splendidly then. Try again! There, there! Easy now. O scissors, there goes my other boot! The next thing will be that I shall get my legs in for good, and by to-morrow morning early the water will be over us all. Come, friend, you don’t want to get drowned. Pull away! Steady there! Move on! We are making progress, you see. Again, there! On she goes! Hem—now, once more! All together! There we are!”

There came a series of such trials, and finally Will shouted, “Must be almost there—and—” bump they went against the stone wall at the upper end of the dock.

“Three cheers, friend!”

“Hip—hip—hip—”

“No matter about giving them. Now we will work along to some steps back of a barn. Careful!”

When the steps had been reached Will exclaimed, “So far, so good, friend.”

“Yes—hic—I’m glad—I’ve—hic—got you—hic—so far safe—hic.”

“Got me? You have my thanks. Well, now, you stay here by these steps until I come for you. I will fetch a light. Stay here, now.”

“I will—hic.”

Will felt his way along the base of the wall until he came to the lane. The stones in the wall were smooth with the slime accumulating there for years, and it was hard work to get his feet out of the mud, and very hard then to get them up and over the wall. He succeeded though, and grasping a rail-fence and mounting it, dropped down into the lane.

“Glad to touch solid ground,” thought Will, “though I be in my stocking-feet.”

He hurried to Aunt Stanshy’s door, which had been left unlocked for his admittance, and opening it, stepped upon the entry oil-cloth.

“Tick—tick! Who comes here?” the old clock now seemed to say, loudly, solemnly ticking.

“How I shall muddy this sacred floor! Can’t help it, though! Aunt Stanshy,” he now began to call; at the same time he rapped on the baluster. “Aunt Stanshy!”

He looked up and saw the light from the lamp that she kept burning at night. Soon there was the sound of a stirring, and a tall figure in white bent over the railing. A second and smaller statue of snow was there in a moment, leaning over the railing by the side of Aunt Stanshy.

“What is it?” she asked.

“I’m sorry to trouble you, but I’ve just come from the dock, and—”

“Why, you look like a mud-turtle,” said Aunt Stanshy, bending over still farther and holding out the lamp, whose light fell on Will.

“Mud-turtle? I don’t wonder you say so, and there’s another and worse-looking one out in the dock.”

“Two mud-turtles? What do you mean? Where *have* you been?”

“I mean this; I was coming home and heard some one calling for help, and ran to the dock and saw—no, I couldn’t see a barley-corn before my nose—but I knew somebody was down there, and without thinking —”

“Just like you!” said Aunt Stanshy to herself.

“And in I went, and I succeeded in getting my man, who is drunk, round to the upper aide of the dock.”

“You did splendidly,” said Aunt Stanshy, aloud.

“But I had to work for it! And now I want a light, which you may wonder I didn’t get before; but I was so anxious to help that fellow, I put and run as soon as I heard him cry, and when I was in the dock I thought I might as well stick to him and work him into a safe place. But haven’t you a door in the dock-side of your barn?”

“Y—e—s,” said Aunt Stanshy, reluctantly, remembering an old decision about the door. “I will be out, and you take the lantern that you will see in the back entry. Don’t mind my floor. I will be out in two minutes.”

“Let me go down and show Will about the lantern,” said Charlie.

“Are you dressed?”

“O yes. I thought I might help, you know,” was the complacent remark of Charlie, who had improved his time, and, while keeping his “ears out,” had been putting his legs into his pants as rapidly as possible.

“You have been smarter than your aunt, but she will be there soon.”

Charlie showed Will where the lantern hung in the back entry, and together they went into the barn.

“Here is the door,” said Charlie, “that lets folks into the dock.”

“But how do you get the thing open?” asked Will, flashing the light of his lantern upon the door.

“I will open it,” said Aunt Stanshy, who now appeared, and already decided that the door might be consistently opened for a good deed’s sake. She carried a hammer in her hand, which she energetically swung about the driven nails, soon removing them. Then she threw back the door, and out into the black night peered anxiously. How long it had been since the last time that she had looked out from that door! She could see nothing at first, but in a moment made out a man’s form below. As the rays of Aunt Stanshy’s lamp shone out, they made a bridge of light that stretched off into the mist, as if anxious to reach the river and bridge it for some poor, helpless soul in the water.

“Say, friend, you down there?” called out Will.

A voice below answered, “Yesh—hic—I’ll help you—up—”

“You will? Better let me help you first.”

“Shuit yourself—hic.”

Will descended the steps, and found the man leaning against the dock-wall.

“Now, friend, we’ll climb these stairs.”

“I will—help you—hic—yes—up.”

“You are very kind, but let me help you first. Now go it! Tough! You don’t gain a peg.”

“You’ll have me—hic—over—friend.”

“Have *you* over! It’s the other way, man.”

“Well—shay! It’s all right, aint it?—hic.”

“O yes! We wont quarrel about it. Look here, folks! haven’t you got any thing up there we could steer him by—a rope, perhaps, to which he could cling? The water has risen and come up here, and it’s not comfortable in one’s stocking-feet. Wish my fire company was here! We would make short work of it.”

“Shall I ring the church bell?” asked Charlie, excitedly.

“O don’t, don’t!”

“Here’s a rope,” said Aunt Stanshy.

“Yes, yes!” exclaimed Charlie, “and we will pull him in.”

“We might do that, or at least help,” said Aunt Stanshy, laughing.

“Yesh—hic—pull him in,” said the man in the dock.

“We will fasten the rope about you, friend, and they’ll draw on it, and perhaps you could hold on to it and draw yourself up, and I will shove you behind. Now, all, a good try!”

Will was now shoving, Aunt Stanshy and Charlie hauling, while the man tried to grasp the sides of the steps; and so, out of the slime and the mist and the night, up into the light, and then into Aunt Stanshy’s barn, came the face of—old Tim Tyler!

“Horrors!” said Aunt Stanshy, startled by this unexpected sight of the second mud-turtle. Her face wore, indeed, a look of horror at first, and then the expression changed to one of pity.

Over the door-sill he crawled, and then looking up, he said, in a drunken, but abashed, humiliated way, “Stanshy, is it you? Real—hic—sorry to trouble—hic—you.”

Aunt Stanshy made no audible reply, but stood looking away as if into distant years. She was recalling the words uttered by Tim long ago, when he vowed that he would see himself “a-drownin’ in that dock first afore he’d ask a favor of her.” “He has come up to his word,” she said to herself, and then she bowed her troubled face.

“Well, now,” said Will, looking round with a worried face, “what next?”

“Guesh I’ll—hic—go home now. Thank you, sir,” he said, bowing to Will. “Thank you, Stanshy,” and he bowed still lower.

“Timothy,” said Aunt Stanshy, calling him by the old name, “I wouldn’t turn a dog into the street a night like this, and you had better stay here. I will get you some clothes, and, Will, perhaps you will see that he gets off these.”

“And bring me one of my suits, too, please. And if Charlie will bring me a basin and some water, we will wash here. I will look after my man here. Bring my slippers, please.”

“Where’s—hic—your boots?”

“O, they concluded to stay in the dock.”

“I’ll—get—you another pair—hic.”

“I may find them at low-water and by daylight.”

Tim Tyler stayed at Aunt Stanshy’s that night. The next morning he was in his right mind, and, thanking Aunt Stanshy, said he must go. Then he lingered, twirling in his hands the old felt hat that was his daily companion, though a much abused one.

“He wants to say something,” thought Charlie.

“Constantia, years ago you and I had a falling out. I think I was to blame in tempting that boy’s father, and I have often thought so, but have been too proud to say it all these years. I did not like what you said; but no matter, I was to blame for what I did, and I did not answer you back in gentleman-fashion. I want to say I am sorry, and ask you to overlook it and shake hands.”

He held out his hand to Aunt Stanshy.

“He has spoken like a man and what will she do?” thought Will.

Aunt Stanshy was ready to show that she was a woman. She held out her hand, also, and said, “I said more than I needed to, and I am sorry for that. Let it go, please.”

“Well,” he exclaimed, “it was mean in me to tempt a man, though I did not see then, as I do now, how low drink may bring a man. God knows I am low enough.”

The tears were now making their way down old Tim Tyler’s face. Charlie saw that Aunt Stanshy turned away from those present and looked in another direction, but the quick-eyed boy thought he noticed a redness to Aunt Stanshy’s eyes when she faced the company again.

Will Somers had come from the store in season to hear Tim’s words. A fisherman soon called who had hurt his hand with a fish-hook and wished to have a poultice applied by the “young doctor,” as people sometimes called Will. This second party had closely followed Will and had heard what was last said. It was an interesting scene. There was the drunkard, confessing how low he had fallen, and there was the woman who once had loved and respected him. There was Charlie, the son of the man whom the drunkard tried to lead astray. There was Will, and the fisherman made an additional spectator.

Will stepped up to Tim.

“Mr. Tyler, excuse, me, but why do you stay so low? Why not come up again?”

“Will’s tone was full of sympathy.

“God knows I would like to come up again.”

“You can, and be back in your old place, owning your own boat, too.”

“Yes,” said Aunt Stanshy, eagerly, “and fishing from the barn, just the same as before.”

“You are all kind, very kind. It does me good,” and poor Tim actually smiled at the prospect. “What would my sister, who has clung to me, say? Wouldn’t she be taken aback?”

The tears were again in the drunkard’s eyes.

“Good deal of the man there yet,” thought Will. “Your sister might be taken aback, but in that kind of way that would help you forward. Come,” he said, aloud, “I will go into my room and write a pledge for you, and be back in a moment.”

Tim looked intently at the pledge of total abstinence that Will brought.

“If—if—I had some one to sign with me, some one to stand with me,” he murmured.

“I will,” said the fisherman, stepping forward, and now recognized as a previous acquaintance.

“You, John Fisher, will you?”

“Yes, I have taken a drop now and then, but I’ll sign and stand with you. I don’t want to get into the—”

“Dock, where I was?” asked Tim.

“No, I am sure I don’t.”

“And that’s the very place where drop-people may fetch up. I was a drop-taker once. I will sign, and God help me!”

“O he will,” said Aunt Stanshy, encouragingly. Charlie now saw that her eyes were redder than ever.

After the name of Timothy Tyler came the name of John Fisher.

“Now you will make those at home happy,” said Will.

But only those with whom Tim made his home really knew how happy it made them. How great was the change there! Young Tim speedily began to rally, sitting up that very day, while Ann went round the house singing.

Charlie came up the next day with a delicacy from Aunt Stanshy for the patient.

“Tell Aunt Stanshy to wipe out every thing, and we will start once more,” was the message that Ann sent off by Charlie.

“It is all wiped out,” was Aunt Stanshy’s answer, and the two soon came together and joined hands.

The barn-door toward the dock was now open, and, in a humble way, the firm of “Tyler & Fisher” began business, drying their fish on the flakes adjoining Aunt Stanshy’s barn, while in the barn itself they stored their possessions, as might be necessary.

A note from Mr. Walton arrived about that time. It was written in his frank, simple, hearty way, congratulating both the men on the stand they had taken. Referring to Tim’s desire for fellowship in his new effort, of which Mr. Walton had heard, he added, “There is another who will stand by you, the Great Brother who came as a babe at Bethlehem, and Christmas will soon remind us of it. Feeling for us and loving us, he at last died for us. Ask him to stand with you. He came to help just such poor weak fellows as we all are.”

That touched the “firm,” and the next Sunday they both sat in a back seat near the stove by the church-door. As Tim Tyler sat there in old St. John’s and heard the dreary wind roaring without, he thought of the fishing-boats that scud before such winds anxious to make port and reach home.

“That’s me, I hope, trying to get home,” he thought, “and find harbor in God’s Church, will hold us all.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NEW DEPARTURE.

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Again the club was only a memory. It was like a walking-stick that, when the mountain-tramp is over, the vacationist puts on the wall as a memento.

“How is your club getting along, Charlie?” asked Miss Bertha Barry, one day, when she was calling at Aunt Stanshy’s.

“We—we—don’t meet,” said Charlie, mournfully. Juggie was there, also, calling on a once brother knight, and he, too, looked sad.

“Now I have an idea,” said the teacher. “You know I like a good time as well as any body, but I think if we have clubs, it is a good idea to make them as useful as possible. If you meet again, remember, your name is ‘Up-the-Ladder Club,’ always to be climbing up, always to be advancing. Now you can advance in this way; you can combine the literary element.”

“Come-and-bine what?” asked Juggie.

“The literary element.”

“De literal element?”

“Recitations and so on, I mean.”

“We did have an entertainment,” said Charlie, who was not disposed to forget or disparage the glory of “departed days.”

“But this is something different, and let me explain. Let us suppose that we take the subject, ‘Days of our Forefathers,’ the times before or at the Revolutionary War. One of you could be dressed as a farmer in those days, and tell what farmers did; another as printer could tell what printers did, and so on. That would give you an idea of those days, and make something useful of your club.”

The plan was popular with the boys of the club. When the subject was proposed to Aunt Stanshy, she made the comment:

“Some sense in the idea. The boys will learn something.”

“And then,” said Miss Barry, “when Christmas comes, you can give a Christmas entertainment, and ask an admission fee, and, won’t you give the money to the missions of our Church? That will be putting another round in the ladder, and the ‘Up-the-Ladder Club’ will go higher still. I want you to help other people all you can. I’ll tell you what to do, and be with you.”

The boys agreed to their teacher’s plan. Sid was specially enthusiastic. Will Somers said he would help. Aunt Stanshy had promised to open the rooms of her house, and one December night, when the sky was

like the dark face of an Oriental beauty, hung all over with golden jewelry, the White Shields and their friends met at Aunt Stanshy's. How happy were the club boys to find there a banner sent by Mr. Walton. He wrote that Tim Tyler was coming to Sunday-school, and that they had previously secured four scholars, and Tim should be counted the fifth. Happy knights to earn that banner!

About eight Sid came into the front room dressed in a brown, broad-skirted coat, also wearing small clothes, silver knee-buckles, and buckled shoes. He took off his cocked hat, made a low bow, and holding out a diminutive newspaper, yellow with age, began:

"I am a printer. I had the honor of printing the 'New Hampshire Gazette,' which was started in Portsmouth in 1756, and is still published in that good old city. In those days newspapers were not so numerous as now. When the Revolutionary War closed there were forty-three papers in the country. We did not give such crowded or so large sheets as are now published. My paper, though, was so popular all the spare copies were taken, and I have none by me this moment; but here is a copy of the 'New England Chronicle,' that came out in Boston on the 4th of July, 1776. It has four pages, you will see, measures ten inches by fifteen, say, and each page has three columns. It was not easy work then to publish a paper. We had no steam-presses, but hand-power had to do the work, and my arms ache to this day. It was hard, too, at the time of the Revolutionary War, to get paper, and before the war, too. In 1769 there was only one paper-mill in New England, and that was at Milton, Mass. They had to advertise for rags, and what they called the bell-cart went through Boston picking them up. Then in towns like Salem, Charlestown, Portsmouth, they scraped all they could. Ten years after, my brother-publisher, of the 'Massachusetts Spy,' appealed to the 'fair Daughters of Liberty in this extensive country' to save their rags, and so 'serve their country,' advising them to hang up a bag in one corner of a room that the odds and ends might be saved. For a pound of 'clean white rags' the ladies could get ten shillings! If you had lived then, and had your mother's rags to-day, what heaps of money you could have made! It was hard, too, for us newspaper men to get news. I was looking yesterday at a copy of the 'Portsmouth Oracle,' published in 1805. That was in this wonderful century. What did it say on the 26th of January? 'News by telegraph?' and did it tell us what the Hottentots were doing yesterday? No; it said, 'By the mails,' and had one item from Boston two days old, two from New York nine days old, and one from Fredericksburg about a trouble with the colored people, and that news was twenty-three days old! Rags and news, those two things, how hard they were to get! And then, ladies and gentlemen, how hard it was to get our pay! A brother editor in New York, in 1777, told his customers he must charge them, for 'a quarter of news,' twelve pounds of beef, seven pounds of cheese, and so on, or he must have their worth in money, and he tells them to bring in the produce, or he will have to 'shut up shop.' I will now shut, also."

Making a low bow again, the wearer of small clothes retired. When Juggie's turn arrived, he appeared, whip in hand.

"I'm de stage-driber. In de days ob our ancestors dar were no railroads, but jest common roads. De fust canal was built in 1777. Dar was a big road dat went from Bosson to mouf of Kennebec, one up into New Hampshire, and den ta Canada, one to Providence, and one to New York, while New York had two roads, norf and one souf. I was a stage-driber." (Here Juggie cracked his whip and shouted, "Get up, Cæsar!") "I ran de 'Flyin' Machine' dat went from New York to Philadelfy, and took only two days; and one spell I took a stage from New York to Bosson in six days. What do you say to dat? Don't it make yer eyes open? Who carried de mail, do you say? And haben't you eber heard? De stage. In 1775 de mail went from Philadelfy to New England ebery fortnight in winter, but dey improbed and went once a week, and letter-writers could get an answer in free weeks, when before it took six weeks. What progress! De worl' goes

on, and—so do I.”

Juggie left, and Governor Grimes appeared in the dress of a farmer, carrying a shovel in one hand and a hoe in the other.

“I am a farmer, and was one in the old days. It is true I did not have so many neighbors as people nowadays, and I went without things that farmers now have. I didn’t have newfangled cultivators, reapers, or such things. But then what a stout house I lived in, a big, square house, and its frame wasn’t made of pipe-stem sticks! They were big, solid sticks of oak that I had, and you could see them sticking out of the corners and down from the ceiling. What chimneys I had, and the bricks came all the way from England! I had none of your box stoves, but a big fire in the chimney which you could see. My wife, Polly, had no carpets on the floor, but she had rugs she made of rags. And my darter, Jerusha, what a cook she was! She made pies—cooked ’em, I mean—in a brick oven, and she stewed her chickens in pots hung on hooks from a swinging crane in the chimney. And then I gave Jerusha a turn-spit, too, which she put before the fire, and I gave her a tin kitchen. Polly had a spinning-wheel and Jerusha a hand-loom, and that is where our cloth came from. I raised corn and grass and potatoes, and we had plenty of apples, and what fun we had at huskin’ parties and apple parings! I took care of my horses, oxen, cows, and sheep, pigs, too, and had to kill my own critters and cure the hams we used. In those days we had to do many things ourselves, such as dip our candles, and I made my eyes weak mending Jedidiah’s shoes in the evening, a candle near me, and the tall old family clock ticking in the corner.”

Miss Barry was charming in her antique dress, as every White Shield thought. It came down from her great-great-grandmother, Sally Tilton, who was a famous belle in her day. The dress was hooped and ruffled, “trailed,” also, in the old style. Miss Barry’s hair was powdered, and she wore white satin shoes. She represented the “Daughters of Liberty,” and told about Emily Geiger, the South Carolina young lady who undertook to carry a written message from General Greene to General Sumter, and when the British took her, she ate up her letter! The enemy released her, not finding her message. She went on and she did her errand, though, giving the message from memory, as General Greene, fearful of a capture, had told her the contents of the letter. Then Miss Barry told about some girls in New York who gave a coat of molasses and flag-down to a young man disrespectful to Congress. She gave an account of the young ladies in Virginia, Massachusetts, and elsewhere.

Will Somers appeared in the dress of a revolutionary soldier, carrying on his shoulder a musket that was a fire-lock, and slung at his side was a powder-horn, while in his tinder-box were flint and steel. How many battles this old Continental had been in, what victories he had won, and what hardships he had endured! He was not slow to tell of them all.

The entertainment was voted a great success.

“There, Charles Pitt,” declared Aunt Stanshy the next morning at the breakfast-table, “I like that style of a club ever so much. It tells you something.”

“Yes,” said Charlie, “I know a lot more than I did.”

“I want you to have a good time in your club, but when it is all play and nothing else, it aint just the thing.”

“Yes, aunty,” said the now matured and venerable Charlie. “And we’re going to have something else.”

“What is it?”

He only winked and looked wise as an owl at midnight.

December was now hurrying away. The winter weeks followed one another rapidly, and at last Charlie heard Mr. Walton say in church something about a Christmas festival.

“Christmas is coming!” was Charlie’s silent response.

What a Christmas it was! Two nights previous to it the club had an entertainment in behalf of missions, as Miss Barry had suggested. Dressed as that benevolent individual, Santa Claus, different members of the club stepped forward and gave an account of Christmas in Germany, Christmas in Russia, Christmas in Italy, and Christmas in Australia. The boys were curious to see how much money they had made.

“Twenty dollars!” declared Sid, who counted the funds.

“There,” said Miss Barry, “the Up-the-Ladder Club will put rounds under the feet of boys in heathen lands, and help them climb up into the light of a Saviour’s presence.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WRECK.

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Snow still kept away, but winter winds had come, and they swept over the bare ground, cutting like knives. About the first of the year the weather softened. The old gray heads, whose possessors occupied that village-throne of wisdom, the jackknife-carved bench by Silas Trefethen's stove, prophesied "a spell of weather."

"Storm brewin'! I feel it in my bones," declared Simes Badger, squinting at the vane on Aunt Stanshy's barn and then at the gray, scowling clouds above. The wind was from the "nor'-east." It had a damp, chilly touch, so that the people shrank from it, and were glad to get near their cozy fires. All day threatening clouds rolled in from the sea, as if the storm had planted batteries there and the smoke from the cannonade was thickening. At night Charlie, passing a window in his chamber, heard the rain drumming on the panes. He had gone to his warm nest and been there only two minutes, when he said to himself, as he gaped, "If it would only rain so hard that I wouldn't have to go to school to-mor—" Here the angel of sleep came along, and, putting his hand on the eyes of a tired boy, closed them and drowned in sweet oblivion all his school anxieties. It rained through the night. It rained all the next day. The tide, too, was unusually high. It rolled over the wharves, swept up the shipyards, and even ventured into the yard back of Silas Trefethen's store, floating away a hencoop with its squawking tenants.

"It beats all!" said Simes Badger. "The oldest person round here never saw such a tide."

The Up-the-Ladder Club did the tide the honor of making it a call in a body, and from the rear of Silas Trefethen's store watched the swollen current beyond the yard.

"Let's go down to the beach and see the waves to-morrow. It's Saturday, you know, and the waves pile up tremendous in a storm. Who's for it!" inquired Sid Waters. There was not a White Shield present who was unwilling to go. Some of them, however, went sooner than they expected.

Toward the morning of the next day, Will Somers was aroused by the ringing of a bell. He opened his ears, opened his eyes, and then he sprang out of bed.

"Fire!" he said. "Fire!"

He rushed to a window, threw it up, and put his head out into the black storm, through which echoed the notes of the bell of old St. John's. They made such an impression it seemed as if they must be living things out in the darkness walking. So strange, so unreal was this, it was a relief to hear the approaching footsteps of somebody who was actually "flesh and blood."

"Where's the fire?" asked Will.

"Fire!" said the man, walking leisurely along. "I should think any booby might know this is not the night for a fire, when things are so wet; but it is the night for a wreck, and the feller pullin' that bell tells me there is one off Gull's P'int."

“Is it? I am going, then, and I should think any one but a booby would be going in that direction,” retorted Will, noticing that the man was not moving toward the quarter where the wreck was. The stranger muttered something about knowing his own business best, while Will pulled in his head and slammed down the window.

“Charlie!” he said, stepping into the boy’s little chamber after lighting a lamp.

“What is it?” asked Charlie, winking his eyes at the blinding glare of the light.

“Do you want to go with me?”

“Go where?”

“To see a wreck.”

“O yes! Just wait a minute and let me ask Aunt Stanshy.”

He groped his way to his aunt’s bedroom.

“Aunt Stanshy, may I go with Will?”

In his eagerness he forgot to mention the object of this midnight expedition. Aunt Stanshy was not thoroughly awake, for the angel of sleep visiting Charlie had touched her eyes also. If awake, she might not have granted the request. The idea went confusedly through her brain that Charlie wanted to sleep with Will.

“Y-e-s,” she murmured, drowsily, and then the angel of sleep had her fully again under his control. Charlie stole down into Will’s room, his clothes on his arm.

“Now, dress quick as you can. Have you an overcoat?”

“Yes, but it is up in Aunt Stanshy’s closet.”

“We don’t want to disturb her again. Here, you put on the cape of my cloak and fold it about you.”

Charlie was proud to be thus enveloped. Will then completed his dressing, and looked like a Cape Codder just arrived from a fishing-smack. He took his young companion by the hand and off they started.

“Who’s that?” asked Will, as they turned from Water Street into Beach Street.

“That boy in the door where there’s a light? Why, that is Tony! He’s up. Tony, that you?” sang out Charlie.

“Yes! You going down to the beach?” said Tony, standing in the lighted door-way of a low-roofed house.

“Yes.”

“I heard the bell and got up, and one of the neighbors came and told us it was a wreck, and Mr. Grimes said I might go if I could go with somebody.”

“Come along,” said Will. “Tell him I will take care of you.”

Tony went eagerly back. He prepared for the trip, and then came out to join Will and Charlie.

“Now, boys, take hold of my hand and let’s put,” said Will.

They accordingly “put.”

“Isn’t this good fun, Tony.”

“Yes, Charlie, splendid.”

It was such good fun that Charlie thought he was willing to be a sailor on board that wreck even. He changed his mind, however, in a short time. Beach Street led down to a road that was called “Back Road.” This took as many turns as it pleased, and after a quarter of a mile struck the low, level marshes. Traversing the marshes, the road led Will and his companions up to the yellow hammocks, at whose base the breakers were discharging their fury in a terrible bombardment of the land. The road wound through the hummocks, and then the party stood upon the beach. It was a cold, ugly atmosphere, pierced by the missiles of the storm, while the surf crashed on the sand in one long, fierce, unearthly roar. People from the town were now gathering on the beach, some of them carrying lanterns that twinkled like stars knocked out of their places by the storm, fallen now to the level of the beach.

But where was the wreck? No sign of it anywhere; only rain, surf, storm, blackness—a wild medley.

“This is a sell!” said a man.

“Wish I was in bed agin,” exclaimed another.

“Let’s catch the feller that rang that church bell,” exclaimed a third, “and duck him in the surf.”

A fourth made a sensible suggestion: “Let’s go down to the life-saving station, and they can probably tell us there.”

A quarter of a mile up the beach was a life-saving station, and a light could be seen winking from one of its windows. Several, including Will and the boys, walked up the beach, past the crashing waves, and reaching the station, pushed open its door on the land-side of the building, and entered. Charlie looked about him with eager curiosity, for it was the first time he had ever been in such a place. The building was of two stories. The larger part of the lower story was taken up by a “boat-room” for various kinds of apparatus for reaching wrecks. Charlie also saw the inside of a kitchen, and Will told him there was a room up stairs for the beds of the men at the station. Charlie and Tony warmed themselves at the brisk fire in the store. The man on duty there did not seem to know any thing about the disaster reported in town, but he talked with Will and Charlie about shipwrecks and storms and efforts at rescuing the wrecked. After a while, Charlie said to Will, “Let’s go out and take a run along the beach, and see what’s going on.”

“Yes,” added Tony, “let’s do it.”

“A run up and down the beach to see what is going on, this stormy night? You are enterprising boys. Well, we will go. Button up your coats snug, though. Fold my cape about you, Charlie. There, you look like a small monk off on a tare. You fixed, Tony? Come, boys,” said Will.

Bang! How the wind slammed the door after them! And how the sea thundered and roared; then roared and thundered again! It seemed as if every throw of surf was heavier than that before, and yet none of this violence and wrath could be seen unless some one chanced to pass carrying a lantern. Then this thing that raged along the sands, this creature, this dragon from the deep, would show an angry whiteness, as if it were the opening of his jaws.

Will and the boys may have tramped a quarter of a mile along the beach, when Will exclaimed, "Hullo, there's a light!"

It was a lively twinkle upon the sands that came nearer and nearer, and then stopped before the party.

"Who's this?" asked a voice, pleasantly.

Charlie lifted up his face toward the shining of this friendly light.

"Bub, is this you down here at this time of night? Don't you know the man who goes fishin' from your Aunt Stanshy's barn?"

"O yes, I know you."

It was the junior member of the new firm, "Tyler & Fisher."

"Are you a patrolman, Mr. Fisher?" asked Will.

"I am at spells, when a man at the station may be sick. You see I can't go fishin' in this storm, and it comes handy to be employed as a substitute at the station. But what are you here for?"

"We came down to find a wreck. Up in town St. John's bell was rung and we were told there was a wreck at Gull Point. At the station, though, where we have been, a man said that he did not know of any."

"I guess I know how that story got up to town. A little fool was down here with a squeaky voice and sharp little eyes, and he wanted to know if there were any wrecks. The fact is we had been looking for sich all day and through the evening and night. There were one or two vessels off the mouth of the harbor as night came on, trying to get in, and, pizen! they could no more get in than my old tarpaulin, and they wouldn't stand a hundredth part of the chance she would. You see, a nor'easter rakes right across the mouth of our harbor and drives off any sail tryin' to get in, and one of two things will happen—either a ship will be swept out to sea or swept on to Gull P'int. Well, that feller said to Joe Danforth—Joe and me were together—'Has there been a wreck?' 'No,' said Joe, 'I think not,' meaning to answer him. But I had said to Joe at that time, or just before that feller asked his question, 'Hadn't we better go to the station and get a bite?' 'Yes,' said Joe, meaning to answer *me*, and that person—whoever it was, grabbed up the answer to me and thought it was for him, and went off accordingly. That is how that bell came to ring. It would be an awful night for a wreck, wouldn't it? Hullo!" exclaimed John Fisher, stopping in his explanation, "What's that? If that aint the crittur hisself!"

As the patrolman turned his face to the sea, the boys looked off in that direction, and they were quick enough to see a rocket exploding in the air, scattering down a shower of tinted stars. This bright constellation faded away into the night, when suddenly up, up into the darkness, shot two vivid lines of fire, parting as they swept higher and higher, exploding in stars till the whole seemed like immense forks

of gold with spreading, jeweled prongs.

“They let go a couple then,” said Will.

“O look, Tony!” cried Charlie.

While the boys were watching the rockets, John Fisher was eagerly handling his Coston light. The design of this is to signal to any wreck, or to warn vessels away from an unsafe shore. John now ignited his light and, holding it up, ran along the beach. His big, burly form wrapped in a coarse, heavy suit, threw an immense shadow on the sands, while the light of his torch so colored the beach that he seemed to be trampling on red snow. The foam of the waves, broken into patches, changed till it became clots of blood. Beyond all, was that wrathful, howling, restless ocean. Away ran John Fisher, swinging his light, flinging out his big boots till he looked like a sea-monster, with unwieldy limbs, plunging through an atmosphere blood-tinged. At the station they had evidently become aware of the real situation of things, for there was a moving of lamps at the windows, then the opening of a door letting out a bright light. As Will and the boys reached the station, they saw the big door in one end of the building swinging back, and out rushed two men pulling a cart. John Fisher here came running up.

“Wreck is down at Gull’s P’int,” he said, “so some one told me, and that agrees with the place where the signals were seen. I guess she is on the nub of the P’int, and our wreck-gun will reach her.”

“What is a wreck-gun?” Charlie wanted to ask, but every body seemed too busy to answer questions.

“It will be morning soon,” exclaimed Will. “I fancy I see a whitish streak now in the east.”

Charlie was not looking at the sky, but, standing on his longest toe, was trying to get a peep into that mysterious cart dragged from the station. A man now stood on the axle and lighted a lamp on a pole. The lamp was inclosed so that the storm could not harm it. Charlie saw a stout reel in the cart, about which went many turns of a stout rope. Then there was the wreck-gun. There were also shovels and various apparatus.

“Now, boys,” shouted Captain Peters, who had charge of the station, “all hands for the P’int!”

That slow-moving, clumsy man that Charlie had seen in the station when he called, was now changed to a very nimble-footed being, and his comrades were as active. Away they went, threatening to leave Charlie and Tony far behind, but the boys grabbed Will by the hand and rapidly as possible pushed on after the enterprising apothecary.

“Getting to be morning,” shouted Will. While the shadows were still thick on the beach, over in the east was a grayish, uncertain light. There were occasional discharges of rockets from the vessel in distress.

“O dear!” said the breathless Charlie.

“I can’t hold out much longer,” thought Tony.

Will, though, pushed stoutly on, and it was manifest that a wreck excited him as much as a fire. The distance to Gull Point from the station was at least a mile and a half. The point itself was a rocky stretch into the sea measuring about six hundred feet in length. Day was creeping over the water; finally, a thin, sullen light, revealing a wild, ghostly tumult of waves. The surf that ordinarily broke near the shore

seemed to whiten the water as far as the eye could reach. It was the angriest tumult of foam possible, as if the frothing of millions of enraged creatures of the sea.

“Ah, there she is!” shouted John Fisher, as the cart neared the shore-end of the point.

“We will get her!” screamed Charlie, as he reached the cart. The men laughed.

“It’s a three-masted schooner,” bawled Captain Peters, “and she’s where the life-boat can’t reach her, but our wreck-gun will. That craft has keeled over on Deep Rock, near the very P’int itself! Get out the gun!”

The men now took from the cart a small cannon, then a mass of rope, and then a rope of larger size.

“Take out that life-car, too!” shouted Captain Peters. Charlie watched every thing that was done with an intense curiosity. He sat down on the cannon to rest his short, fat legs.

“Sonny!” shouted John Fisher—the roar of the surf compelled every one to shout—“do you know what we are up to?”

Charlie shook his head.

“Well, that cannon is loaded, and—”

Up sprang Charlie. He did not want a seat like that.

“And the shot has a light but strong line hitched to it. A man will p’int the gun so that when the shot goes out it will fall over the vessel, and carry the line with it. Now watch him.”

Charlie watched. “Bang!” went the gun. Away went the shot, the long rope wriggling after it.

“Good!” cried John.

“What is good?” bawled Charlie.

“A good shot! The man sent the shot so that the rope has fallen across the vessel, I think.”

Others thought so, too, and a man quickly shouted, “They’re pulling on it! Hurrah!”

Then they all cheered. The crew on board the wreck were steadily drawing the rope through the water. Charlie looked intently with both eyes, and he wished that his ears also could be eyes for a little while.

“Come here!” shouted John to Charlie, and he led the boy around to a coil of rope, one end of which was attached to the line going through the water.

“See there, Bub! There is a block, what they call a single pulley-block, and this stouter rope is doubled through it. It will soon go to the wreck.”

Another explanation was then bawled at Charlie, who now wished his eyes were ears, so anxious was he to hear.

“Look at that block, and then there is what they call a tally-board, and it has some printed directions on it, telling the men on the wreck just what to do. Only *watch!*” he shouted.

The stouter rope had now started on its journey through the waters, and was taken on board the wreck.

“There,” said John, “you noticed the rope was doubled through that block?”

Charlie nodded assent.

“That gives us what we call an endless line—*line*. O, those noisy waves! The line runs through the block, I told you, which must have got to the wreck by this time. Here, you see, one end is made fast. At the wreck the tally-board told them just where to hitch it. Now watch! They are hitching on to the line a bigger one yet, and that will be hauled out to the schooner, and fastened *above* the other line. A second tally-board tells them what to do.”

Here John stopped to lay in a fresh stock of breath. Charlie saw that two of the men on shore had been rigging tackles to long supports planted firmly in the sand.

“Those tackles,” resumed John, “help us straighten that second line till it is above the breakers, and—now watch ’em—here comes the life-car, a sort of box, you see, that we suspend from the upper rope, and at the same time it is hitched to the lower or endless line. Now all we have got to do is to pull on that endless line, and the life-car, sliding along the upper rope, will spin right out to the vessel, and—here she goes!”

The life-car was moving along the upper line bound for the wreck. One or two halts occurred on the way, but the venture was ultimately successful, and Charlie saw the life-car as the crew of the wreck eagerly seized it.

“She’s coming back!” he cried.

Captain Peters shouted, “Here she comes, my hearties! Pull away on the whip!”

This was a title for the endless line.

“Suthin’ in that life-car!” sang out one of the men.

“Not so very much, I guess,” said another. “She runs sort of light.”

How the breakers tried to reach the car! Several times the sea threw itself spitefully, violently upward. One breaker seemed to make a spring for the car, wetting it with a cloud of spray.

“A real vixen, aint it?” said John. “It can’t harm any thing. But who is that in the car? A small cargo.”

It was not a large one certainly. One man doubted if any thing were there.

Nearer and nearer came the car, riding safely over that white, yeasty sea. It was pulled across the surf, and the outermost man laid his hands on it and pushed it. At the same time a little door in the top slid back, and a boy’s head rose higher and higher in the car, and as it stopped he was helped to get out. He seemed to be in a heap, and his movements were stiff, for his legs were cramped by the cold.

“There!” he screamed, “it’s the last time I ever want to go on that pesky old sea.”

“Wort Wentworth!” shouted Tony, springing forward to meet this returned knight.

“Hullo, Tony! Hullo, Charlie!”

“This *you*?” asked Charlie.

“Yes, it’s me just about drowned. They let me come alone. The others were not quite ready.”

“Haven’t you been through a lot?” asked Tony.

“More than I want to see again.”

“How many are on board the ‘White Shield?’”

“I feared it was she when I laid my eyes on her,” said Captain Peters.

“Five in the crew, my father, and one passenger.”

“Dis a s’prise,” said a new-comer, looking at Wort. It was Juggie.

“It *is* a surprise,” was Wort’s reply. “Catch me going again.”

“You’d rather be de keeper ob de great seal.”

“Yes, indeed!”

Among the arrivals by the life-car was the skipper of the “White Shield,” and there was also a man wrapped in a cloak.

“He aint a sailor,” said one of the station-hands, criticising the dress of the man in the cloak.

“It is the passenger,” said Wort.

He was a man still young, and his clothes had an outlandish cut. He walked up the beach, the four young knights having preceded him. Then he halted, and gave a look at the boys. The boys halted, and gave a look at him. Suddenly Tony bounded away, and bounded into the man’s arms.

What happened afterward, Charlie told Aunt Stanshy at the breakfast-table.

“Aunt Stanshy, guess what happened at the beach to Tony.”

“I don’t know, I am sure. I give it up.”

“Well, the ‘White Shield’ had a passenger, and when he got on the beach, the first thing we knew, Tony Blanco went rushing at him, and the man put his arms round Tony, and then Tony came pulling him along to us, and said, ‘It’s my father, boys!’ And he was real pleasant, and said he’d send as some oranges.”

“Tony’s father? How did he turn up? I thought he was in Italy.”

“Well, you see, aunty, he was in a ship coming from Italy, and the ship, I b’lieve, had a storm and was sinking when the ‘White Shield’ and another vessel came along, and they two took the people from Tony’s father’s ship. But that other vessel, you know, was going right to Italy, and so all but Tony’s father went back in her, because you know they were Italian sailors. Tony’s father, though, was a passenger, and he wanted to come to America, and so he got aboard the ‘White Shield’ and came here, right where Tony was; and, wasn’t that funny?”

“I should think it was.”

“He and Tony were real glad to see one another. Juggie called it, aunty, ‘a second s’prise.’”

The “s’prises,” though, were not all over. Charlie had a nap after breakfast, and finishing it, went to a window to see how the outside world looked. He stayed there only a minute, and then rushed to the head of the stairs leading down cellar, calling:

“Aunt Stanshy! Aunt Stanshy, come quick, do! There goes Tony’s father!”

Aunt Stanshy was down cellar fishing for pork in a capacious barrel. She dropped the piece for which she had successfully angled, and rushed to the stairs as if a whirlwind was after her. Breathless, she arrived at Charlie’s window.

“There, aunty, that is he!”

“What, Mr. Walton?”

“No, Mr. Walton is coming down the lane; but don’t you see that other man going up the lane?”

“O, yes, I see now.”

“Well, that is him.”

“But what are those two men doing? If they aint shaking hands! and now they’ve got their arms round one another, and there they go walking off together! It is the queerest proceeding! Why, they act as if they had known one another a long time!”

Aunt Stanshy had too much of the woman in her to let the matter drop there.

She said to herself, “If any one knows about this thing, it is Miss Persnips. I’ll clap on my bonnet and go up there.”

Miss Persnips generally had a bag full of news, and it was the only thing in the store for which she did not make a charge. Its mouth was hospitably open to all comers, and the distribution of its contents had an effect on her custom like the giving out of a chromo as a present. This morning, though, while the assortment in the bag was quite full and varied, it had nothing on the above subject. Aunt Stanshy went home disappointed. If she could have gone to Mr. Walton’s she would have witnessed something of interest.

Mr. Walton was leading the stranger into his house, when he said, “Stop a moment in the parlor and I will go into the sitting-room and prepare her.”

“All right.”

“Mother,” said Mr. Walton, stepping into the sitting-room, “would you like to see an old friend this morning? You feel comfortable?”

“O yes; bring him in.”

“Shall I tell you who it is?”

“No, let me have the surprise.”

Her son led the stranger in.

“Why, Fred!” exclaimed Mrs. Walton.

The man dropped on his knees, and put his head in her lap. And this was all that the mother did—she stroked his head with her hands, saying: “Why, Fred! Fred! my poor boy!”

That was the way the long-absent son came home.

Fred Walton had been a wayward young man, finally going to Italy in a sailing-vessel, engaging to do any work for the sake of his passage.

In Italy, he took the name of Blanco, purposing to build up a new character on the basis of a new name. The new character he needed, but his old name would have served him. He there married a young Italian lady who had met his older brother in his travels and was an object of deep interest to him, but he had relinquished her to the younger brother. Their married home was a pretty one, and a view of it Fred sent to his family in America. It was a picture of this home, taken at another season of the year, and from a different point of view, that his mother and brother had noticed, and yet failed to identify, when Tony’s pictures were inspected. Fred’s wife dying, leaving a little boy, Antonio, four years old, Fred wished to return to America, but concluded to remain in Italy, educating his boy in English as well as Italian. A year before this story opens, he wrote his mother that he was about to sail for a port in Algeria. It was a wild business enterprise, and he sent his little boy, Antonio, with friends—also named Blanco—to New York, expecting soon to follow them, and desiring in the meantime to make sure of a good home for Antonio. During his absence in Africa he wrote home, but his letters miscarried. Nothing had been heard since the day he sailed from Italy, and his old mother anxiously thought of him on stormy nights, fearing lest he had gone down into the wide grave of the sea. The Blanco family that cared for Tony in New York, obliged to leave the city by the failure of their work, came to Seamount to find it there awhile. When they returned to New York, as Tony was attached to Seamount, they left him with the Badger family for awhile. They were waiting to hear from Tony’s father about his plans for the boy, when he appeared in an unexpected fashion to look directly after Tony, and visit also his relatives; but they and the club were sorry to know that, contrary to his wishes, he must go back to Italy, and take Tony with him.

“Ah, now I understand about that boy,” said Mr. Walton, to his mother; “why he looked familiar, and if the people who brought him had had a different name, I might have looked into it, but I thought they must be relatives. Of course, not hearing from Fred, we had no thought that his child was here.”

And the mother said, “I hope my boy will now take his true name, and come again soon, and bring

Antonio Walton with him.”

But would he and Tony ever come again? Tony came to bid good-bye to Charlie, and said, very soberly and touchingly, “We’d better kiss each other, for I feel that we shall never see each other again. Good-bye, for we shall never see each other any more.”

It was a very pathetic speech, and Charlie said, mournfully, as he kissed him, “Well, good-bye, Tony.”

Tony and his father went to Italy in a bark that left Seamount bound for the Mediterranean. Charlie watched the vessel from the barn window.

Like a gull that flying afar sinks lower and then disappears behind some rising billow, so the sails of the bark, receding farther and farther, vanished behind that blue rim of the horizon that rises up to check our sight and hide away the vessels that may hold our dearest hopes.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ROUND HIGHER UP.

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Miss Barry was talking to her boys one Sunday; “Boys, you have had an Up-the-Ladder Club this past year, and I hope it has not been simply a play-ladder, but while playing you have also done something else. I think you have done a good work for temperance, and you have been kind to another in trouble. I think you have tried to keep your badge clean, and not stain it by bad words. You have tried to get hold of some useful knowledge through your club. All that is excellent as far as it goes. But I am thinking, while you are on this ladder, whether there may not be a round you haven’t touched, and yet one you ought to put your foot on. Between this time and next Sunday, please think what that other round may be, the round higher up.”

The boys looked sober, but no one made a reply.

“The round higher up,” Charlie would sometimes say to himself during the week.

Sometimes in the midst of his play and his studies, that thought would visit him, “the round higher up.” It came to him in his dreams. Looking up, he saw a silver ladder and it stretched above him, reaching at last a beautiful palace. Over the palace, flashed out, in letters of gold, the words, “God’s Palace.” But what was it Charlie saw not far from this ladder? Another, but O, so mean and little! Charlie knew it.

“My ladder!” he shouted. “Let me see how many rounds are there!”

“I think there is room for a round higher up,” said a voice. “That, as it is, wont touch God’s Palace.”

Startled by the sound Charlie awoke.

The next Sunday Miss Barry said: “Boys, I don’t think I need ask about the round higher up which your ladder needs. You understand me, and I want you to put it in. We never can climb very high, unless our life is pure and lovely and noble. It must be like Christ’s life, and filled with the beautiful thoughts and purposes he had. That is the round higher up we need.”

These words stirred Charlie still more deeply. He thought about that round higher up. If he could only put it into his ladder and get his feet on it! One night he went to his little bedroom, thinking still about the round higher up. He could lie in bed and look up to the white, silver stars that, like ladder-rounds, seemed to stretch across the sky in lines going higher and higher. If he only had rounds by which he could climb as high as they, his ladder would be tall enough. But how find and where get “the round higher up?” Once more he dreamed and he was looking again at a ladder that starting on the ground stretched up a little way and then suddenly stopped.

“My ladder!” exclaimed Charlie. Then it seemed to him as if above his ladder he saw a bright, beautiful, silver round, but it was up so high he could not reach it! Looking at it, longing to plant his feet upon it, some one seemed to approach Charlie whom he immediately knew, because he resembled pictures in the old family Bible at Aunt Stanshy’s. He had a shepherd’s crook in his hand, and there was a crown of thorns on his head.

“That’s the Good Shepherd,” thought Charlie.

“You can’t reach that round. Let me help you,” said the Good Shepherd. He laid down his crook and lifted Charlie at once. Then the beauty of the dream, its light, its ladder, the Good Shepherd, seemed to vanish, slowly though, even as the stars die away out of the early morning sky. Charley knew what it all meant. When he awoke and thought it over, he knelt by his bed and he prayed to the Saviour. He told him that he wanted to lead that better life, and would he not lift a little fellow where he could not climb himself? And a Saviour’s arms, ever waiting to raise us all, were lowered for Charlie’s help, and they lifted him to the “round higher up.”

Is it not time that we all looked upward, beseeching God to forgive us, receive us, and make us his forever? Forget not “the round higher up,” and through the strength of God, may it become yours! This very day may your feet be planted on it!

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