ALGER HORATIO JR.

CHARLIE CODMAN'S CRUISE

Horatio Alger
Charlie Codman's Cruise

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Charlie Codman's Cruise / A Story for Boys:

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Jr. Horatio Alger
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Cruise / A Story for Boys

PREFACE

In deference to the expressed wishes of some of his young friends, the author has essayed a story of the sea, and now presents "Charlie Codman's Cruise," as the third volume of the Campaign Series. It will be found more adventurous than its predecessors, and the trials which Charlie is called upon to encounter are of a severer character than befell Frank Frost or Paul Prescott. But it will be found that they were met with the same manly spirit, and a like determination to be faithful to duty at all hazards.

Though not wholly a stranger to the sea, the author is quite aware of the blunders to which a landsman is exposed in treating of matters and a mode of life which, at the best, he must comprehend but imperfectly, and has endeavored to avoid, as far as possible, professional technicalities, as not essential to the interest of the story.

With these few words he submits the present volume to his young readers, hoping for it a welcome even more generous than

has been accorded to "Frank's Campaign" and "Paul Prescott's Charge."

I.
CHARLIE AND THE MISER

Charlie Codman turned out of Washington into Bedford Street just as the clock in the Old South steeple struck two. He was about fourteen, a handsome, well-made boy, with a bright eye and a manly expression. But he was poor. That was evident enough from his clothes, which, though neat and free from dust, were patched in several places. He had a small roll of daily papers under his arm, the remains of his stock in trade, which he had been unable wholly to dispose of.

Some of my readers may know that the Latin School and English High School are kept in the same building. At two o'clock both are dismissed. Charlie had scarcely passed the school-house when a crowd of boys issued from the school-yard, and he heard his name called from behind. Looking back he recognized a boy somewhat smaller than himself, with whom he had formed an acquaintance some time before.

"Where are you bound, Charlie?" asked Edwin Banks.

"I'm going home now."

"What luck have you had this morning?"

"Not much. I've got four papers left over, and that will take away about all my profits."

"What a pity you are poor, Charlie. I wish you could come to

school with us."

"So do I, Eddie. I'd give a good deal to get an education, but I feel that I ought to help mother."

"Why won't you come some time, and see us, Charlie? Clare and myself would be very glad to see you at any time."

"I should like to go," said Charlie, "but I don't look fit."

"Oh, never mind about your clothes. I like you just as well as if you were dressed in style."

"Perhaps I'll come some time," said Charlie. "I'd invite you to come and see me, but we live in a poor place."

"Just as if I should care for that. I will come whenever I get an invitation."

"Then come next Saturday afternoon. I will be waiting for you as you come out of school."

Charlie little thought where he would be when Saturday came.

Shortly after the boys separated, and Charlie's attention was arrested by the sight of an old man with a shambling gait, who was bending over and anxiously searching for something on the sidewalk. Charlie recognized him at once as "old Manson, the miser," for this was the name by which he generally went.

Old Peter Manson was not more than fifty-five, but he looked from fifteen to twenty years older. If his body had been properly cared for, it would have been different; but, one by one, its functions had been blunted and destroyed, and it had become old and out of repair. Peter's face was ploughed with wrinkles. His cheeks were thin, and the skin was yellow and hung in folds. His

beard appeared to have received little or no attention for a week, at least, and was now stiff and bristling.

The miser's dress was not very well fitted to his form. It was in the fashion of twenty years before. Grayish pantaloons, patched in divers places with dark cloth by an unskilful hand; a vest from which the buttons had long since departed, and which was looped together by pieces of string, but not closely enough to conceal a dirty and tattered shirt beneath; a coat in the last stages of shabbiness; while over all hung a faded blue cloak, which Peter wore in all weathers. In the sultriest days of August he might have been seen trudging along in this old mantle, which did him the good service of hiding a multitude of holes and patches, while in January he went no warmer clad. There were some who wondered how he could stand the bitter cold of winter with no more adequate covering; but if Peter's body was as tough as his conscience, there was no fear of his suffering.

Charlie paused a moment to see what it was that the old man was hunting for.

"Have you lost anything?" he asked.

"Yes," said Peter, in quavering accents. "See if you can't find it, that's a good boy. Your eyes are better than mine."

"What is it?"

"It is some money, and I—I'm so poor, I can't afford to lose it."

"How much was it?"

"It wasn't much, but I'm so poor I need it."

Charlie espied a cent, lying partially concealed by mud, just beside the curb-stone. He picked it up.

"This isn't what you lost, is it?"

"Yes," said Peter, seizing it eagerly. "You're a good boy to find it. A good boy!"

"Well," thought Charlie, wondering, as the old man hobbled off with his recovered treasure, "I'd rather be poor than care so much for money as that. People say old Peter's worth his thousands. I wonder whether it is so."

Charlie little dreamed how much old Peter was likely to influence his destiny, and how, at his instigation, before a week had passed over his head, he would find himself in a very disagreeable situation.

We must follow Peter.

With his eyes fixed on the ground he shuffled along, making more rapid progress than could have been expected. Occasionally he would stoop down and pick up any little stray object which arrested his attention, even to a crooked pin, which he thrust into his cloak, muttering as he did so, "Save my buying any. I haven't had to buy any pins for more'n ten years, and I don't mean to buy any more while I live. Ha! ha! Folks are *so* extravagant! They buy things they don't need, or that they might pick up, if they'd only take the trouble to keep their eyes open. 'Tisn't so with old Peter. He's too cunning for that. There goes a young fellow dressed up in the fashion. What he's got on must have cost nigh on to a hundred dollars. What dreadful extravagance! Ha! ha! It hasn't cost old

Peter twenty dollars for the last ten years. If he had spent money as some do, he might have been in the poor-house by this time. Ugh! ugh! it costs a dreadful sum to live. If we could only come into the world with natural clothes, like cats, what a deal better it would be. But it costs the most for food. Oh dear! what a dreadful appetite I've got, and I *must* eat. All the money spent for victuals seem thrown away. I've a good mind, sometimes, to go to the poor-house, where it wouldn't cost me anything. What a blessing it would be to eat, if you could only get food for nothing!"

It is very clear that Peter would have been far better off, as far as the comforts of life are concerned, in the city almshouse; but there were some little obstacles in the way of his entering. For instance, it would scarcely have been allowed a public pensioner to go round quarterly to collect his rents,—a thing which Peter would hardly have relinquished.

Reflections upon the cost of living brought to Peter's recollection that he had nothing at home for supper. He accordingly stepped into a baker's shop close at hand.

"Have you got any bread cheap?" he inquired of the baker.

"We intend to sell at moderate prices."

"What do you ask for those loaves?" said the old man, looking wistfully at some fresh loaves piled upon the counter, which had been but a short time out of the oven.

"Five cents apiece," said the baker. "I'll warrant you will find them good. They are made of the best of flour."

"Isn't five cents rather dear?" queried Peter, his natural

appetite struggling with his avarice.

"Dear!" retorted the baker, opening his eyes in astonishment; "why, my good sir, at what price do you expect to buy bread?"

"I've no doubt they're very good," said Peter, hastily; "but have you any stale loaves? I guess they'll be better for me."

"Yes," said the baker, "I believe I have, but they're not as good as the fresh bread."

"How do you sell your stale loaves?" inquired Peter, fumbling in his pocket for some change.

"I sell them for about half price—three cents apiece."

"You may give me one, then; I guess it'll be better for me."

Even Peter was a little ashamed to acknowledge that it was the price alone which influenced his choice.

The baker observed that, notwithstanding his decision, he continued to look wistfully towards the fresh bread. Never having seen old Peter before, he was unacquainted with his character, and judging from his dilapidated appearance that he might be prevented, by actual poverty, from buying the fresh bread, exclaimed with a sudden impulse: "You seem to be poor. If you only want one loaf, I will for this once give you a fresh loaf for three cents—the same price I ask for the stale bread."

"Will you?"

Old Peter's eyes sparkled with eagerness as he said this.

"Poor man!" thought the baker with mistaken compassion; "he must indeed be needy, to be so pleased."

"Yes," he continued, "you shall have a loaf this once for three

cents. Shall I put it in a paper for you?"

Peter nodded.

Meanwhile he was busy fumbling in his pockets for the coins requisite to purchase the loaf. He drew out three battered cents, and deposited them with reluctant hand on the counter. He gazed at them wistfully while the baker carelessly swept them with his hand into the till behind the counter; and then with a sigh of resignation, at parting with the coins, seized the loaf and shambled out into the street.

He put the bundle under his arm, and hastened up the street, his mouth watering in anticipation of the feast which awaited him. Do not laugh, reader,—little as you may regard a fresh loaf of bread, it was indeed a treat to Peter, who was accustomed, from motives of economy, to regale himself upon stale bread.

The baker was congratulating himself upon having done a charitable action, when Peter came back in haste, pale with affright.

"I—I—," he stammered, "must have dropped some money. You haven't picked up any, have you?"

"Not I!" said the baker, carelessly. "If you dropped it here you will find it somewhere on the floor. Stay, I will assist you."

Peter seemed rather disconcerted than otherwise by this offer of assistance, but could not reasonably interpose any objection.

After a very brief search Peter and the baker simultaneously discovered the missing coin. The former pounced upon it, but not before the latter had recognized it as a gold piece.

"Ho, ho!" thought he, in surprise, "my charity is not so well bestowed as I thought. Do you have many such coins?" he asked, meaningly.

"I?" said Peter, hastily, "Oh no! I am very poor. This is all I have, and I expect it will be gone soon,—it costs so much to live!"

"It'll never cost you much," thought the baker, watching the shabby figure of the miser as he receded from the shop.

II.
A MISER'S HOUSEHOLD

Peter Manson owned a small house in an obscure street. It was a weather-beaten tenement of wood, containing some six or eight rooms, all of which, with one exception, were given over to dirt, cobwebs, gloom, and desolation. Peter might readily have let the rooms which he did not require for his own use, but so profound was his distrust of human nature, that not even the prospect of receiving rent for the empty rooms could overcome his apprehension of being robbed by neighbors under the same roof. For Peter trusted not his money to banks or railroads, but wanted to have it directly under his own eye or within his reach. As for investing his gold in the luxuries of life, or even in what were generally considered its absolute necessaries, we have already seen that Peter was no such fool as that. A gold eagle was worth ten times more to him than its equivalent in food or clothing.

With more than his usual alacrity, old Peter Manson, bearing under his cloak the fresh loaf which he had just procured from the baker on such advantageous terms, hastened to his not very inviting home.

Drawing from his pocket a large and rusty door-key, he applied it to the door. It turned in the lock with a creaking sound,

and the door yielding to Peter's push he entered.

The room which he appropriated to his own use was in the second story. It was a large room, of some eighteen feet square, and, as it is hardly necessary to say, was not set off by expensive furniture. The articles which came under this denomination were briefly these,—a cherry table which was minus one leg, whose place had been supplied by a broom handle fitted in its place; three hard wooden chairs of unknown antiquity; an old wash-stand; a rusty stove which Peter had picked up cheap at an auction, after finding that a stove burned out less fuel than a fireplace; a few articles of crockery of different patterns, some cracked and broken; a few tin dishes, such as Peter found essential in his cooking; and a low truckle bedstead with a scanty supply of bedclothes.

Into this desolate home Peter entered.

There was an ember or two left in the stove, which the old man contrived, by hard blowing, to kindle into life. On these he placed a few sticks, part of which he had picked up in the street early in the morning, and soon there was a little show of fire, over which the miser spread his hands greedily as if to monopolize what little heat might proceed therefrom. He looked wistfully at the pile of wood remaining, but prudence withheld him from putting on any more.

"Everything costs money," he muttered to himself. "Three times a day I have to eat, and that costs a sight. Why couldn't we get along with eating once a day? That would save two thirds.

Then there's fire. That costs money, too. Why isn't it always summer? Then we shouldn't need any except to cook by. It seems a sin to throw away good, bright, precious gold on what is going to be burnt up and float away in smoke. One might almost as well throw it into the river at once. Ugh! only to think of what it would cost if I couldn't pick up some sticks in the street. There was a little girl picking up some this morning when I was out. If it hadn't been for her, I should have got more. What business had she to come there, I should like to know?"

"Ugh, ugh!"

The blaze was dying out, and Peter was obliged, against his will, to put on a fresh supply of fuel.

By this time the miser's appetite began to assert itself, and rising from his crouching position over the fire he walked to the table on which he had deposited his loaf of bread. With an old jack-knife he carefully cut the loaf into two equal parts. One of these he put back into the closet. From the same place he also brought out a sausage, and placing it over the fire contrived to cook it after a fashion. Taking it off he placed it on a plate, and seated himself on a chair by the table.

It was long since the old man, accustomed to stale bread,—because he found it cheaper,—had tasted anything so delicious. No alderman ever smacked his lips over the most exquisite turtle soup with greater relish than Peter Manson over his banquet.

"It is very good," he muttered, with a sigh of satisfaction. "I don't fare so well every day. If it hadn't been for that unlucky

piece of gold, perhaps the baker would have let me had another loaf at the same price."

He soon despatched the half loaf which he allotted to his evening meal.

"I think I could eat the other half," he said, with unsatisfied hunger; "but I must save that for breakfast. It is hurtful to eat too much. Besides, here is my sausage."

The sausage was rather burned than cooked, but Peter was neither nice nor fastidious. He did not eat the whole of the sausage, however, but reserved one half of this, too, for breakfast, though it proved so acceptable to his palate that he came near yielding to the temptation of eating the whole. But prudence, or rather avarice, prevailed, and shaking his head with renewed determination, he carried it to the closet and placed it on the shelf.

Between seven and eight o'clock Peter prepared to go to bed, partly because this would enable him to dispense with a fire, the cost of which he considered so ruinous. He had but just commenced his preparations for bed when a loud knock was heard at the street door.

At the first sound of the knocking Peter Manson started in affright. Such a thing had not occurred in his experience for years.

"It's some drunken fellow," thought Peter. "He's mistaken the house. I'll blow out the candle, and then he'll think there's nobody here."

He listened again, in hopes to hear the receding steps of the visitor, but in vain. After a brief interval there came another knock, louder and more imperative than the first.

Peter began to feel a little uneasy.

"Why don't he go?" he muttered, peevishly. "He can't have anything to do with me. Nobody ever comes here. He's mistaken the house."

His reflections were here interrupted by a volley of knocks, each apparently louder than the last.

"Oh dear, what shall I do?" exclaimed the miser with a ludicrous mixture of terror and perplexity. "It's some desperate ruffian, I know it is. I wish the police would come. I shall be robbed and murdered."

Peter went to the window and put his head out, hoping to discover something of his troublesome visitor. The noise of opening the window attracted his attention.

"Hilloa!" he shouted. "I thought I'd make you hear some time or other. I began to think you were as deaf as a post, or else had kicked the bucket."

"Who's there?" asked Peter, in a quavering voice.

"Who's there! Come down and see, and don't leave a fellow to hammer away all night at your old rat-trap. Come down, and open the door."

"This ain't the house," said Peter. "You've made a mistake. Nobody ever comes here."

"No more I should think they would, if you always keep 'em

waiting as long as you have me. Come along down, and let me in."

"But I tell you," persisted Peter, who didn't at all like the visitor's manners, "that you've made a mistake. This ain't the house."

"Ain't what house, I'd like to know?"

"It ain't the house you think it is," said the old man, a little puzzled by this question.

"And what house do I think it is? Tell me that, you old–"

Probably the sentence would have been finished in a manner uncomplimentary to Peter, but perhaps, from motives of policy, the stranger suppressed what he had intended to say.

"I don't know," returned Peter, at a loss for a reply, "but there's a mistake somewhere. Nobody comes to see me."

"I shouldn't think they would," muttered the outsider, "but every rule has its exceptions, and somebody's come to see you now."

"You've mistaken the person."

"No, I haven't. Little chance of making a mistake. You're old Peter Manson."

"He *has* come to see me," thought Peter, uneasily; "but it cannot be for any good end. I won't let him in; no, I won't let him in."

"Well what are you going to do about it?" asked his would-be visitor, impatiently.

"It's too late to see you to-night."

"Fiddlestick!" retorted the other. "It isn't eight yet."

"I'm just going to bed," added Peter, becoming momentarily more uneasy at the man's obstinacy.

"Going to bed at half past seven! Come, now, that's all a joke. You don't take me for a fool!"

"But I am," urged Peter, "I always do. I'm very poor, and can't afford to keep a fire and light going all the evening."

"You poor! Well, may be you are. But that ain't neither here nor there. I have got some important business to see you about, and you must let me in."

"Come to-morrow."

"It's no use; I must see you to-night. So just come down and let me in, or it'll be the worse for you."

"What a dreadful ruffian!" groaned Peter; "I wish the watch would come along, but it never does when it's wanted. Go away, good man," he said, in a wheedling tone. "Go away, and come again to-morrow."

"I tell you I won't go away. I must see you to-night."

Convinced that the man was not to be denied, Peter, groaning with fear, went down, and reluctantly drawing the bolt, admitted the visitor.

III.
THE UNWELCOME VISITOR

Opening the door with trembling hand Peter Manson saw before him a stout man of forty-five, with a complexion bronzed by exposure to the elements.

Short and thick-set, with a half-defiant expression, as if, to use a common phrase, he "feared neither man nor devil," a glance at him served hardly to reassure the apprehensive old man.

The stranger was attired in a suit of coarse clothing, and appeared to possess little education or refinement. He might be a sailor,—there was an indefinable something about him,—a certain air of the sea, that justified the suspicion that he had passed some part of his life, at least, in the realms of Father Neptune.

Peter Manson, holding in his hand the fragment of candle which flickered wildly from the sudden gust of wind which rushed in at the door just opened, stood in silent apprehension, gazing uneasily at his unwelcome visitor.

"Well, shipmate," said the latter, impatiently, "how long are you going to stand staring at me? It makes me feel bashful, not to speak of its not being over and above civil."

"What do you want?" inquired Peter, his alarm a little increased by this speech, making, at the same time, a motion as

if to close the door.

"First and foremost, I should like to be invited in somewhere, where it isn't quite so public as at the street door. My business is of a private nature."

"I don't know you," said the miser, uneasily.

"Well, what's the odds if I know you?" was the careless reply. "Come, push ahead. Where do you live? Up stairs, or down stairs? I want to have a little private talk with you somewhere."

The speaker was about to cross the threshold when Peter stepped in front, as if to intercept him, and said, hurriedly, "Don't come in to-night; to-morrow will do just as well."

"By your leave," said the visitor, coolly, pushing his way in, in spite of the old man's feeble opposition. "I have already told you that I wanted to see you to-night. Didn't you hear me?"

"Thieves!" the old man half ejaculated, but was checked by the other somewhat sternly.

"No, old man, I am not a thief; but if you don't have done with your stupid charges, I may be tempted to verify your good opinion by trying my hand at a little robbery. Now lead the way to your den, wherever it is, if you know what is best for yourself."

The outer door was already closed, and Peter felt that he was at the intruder's mercy. Nevertheless, there was something in this last speech, rough and imperative as it was, that gave him a little feeling of security, so far as he had been led to suspect any designs on his property on the part of his companion.

Without venturing upon any further remonstrance, which, it

was clear, would prove altogether useless, he shuffled up stairs, in obedience to the stranger's command, yet not without casting back over his shoulder a look of apprehension, as if he feared an attack from behind.

His visitor, perceiving this, smiled, as if amused at old Peter's evident alarm.

Arrived at the head of the stairs, Peter opened the door into the apartment appropriated to his own use.

The stranger followed him in, and after a leisurely glance about the room, seated himself with some caution in a chair, which did not look very secure.

Peter placed the flickering candle upon the mantel-piece, and seated himself.

It was long, very long, since a visitor had wakened the echoes of the old house; very long since any human being, save Peter himself, had been seated in that room. The old man could not help feeling it to be a strange thing, so unaccustomed was he to the sight of any other human face there.

"It seems to me," said his visitor, dryly, taking in at a glance all the appointments of the room, "that you don't care much about the luxuries of life."

"I," said Peter, "I'm obliged to live very plain,—very plain, indeed,—because I am so poor."

"Poor or not," said the visitor, "you must afford to have a better fire while I am here. I don't approve of freezing."

He rose without ceremony, and taking half a dozen sticks from

the hearth, deposited them in the stove, which now contained only some burning embers.

"Stay," said Peter, hastily. "Don't put so much on; it's wasteful, and I sha'n't have any left for to-morrow."

"I'll risk that," said the other, carelessly. "At any rate, it's better to be comfortable one day than to shiver through two."

The flame caught the wood, which soon blazed up, diffusing an unusually cheerful glow over the apartment. Peter, in spite of the dismay with which he had at first contemplated the sudden movement on the part of his visitor, and the awful consumption of wood which he knew must ensue, nevertheless appeared to enjoy the increased heat. He drew his chair nearer the stove, and an expression of satisfaction was visible in his face as he spread out both hands to catch a little warmth.

"There, Peter," said the stranger, "I knew you'd like it after it was fairly done. Isn't it worth while to have a good warm fire?"

"If it didn't cost so much," groaned Peter, the one thought intruding.

"Hush, Peter; if what people say be true, and as I am inclined to believe, there's no one better able to afford a good fire than you."

"No one better able!" repeated Peter, at once taking alarm, and lifting up both hands in earnest deprecation, "when I can hardly get enough together to keep from absolute starvation. Oh, it's a strange world, it's a strange world!"

"Well, Peter, some strange people do live in it, to be sure. But

people do say, Peter, that you have a power of money hidden away in this old house somewhere."

Peter started to his feet in affright, then feeling that his movement might lead to suspicion, sank back into his seat, saying, uneasily, "I only wish it were true. People say such strange things. But it's only idle talk, idle talk. They know better."

"You'd be very grateful, I have no doubt, to anybody that would show you where all these treasures are that people talk about, wouldn't you, hey?"

"Ye—Yes," answered Peter Manson, who did not know quite how to understand his companion, whose tone seemed to have a hidden meaning which made him uneasy.

"And will you give me leave to search the house, if I will promise to give you half the gold I find?"

"But you wouldn't find any," answered the miser, hastily.

"Then there would be no harm done. Suppose now I should remove the flooring, just here for instance, don't you think I might possibly find something underneath that would repay me for my search?"

Unconsciously the speaker had hit upon one of Peter's places of deposit. Directly under where he was seated there was a box of gold coins. Accordingly this remark, which seemed to indicate to Peter some knowledge of his hiding-place, filled him with fearful apprehensions.

"No, no," said he, vehemently; "go away, there isn't any there. If that is all you have got to say, go away and leave me to my rest.

I ought to be in bed; it is getting late."

"I *have* something more to say, Peter Manson," returned his companion. "If I had not, I should not have sought you to-night. What I have to say is of great importance to you as you will find. Will you hear it?"

"Go on," muttered Peter, his attention arrested, in spite of his fears, by the stranger's peculiar tone.

"First, then, let me tell you a story. It may be real, it may be only fancy. I won't say anything about that. By the way, Peter, were you ever in the West Indies?"

This question produced a singular effect upon Peter, considering its apparently unimportant character. He started, turned as pale as his ghastly complexion permitted, fixed an anxious glance upon the stranger, who looked as if nothing particular had happened, and said hastily, "No, I was never there. What made you ask?"

"Nothing particular," said the other, carelessly; "if you were never there, no matter. Only it is there that what I am going to tell you happened. But to my story.

"Some twenty years ago there lived in the city of Havana an American gentleman, no matter about his name, who had established himself in business in the city. He had married before he went there, and had a daughter about sixteen years of age. Well, his business flourished. Good luck seemed to attend him in all his ventures, and he seemed likely to accumulate enough to retire upon before many years."

Peter started, and as the story progressed seemed to be internally agitated. A keen glance satisfied his visitor of this; without appearing to notice it, however, he went on,—

"But things don't always turn out as well as we expect. Just when things looked brightest there came a sudden blow, for which the merchant was unprepared. On going to his counting-room one morning, he discovered that his book-keeper had disappeared, and what was worse, had carried off with him the sum of twenty thousand dollars—a large sum, was it not?"

"What is all this to me?" demanded Peter, with sudden fierceness.

"I will tell you by and by," said the stranger, coolly.

"I will take the liberty to put a little more wood into the stove, and then go on with my story."

"I—I'll put some in," said Peter.

He took a small stick about half as large round as his wrist, and opening the stove-door, put it in.

"That'll do to begin with," said the stranger, following it, to Peter's dismay, with half a dozen larger ones. "Now we'll be comfortable."

IV.
A STARTLING QUESTION

While Peter's uneasiness became every moment more marked, his visitor continued,—

"This sad defalcation was the more unfortunate because, on that very day notes to a heavy amount became due. Of course the merchant was unable to pay them. Do you know what was the result?"

"How should I know?" asked Peter, testily, avoiding the gaze of the stranger, and fixing his eyes uneasily upon the fire.

"Of course you couldn't know, I was foolish to think such a thing."

"Then what made you think it?" said Peter, in a petulant tone. "I don't care to hear your story. What has it got to do with me?"

"Don't be in too much of a hurry, and perhaps you will learn quite as soon as you care to. The same result followed, which always does follow when a business man cannot meet his engagements. He failed."

Peter stirred uneasily, but said nothing.

"His character for integrity was such that there were many who would have lent him a helping hand, and carried him safely through his troubles; but he was overwhelmed by the blow, and sank under it. Refusing all offers of assistance, he took to his

bed, and some six months after died."

"And what became of his daughter?" asked Peter, showing a little curiosity for the first time.

"Ha! you seem to be getting interested," exclaimed the other, fixing his keen eyes upon Peter, who seemed confused. "His daughter was beautiful and had already won the heart of a young American, who had little money but a handsome figure and good business habits."

"Did she marry this young Codman?"

"Who told you his name was Codman?" asked Peter's visitor, watching him keenly.

"I—I thought you did," stammered the miser, disconcerted.

"You are mistaken. I have mentioned no name."

"Then I—I must have misunderstood you."

"I dare say," said the other, ironically. "However, we won't dispute that point. Well, this young Codman,—for singularly enough you hit upon the right name, not knowing anything of the circumstances of course,—this young Codman married Isabel."

"Isabel!" repeated the old man. "Her name was–"

Here he paused in sudden confusion, feeling that he was betraying himself by his incautious correction.

"Yes, Peter," said the other with a shrewd smile, "you are right. Her name was not Isabel, but Eleanor. I acknowledge that I was wrong; but it seems to me that, for one who is entirely a stranger to the events I have been describing, you show a wonderful shrewdness in detecting my mistakes."

Peter maintained a confused silence, and wriggled about uneasily, as if the stranger's fixed and watchful gaze disturbed him.

"Humph! well they say that some people have the gift of second sight, and others can see through millstones, and various other wonderful things."

"What has all this to do with me?" asked Peter, crossly, for he felt it necessary to make some demonstration. "It's getting late, and I want to go to bed. Go away, and—and come again to-morrow, if you want to."

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, Peter, which means that I am sure of you now, and perhaps you wouldn't let me in if I should call to-morrow. If you are sleepy I have no objection to your going to bed. I can talk to you as well as if you were sitting up. I will stay here and keep the fire going."

Peter looked at the small pile of wood with a groan, and muttered something about "its being awful extravagant to keep such a fire."

"I believe," said the stranger, "I have not yet told you the name of the defaulted clerk."

Peter said nothing.

"It was Thornton, but his first name was Peter, the same as yours. Singular, isn't it, Peter?"

"I suppose there are a good many Peters in the world," muttered the old man.

"Very likely; though I hope most of them are better than

this Peter Thornton. He got off without being taken, with the twenty thousand dollars in his possession. He was fond of money, and many thought this explained the defalcation. However, there were not wanting others who assigned a different motive. It was said that he had been smitten by the youthful charms of his employer's daughter Eleanor, who did not favor his suit."

Peter shifted uneasily in his chair.

"No one could blame her. In fact it was perfectly preposterous for him to think of mating with her. Did you speak?"

"No!" snarled Peter.

"I thought you said something. I repeat, that she had plenty of reasons for rejecting him. She was just sixteen, and beautiful as she was young, and had no lack of admirers ready to devote themselves to her. As for Peter Thornton, ha! ha! he never could have been very handsome, from all I have heard of him. In the first place, he was forty or more."

"Thirty-eight," muttered Peter, below his breath.

"And his features were irregular, besides being marked with the small-pox, which he had had in early life. He had a long, hooked nose like a bird's beak, an enormous mouth, little sharp gray eyes like a ferret's, and his hair was already mingled with gray. On the whole, he hadn't much beauty to boast of. Did you say anything?"

"No!" snarled Peter, sourly. He was sitting with his elbows on his knees, and his face resting on his hands.

"Beg pardon, I thought you spoke. To add to Peter's charms

of person, his disposition was not the sweetest that ever was. He had a harsh and crabbed manner, which would have led to his discharge if he had not had one saving trait. I will say, to his credit, that he was a capital book-keeper. Of his honesty his employer thought he was well assured, and probably if nothing had occurred of a character to wound Peter's pride, he might have continued faithful to his trust. One day, however, Peter took an opportunity, when he had been calling at the house of his employer on business connected with the counting-room, to declare his love to the young lady, whom he found alone in the drawing-room. You can imagine how much she was amused —why don't you laugh, Peter? You look as glum as if it were *you* that had met with this disappointment. The young lady told him plainly, as soon as she got over her astonishment, that she could give him no encouragement whatever. Perhaps there might have been in her tone something of the aversion which it was natural for her to feel at such a proposition from one so much beneath her. If they had married, it would have been a second case of Beauty and the Beast. Beg pardon, Peter, I believe you said something."

"No!" snarled Peter, fiercely. "Have you got nearly through? Your story is nothing to me—nothing, I say. I want to go to bed. You have kept me up too late already."

"I can't help that, Peter. It took me too long to get in for me to resign readily the pleasure of your society. I say, Peter, what a jolly good fellow you are,—quite a lively companion,—only it

strikes me you might be a little more civil to your company. It isn't exactly polite to keep telling one how anxious you are for him to go.

"As I was saying, when you interrupted me, Eleanor told Peter very decidedly that she could not for an instant entertain his suit. He endeavored to change her determination, being an ardent, impulsive lover, and probably in her impatience she said something which irritated her lover, who went off in a rage. After a while, however, he was foolish enough to open the subject again. Of course she was extremely annoyed at his persistence, and seeing no other way of escaping the persecution, she felt it necessary to acquaint her father with what had transpired. The merchant was naturally indignant at his book-keeper's presumption, and calling him aside one morning threatened to discharge him from his employment unless he should forthwith desist. This was, of course, a great blow to Peter's pride. He had the good sense to say nothing, however, but none the less determined within himself to be revenged upon those who had scorned his advances, as soon as an opportunity offered. I don't know as I blame him. Perhaps I should have done the same under similar circumstances."

There was a trace of agitation upon the pale and wrinkled countenance of the miser.

"This it was," continued the stranger, "taken in connection with Peter's natural cupidity that led to the defalcation I have mentioned. So far as the merchant was concerned his revenge

was completely successful, for he was the means of his ruin and premature death. And now, Peter," he added, suddenly changing his tone, "can you tell me what induced you to change your name from Thornton to Manson?"

"Me!" exclaimed the miser, starting to his feet in consternation, and glaring wildly at the speaker.

V.
THE COMPACT

"Yes," said the stranger, composedly; "I repeat the question, why did you change your name to Manson?"

"What—do—you—mean?" the old man faltered slowly.

"I mean just what I say, and I see you understand me well enough."

"You can't prove it," said Peter, with an uneasy glance at his imperturbable companion.

"Can't I? Perhaps not. I should say the mysterious knowledge you seem to possess of the main incidents in my story would prove something."

"That isn't evidence in a court of law," said Peter, regaining a degree of confidence.

"Perhaps not; but I say, Peter, don't you recognize me?"

The old man scanned his features eagerly, and a sudden look of remembrance satisfied the latter that he was not forgotten.

"I see you do remember me," he said; "I thought you hadn't forgotten John Randall. At any rate he hasn't forgotten you, though twenty years have passed, and I was then but a young man. I used to see you too often about the streets of Havana not to remember that hooked nose, those gray eyes, and (excuse my plainness of speech) that large mouth. Yes, Peter, your features

are impressed upon my memory too indelibly to be effaced."

Peter Manson remembered his companion as one who had had the reputation of being a "wild" young man. He had been placed at school by his father without any profitable result. On his father's death he squandered, in dissipation, the property which came to him, and had since devoted himself to the sea.

"Having settled this little matter of your identity," continued Randall, "I am ready to finish my story. I told you that Eleanor married the young man whose name you remembered so well. He was poor, dependent upon his salary as a clerk, and thanks to you his wife had nothing to hope from her father. They were obliged to live in a very humble way. At length, thinking he could do better here, he removed to Boston, where his early life had been spent."

"To Boston!" muttered Peter.

"The removal took place some six years since. They had three children when they first came here, but two died, leaving only the second, a boy, named Charlie. I should think he might be fourteen years of age. And now, would you like to know if the husband is still living?"

"Is he?" asked Peter, looking up.

"No. He died about a year since, of a fever."

"And—and Eleanor? What of her?"

"For six months past she has been a tenant of yours."

"A tenant of mine!" exclaimed the miser.

"It is even so. She occupies a second-story room in the

tenement-house in–Street."

"And I have met her face to face?"

"I dare say you have. Your tenants are pretty sure to have that pleasure once a month. But doesn't it seem strange that Eleanor Gray, the beautiful daughter of your Havana employer, should after these twenty years turn up in Boston the tenant of her father's book-keeper?"

"Ha! ha!" chuckled the miser, hoarsely, "she isn't so much better off than if she had married old Peter."

"As to being better off," said Randall, "I presume she is better off, though she can't call a hundred dollars her own, than if she were installed mistress of your establishment. Faugh! Poorly as she is obliged to live, it is luxury, compared with your establishment."

He glanced about him with a look of disgust.

"If you don't like it," said Peter, querulously, "there is no use of your staying. It is past my bedtime."

"I shall leave you in a few minutes, Peter, but I want to give you something to think of first. Don't you see that your property is in danger of slipping from your hands?"

"My property in danger!" exclaimed Peter, wildly; "what do you mean; where is the danger?" Then, his voice sinking to its usual whine,—"not that I have any of any consequence, I am poor—very poor."

"Only from what I see I could easily believe it, but I happen to know better."

"Indeed, I am–"

"No more twaddle about poverty," said Randall, decidedly, "it won't go down. I am not so easily deceived as you may imagine. I know perfectly well that you are worth at the very least, thirty thousand dollars."

"Thirty thousand dollars!" exclaimed the miser, raising both hands in astonishment.

"Yes, Peter, and I don't know but I may say forty thousand. Why, it can't be otherwise, with your habits. Twenty years ago you made off with twenty thousand, which has been accumulating ever since. Your personal expenses haven't made very large inroads upon your income, judging from your scarecrow appearance. So much the worse for you. You might have got some good from it. Now it must go to others."

"To others!" exclaimed Peter, turning pale.

"Certainly. You don't think the law gives you whatever you've a mind to steal, do you? Of course there is no doubt that to your tenants, Eleanor and Charlie Codman, belongs this property which you wrongfully hold."

"They sha'n't have it. They never shall have it," said Peter Manson, hastily.

"Well, perhaps the law may have something to say about that."

"My gold!" groaned the miser. "If I lose that I lose everything. It will be my death. Good Mr. Randall, have pity upon me. I am sure you won't say anything that–"

"Will bring you to state's prison," said Randall, coolly.

"They—Eleanor and her son—need never know it."

"Unless I tell them."

"But you won't."

"That depends upon circumstances. How much will you give me to keep the thing secret?"

"What will I give you?"

"Precisely. That is what I have been so long in coming at. You see, Peter, that the secret is worth something. Either I reveal it to the parties interested, in which case I wouldn't give that," snapping his fingers, "for your chance of retaining the property, or I keep silence *if you make it worth my while*."

"Pity me," said the miser, abjectly, sinking on his knees before Randall; "pity me and spare my gold."

"Pity you!" said Randall, contemptuously. "Why didn't you pity your employer? You must make up your mind to pay me my price."

"I am very poor," whined Peter, in his customary phrase, "and I can't pay much."

"Oh yes, Peter," said the other, sarcastically, "I am well aware that you are poor,—wretchedly poor,—and I won't be too hard upon you."

"Thank you—thank you," said Peter, catching at this promise; "I will give you something—a little–"

"How much?" asked Randall, with some curiosity.

"Ten dollars!" said the miser, with the air of a man who named a large sum.

"Ten dollars!" returned Randall, with a laugh of derision. "Ten dollars to secure the peaceable possession of thirty thousand! Old man, you must be mad, or you must think that I am."

"I—I did not mean to offend," said the old man, humbly. "If I double the sum will it satisfy you? I—I will try to raise it, though it will be hard—very hard."

"This is mere trifling, Peter Manson," said his visitor, decidedly. "Twenty dollars! Why I wouldn't have come across the street to get it. No, you will have to elevate your ideas considerably."

"How much do you demand?" said the miser, groaning internally, and fixing his eyes anxiously upon Randall.

"You must not make a fuss when I name the amount."

"Name it," said Peter, in a choking voice.

"One thousand dollars will purchase my silence, and not a dollar less."

Peter sprang from his seat in consternation.

"One thousand dollars! Surely you are not in earnest."

"But I am, though. This is not a subject I care to jest upon."

"One thousand dollars! It will take all I have and leave me a beggar."

"If it should, Peter," said his visitor, composedly, "I will procure you admission to the poor-house, where, if I am not much mistaken you will be better off than in this tumble-down old shanty."

"Has the man no mercy?" groaned Peter, wringing his hands.

"None at all."

"Then," exclaimed the miser, in a sudden fit of desperation, "I won't pay you a cent—not a single cent."

"That is your final determination, is it?"

"Ye—yes," muttered Peter, but less firmly.

"Very well. I will tell you the result. I shall at once go to Eleanor, and inform her of the good fortune which awaits her. No fear but she will pay me a thousand dollars for the intelligence."

"She has no money."

"I will furnish her with money for the lawyers—she can repay me out of your hoards."

Peter groaned.

"Ay, groan away, Peter. You'll have cause enough to groan, by and by. There is one thing you don't seem to consider, that the law will do something more than take away your property. I will come to see you in jail."

He rose to leave the room, but Peter called him back hastily. "We may come to terms yet," he said.

"Then you accede to my terms."

"I will give you five hundred."

"Good-night, Peter. I wish you happy dreams."

"St-stay!" exclaimed Peter, terrified. "I will give eight hundred."

"I am in something of a hurry," said Randall. "I believe I will call on Eleanor. I don't think we can make any arrangement."

"Hold! perhaps I will do as you say."

"Ah! now you are beginning to be reasonable," said Randall, resuming his seat.

"What security can you give me for your silence?"

"I'll tell you what I will do, Peter. You remember I told you Eleanor had a son, a boy of fourteen."

"Yes."

"His mother is quite devoted to him. Indeed, he contributes to her support by selling papers, and by various little jobs. Now, as long as Eleanor lives here you are in danger."

"Yes."

"And if a blow is levelled at her it must be through her boy."

"I see."

"Then I'll tell you of a scheme I have arranged. You must first know that I am mate of a vessel now in port, which is bound for San Francisco. We are to sail in a few days."

"Well?"

"We happen to be in want of a boy to fill up our regular number. Suppose I kidnap Eleanor's boy. Don't you see, that as he is her chief support, she will soon be in difficulties? and this, with her uncertainty about her boy's fate, may rid you of your greatest peril, and the only one of the two who could identify you."

"Excellent, excellent!" chuckled Peter, rubbing his hands; "she shall yet be sorry that she rejected old Peter."

"Am I to understand that you accede to my proposal, then?"

Not without many groans Peter agreed to deliver the sum

mentioned between them, on condition that the boy was secured.

It was striking ten when Randall left the house. His face beamed with exultation.

"I have done a good night's work," he said. "By working on the fears of the old curmudgeon I have made sure of a thousand dollars. He will be lucky if this is the last money I get out of him. He little thinks that I, too, have a revenge to wreak. He is not the only one that has been scornfully rejected by Eleanor Codman. Now to bed, and to-morrow shall see my work commenced."

VI.
CHARLIE AT HOME

The tenement-house owned by Peter Manson was a three-story wooden building, very much in need of paint. It was scarcely likely to be pointed out by any one as one of the architectural ornaments of the city. Years before it had fallen into Peter's hands at a small price, and he had every year since realized from it in the way of rent a sum equal to one half the purchase-money. No one who has lived in a city can help knowing how much more proportionally the poor are compelled to pay for their scanty and insufficient accommodations than the rich, or those in moderate circumstances. No class of property is made to pay a larger percentage than the wretched tenement-houses which seem adapted to furnish as little accommodation as possible to those who are compelled to occupy them.

The tenement-house in which Charlie and his mother lived was no better than the average. It was the home of a large number of persons of various occupations. Seamstresses, mechanics, washer-women, and many others found a home under this one roof.

Mrs. Codman occupied a room on the third floor. As we enter the room it is easy to see what a charm can be thrown around even the humblest place by the presence of refinement and good taste.

All the appointments of the room, indeed, were of the cheapest description. Probably the furniture did not exceed in cost that of the room opposite. Yet there was a considerable difference in the appearance of Mrs. Codman's room and that of Sally Price, who, if she had ever possessed an organ of neatness, had lost it years ago.

The old-fashioned windows were washed as clean as water could make them, so as to admit all the sunshine which could find its way over the tall roof on the opposite side of the street. They were hung with plain chintz curtains, separated in the middle and looped on either side. The floor was quite clean as far as it could be seen. In the centre was spread a floor-cloth some eight feet square, which relieved its bareness. There was a small round table near the window, and a small square work-table of no very costly material, in another part of the room. On this was placed a rose-bush in a flower-pot. It had been given to Charlie by an old gentleman who had taken a fancy to him. In another quarter was a home-made lounge, the work of Charlie's hands. It had originally been a wooden box, given him by a shopkeeper near by. This box had been covered with calico stuffed with cotton, so that it made quite a comfortable seat. It was used besides as a wood-box, its legitimate province, but when the cover was closed it was nevertheless a very respectable article of furniture. There were besides a few plain wooden chairs, and a small rocking-chair for Mrs. Codman. Opening out of the main room was a small bedroom, occupied by the mother, while Charlie had a bed

made up for him at night in the common sitting-room.

A few books—a very few—were piled upon the little table. They were chiefly schoolbooks,—an arithmetic, a geography, and an atlas, over which Charlie would generally spend a portion of every evening, and occasionally a boy's book, lent him by his friend Edwin Bangs, who, together with his brothers, had quite a large juvenile library.

Mrs. Codman is sitting by the window industriously engaged in needle-work, and intent on accomplishing a certain amount before nightfall. She was past thirty-five, yet, in spite of the trials which have left their impress on her brow, she would readily be taken for five years younger. She has drawn her chair to the window to make the most of the rapidly fading daylight. As with swift fingers she plies the glistening needle, and the sun touches her cheek with a beaming glow, we can see that not only has she been beautiful, but is still so.

A hasty step is heard on the stairs, there is a stamping at the door, and in rushes a bright, handsome boy, with rosy cheeks and dark hair.

The mother's face lights up with a bright smile as she turns to her son, the only one she has left to love.

"You're a little later than usual, Charlie, are you not?"

"A little, mother. You see I didn't get a job till late, and then two came together."

"What were they?"

"A gentleman wanted me to take his carpet-bag from the

Maine depot, and I had to carry it away up to Rutland Street."

"Did he go with you?"

"No; he had to go to his counting-room in State Street."

"Was he willing to trust you? Some boys might have made off with the carpet-bag, and he would have never seen it again."

"He thought of that, but he said—and I think he's a real gentleman—that he knew I was honest by my appearance, and he was willing to trust me."

"Quite complimentary, Charlie. How much did he pay you for your trouble?"

"Half a dollar."

"Then you have done a good deal better than I have. I have been working all day, and shall not realize more than twenty-five cents for my labor."

"I wish you didn't have to work at all, mother."

"Thank you, Charlie; but I dare say I am happier for having something to do. I wish I could get better pay for my work. But you haven't told me what the other errand was. You said you had two."

"Yes," said Charlie, "I had just got back from Rutland Street, and had bought two or three evening papers which I was going to try to sell, when a man came up to me, and after looking at me for a minute or two, asked me if I would take a little walk with him. He said he was a stranger in Boston, and didn't know his way about much. He asked me if I had lived here long, and what my name was. He told me he would pay me if I would go

around with him, and point out some of the public buildings. He told me he would pay me at the rate of twenty-five cents an hour for my time. I told him I had one or two papers to dispose of."

"'Never mind about them,' said he, 'I will take them off your hands.'

"'But they are alike,' said I.

"'Never mind,' he answered; so he paid me the full price for two Journals and two Transcripts, and off we went."

"What sort of a person was he?"

"He was a stout man, over forty, and looked to me like a sailor. I shouldn't wonder if he was an officer of some ship."

"Did you like his looks?"

"Why," said Charlie, hesitatingly, "not exactly; not so much as I did of the other gentleman. There was something about his eye which I didn't like. Still he acted up to his agreement, and paid me all he promised."

"How long were you together?"

"About an hour and a half. We walked round the Common and the Public Garden, went into the State House and the Public Library. However, he didn't seem to care much about them. He seemed to take more interest in me, somehow, and asked me a good many questions; whether I had any parents living, and how long I had lived in the city. When I told him you were born in Havana, he said he used to live there himself."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Codman.

"He also told me that he might like to have me go round with

him again, and told me to call to-morrow at the Quincy House, where he is stopping. But, mother, isn't it most time for supper? Here, just let me set the table, if you are busy."

"Very well, Charlie; I shall be glad to have you do so, as I am in a hurry to finish my sewing."

In the evening Charlie read to his mother while she sewed. Neither of them suspected that it was the last evening they would spend together for several months.

VII.
CAPTAIN BRACE

Lying at one of the wharves was a ship of moderate size, evidently fast getting ready for sea. The cargo had all been stowed away, and, notwithstanding the confusion, it was easy even for a landsman to see that the ship was about ready for departure.

The ship was the Bouncing Betsey, commanded by Captain Nathaniel Brace. As to the peculiar name of the vessel, I can give no information whether or not there was a real Bouncing Betsey after whom it was named. The probability however is, that it was a purely ideal name, the sound and alliterative character of which had commended it to the one upon whom rested the selection of a name.

A few words now about Captain Brace, with whom we shall become better acquainted by and by.

He was a short, stout, broad-shouldered man. He was no fresh-water captain, but from the age of thirteen had been tossing about on the ocean. It is my privilege to know many sea captains who do honor to their calling, high-toned, gentlemanly, and intelligent men; not learned in books, but possessing a wide range of general information. I am sorry to say that Captain Brace was not a man of this class. He had little education beyond what was required by his profession, and was utterly lacking in

refinement and courtesy. He was not an amiable man, but rough, stormy, exacting, and dictatorial. The crew under his command he looked upon as so many machines, whose duty it was to obey him with scrupulous exactness, whatever might be the nature of his requisitions. When he got into one of his fits of passion, he would stamp and rave, kicking and striking this way and that with the most reckless disregard of human lives and human feelings. In fact, he was one of those pests of the merchant service, an unfeeling tyrant, who did all in his power to degrade the profession which he had adopted, and add to the hardships which lie in the path of the sailor.

The employers of Captain Brace were far from being aware of the extent to which he carried the severity of his discipline; brutality, indeed, would be the more appropriate word. They supposed him to be a strict commander, who liked to preserve a proper subordination in those under his command, and this they were disposed to commend rather than to complain of, more especially as the captain was master of his profession, and had usually made quick and profitable voyages. This, as may be supposed, was enough to cover a great many defects in the eyes of those whose pecuniary interest he subserved, even if the captain had not been shrewd enough to conceal his more disagreeable traits when on shore, under an affectation of bluff frankness.

There was a time when there were many captains in the service no better than the one we have just sketched, but both in the naval and merchant service there has undoubtedly been a great

improvement within a few years.

Without dwelling further on the personal characteristics of Captain Brace, with whom we shall have abundant opportunity to become acquainted, since we purpose going to sea with him on his approaching voyage, we introduce him pacing the deck of his vessel with a short black pipe in his mouth, on the very morning he intends to sail.

"Where is Mr. Randall? has he come on board?" he inquired, turning to the second mate.

"No, sir; I have not seen him this morning," was the reply.

"When he comes on board tell him I wish to see him immediately."

"Very well, sir."

The captain went to his cabin, and about five minutes later the individual after whom he inquired came aboard. We recognize in him an old acquaintance; no other than the nocturnal visitor who excited such fearful apprehensions in the mind of old Peter Manson the miser.

"Where is Captain Brace, Mr. Bigelow?" he inquired of the second mate.

"In the cabin, Mr. Randall. He wishes to see you."

"And I wish to see him, so we can suit each other's convenience. How long since did he ask for me?"

"Only two or three minutes. He has just gone below."

"Then he hasn't had long to wait."

With these words he hastened to the cabin, where he found

the captain waiting for him.

The subject on which the captain wished to see his first mate was purely of a professional and technical character, and will not be likely to interest the reader, and so will be passed over.

When this preliminary matter was disposed of, Randall, with a little hesitation, remarked: "I have a little favor to ask of you, Captain Brace."

"Very well, sir; let me know what it is, and if I can conveniently grant it I will."

"The boy who had engaged to go with us has backed out, having heard some ridiculous stories about your severity and–"

The captain's brow grew dark with anger as he said:

"The young rascal! I should like to overhaul him! I'd show him what it is to see service!"

There is very little doubt that the captain would have kept his word.

Randall took care not to inform his superior officer that he had privately communicated to the mother of the boy intelligence of his severity, not from any motives of humanity, but simply because his going would have interfered with his own plans in respect to Charlie.

"We shall not have much time to hunt up a boy if we sail at three o'clock," said the captain. "I don't see but we must go without one."

"I think I can supply you with one, Captain Brace."

"Ha! who is it?"

"It's a nephew of mine, and the favor I spoke of was that you should take him in place of the boy we have missed of."

"Humph!" said the captain, "there is one objection I have to taking relations of the officers. You are expected to be tender of them, and not order them about as roughly as the rest."

"There won't be any trouble of that sort in this case, Captain Brace, you may be very sure," said the mate. "Although the boy is my nephew I don't feel any very extraordinary affection for him."

"I should think not," said the captain, with a grim smile, "from your efforts to get him a place on board this ship. You're not any more gentle with boys than I am."

"The fact is, Captain Brace," said Randall, with a smile which evinced a thorough understanding of the captain's meaning; "the fact is, the boy is unruly, and they can't do much for him at home, and I thought it might be well for him to try a voyage or two, *for the benefit of his health*!"

The mate smiled, and as it was such a joke as the captain could appreciate, he smiled too.

"Very well, Mr. Randall; if such are your views I have no objection to his coming on board."

"I had fears," continued the mate, "that his unruly temper would interfere with his usefulness at home. I felt pretty sure we could soon cure him of that."

"*Kill or cure*, that is my motto," said the captain.

"Sometimes both," thought Randall, remembering one boy in a previous voyage who had languished and died under the cruel

treatment he experienced on board.

"Does the boy know he is to go with us?" inquired the captain.

"Bless you, no; not he! He'd make a fuss if he did."

"How do you intend to get him on board, then?"

"I shall invite him to come and see the vessel, and when he is down below I can take care that he stays there till we are fairly at sea."

"A good plan. What is the youngster's name, Mr. Randall?"

"Jack Randall; named after me."

"Humph! hope he'll do credit to the name," said the captain, grimly. "I leave in your hands all the steps necessary to securing him. Remember, if you please, that we shall sail at three."

"I will be on board before that time, sir, and bring my nephew with me."

"Very well, sir."

Of course the reader has conjectured that the Jack Randall, the mate's nephew, spoken of above, is no other than our young hero, Charlie Codman.

Poor boy! little does he dream of the plot that is being formed against him.

VIII.
THE BLUE CHEST

On leaving the Bouncing Betsey, Mr. John Randall, the estimable mate of that vessel, bent his steps towards a shop devoted to sailors' clothing ready-made, with a large variety of other articles such as seamen are accustomed to require.

It was a shop of very good dimensions, but low studded and rather dark, the windows, which were few, being in part covered up by articles hung in front of them.

The proprietor of this establishment was Moses Mellen, a little Jew, with a countenance clearly indicating his Israelitish descent. His small black eyes sparkled with the greed of gain, and he had a long, hooked nose like the beak of a bird, which would not have been considered too small an appendage for a face of twice the size. He had one qualification for a successful trader—he seldom or never forgot a face which he had once seen.

Rubbing his hands with a great show of cordiality, and with his face wreathed in smiles, the instant he espied Randall he hastened to meet him.

"Delighted to see you, Mr. Randall," he exclaimed; "perhaps I ought to say Captain Randall."

"Not yet."

"Ah well, that will come soon. I hope you have had a

prosperous voyage."

"Tolerably so, Mr. Mellen."

"Have you just arrived in the city, or have you been here for some time?"

"Three weeks only, and now I am off again. We sailors don't have a chance to stop long on dry land, Mr. Mellen."

"Not if they are such capital sailors as my friend, Mr. Randall. But where are you bound this time?"

"Probably to Valparaiso."

"Anywhere else?"

"Perhaps so. We may go to the Indies or Sandwich Islands before we return."

"A long voyage,—you will need to be fitted out before you start,—don't you want something in my line? I sha'n't want much profit out of an old friend like you."

This, by the way, was what Moses said to pretty much all his customers.

"I shall want a few things. I will pick them out now."

"This way, then."

Randall followed the proprietor to the back of the store, where he selected a variety of articles, which he ordered sent on board the Bouncing Betsey immediately.

"Now," said the mate, after his own purchases were completed, "I shall require a small outfit for a boy who is going out with us."

"If you had brought him with you we could have furnished

him at short order."

"There was one little difficulty in the way of my doing that."

"Eh?"

"He doesn't know he is going."

"Ah ha!" said the Jewish dealer, putting one scraggy finger to the side of his nose with a knowing look; "that's it, is it?"

"I see you comprehend. Now tell me what shall we do about fitting him?"

"If I could only see him–"

"You could judge by your eye what would be likely to fit him. Is that what you would say?"

"Precisely."

"And how long would you require to look at him?"

"Two minutes would answer."

"Very well; I will call with the boy in the course of an hour or two. By the way, I shall want a small chest to put the articles in. You keep them, of course?"

"A great variety."

"I dare say you will suit me. A very plain one will answer. Have your bill made out for the other articles, and I will discharge it."

With a profusion of bows and thanks, the trader dismissed his customer.

The mate now betook himself to the hotel where he had engaged Charlie to meet him at eleven o'clock. Charlie, who was always punctual to his appointments, had already arrived, and was looking over a newspaper in the reading-room.

"So you are on hand, my boy," said Randall, in a friendly manner.

"Yes, sir."

"I am glad to find you punctual. Are you ready to set out?"

"Yes, sir, quite ready."

Rather to keep up the boy's delusion as to his designs, Randall suffered Charlie to guide him to one or two places of public interest, with which he was already more familiar than his guide, and then suddenly proposed that they should go down to the wharves.

"You must know, my lad," said he, "that I am a sailor."

"I thought so, sir."

"What made you think so?"

"I don't know, sir; but I can generally tell a sailor."

"Perhaps I haven't got my sea-legs off. However, as I was saying, I am an officer on board a ship lying at the wharf, and I have just thought of a bundle I want brought from the ship. If you will go with me and fetch it, I will pay you at the same rate I promised you for going about with me."

Of course Charlie had no objections. In fact, although he had been on board ships at the wharf, he had never been in company with an officer, and he thought it possible his companion might be willing to explain to him the use of some parts which he did not yet understand. Accordingly he gave a ready assent to the mate's proposition, and together they took their way to Long Wharf, at which the ship was lying.

The shop kept by the Jew was, as a matter of convenience and policy, located near the wharves. It was not a general clothing-store, but specially designed to supply seamen with outfits.

"I have a little errand here," said Randall, pausing before the shop of Moses Mellen.

"I can stop outside," said Charlie.

"You had better come in. You will see where we sailors get our clothing."

Not suspecting any sinister design in this invitation, Charlie accepted it without more ado, and followed Randall in. He looked about him with some curiosity, not observing that he too was an object of attention to the Jewish dealer, whose quick eye detected their entrance.

He went forward to meet Randall.

"You see the boy, do you?" asked the mate, in a low voice.

"Is that the one?"

"Yes. Do you think you will be able to fit him?"

"No doubt about it, though he is a little smaller than the boys we usually fit out."

"Never mind if the clothes are a little large. He'll be sure to grow to them, and a precise fit isn't quite so important on the quarter-deck as it might be on Washington Street. We are not fashionable on board the Betsey, Mr. Mellen."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.