Munroe Kirk

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I
A POOR RICH BOY

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

Although Alaric was tall for his age, which was nearly seventeen, he was thin, pale, and undeveloped. He did not look like a boy accustomed to play tennis or football, or engage in any of the splendid athletics that develop the muscle and self-reliance of those sturdy young fellows who contest interscholastic matches. Nor was he one of these; so far from it, he had never played a game in his life except an occasional quiet game of croquet, or something equally soothing. He could not swim nor

row nor sail a boat; he had never ridden horseback nor on a bicycle; he had never skated nor coasted nor hunted nor fished, and yet he was perfectly well formed and in good health. I fancy I hear my boy readers exclaim:

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

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

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

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

he be restrained from all violent exercise.

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

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

During all these years of travel and study and search after health Alaric had never known what it was to wish in vain for anything that money could buy. Whatever he fancied he obtained without knowing its cost, or where the money came from that procured it. But there were three of the chief things in the world to a boy that he did not have and that money could not give him. He had no boy friends, no boyish games, and no ambitions. He wanted to have all these things, and sometimes said so to his

mother; but always he was met by the same reproachful answer, "My dear Allie, remember your poor weak heart."

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

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

This bustling, dashing elder brother had no sympathy with Alaric, and rarely found time to give him more than a nod and

a word of greeting in passing, while his sister Margaret regarded him as still a little boy who was to be kept out of sight as much as possible. So the poor lad, left to himself, without friends and without occupation, found time hanging very heavily on his hands, and wondered why he had ever been born.

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

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

Both Margaret and John were too busy to pay much attention to their young cousin, and so, to Alaric's delight, the whole duty of entertaining her devolved on him. He felt much more at his ease with girls than with boys, for he had been thrown so much more into their society during his travels, and he thought he understood them thoroughly; but in Esther Dale he found a girl so

different from any he had ever known that she seemed to belong to another order of beings. She was good-looking and perfectly well-bred, but she was also as full of life and frisky antics as a squirrel, and as tireless as a bird on the wing.

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

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

three straight games.

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

"I would give anything I own in the world to be able to play tennis as you can, Cousin Esther," he said, earnestly, after it was all over and they were driving from the park.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I should think it would kill you if you didn't, and I'm sure I

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

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

"Who won't?"

"Father and Margaret and John."

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

CHAPTER II
THE RUNAWAY

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

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

Just then a newspaper that had been carelessly dropped in the roadway was picked up by a sudden gust of wind and whirled directly into the faces of the spirited team. The next instant they were dashing madly down the street. At the outset the reins were jerked from Esther's hand; but ere they could slip down beyond reach Alaric had seized them. Then, with the leathern bands wrapped about his wrists, he threw his whole weight back on them, and strove to check or at least to guide the terrified animals. The light cart bounded and swayed from side to side. Men shouted and women screamed, and a clanging cable-car

from a cross street was saved from collision only by the prompt efforts of its gripman. The roadway was becoming more and more crowded with teams and pedestrians. Alaric's teeth were clinched, and he was bareheaded, having lost his hat as he caught the reins. Esther sat beside him, motionless and silent, but with bloodless cheeks.

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

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

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

gathered about them with offers of assistance and advice.

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

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

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

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

"Plucky young chap that!"

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

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

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

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

"Oh yes you can," laughed Alaric, "for it is true – that is, it was true; for I can see now that I have been a regular Miss Nancy sort

of a fellow all my life. That is what made me feel so badly when you said it. Nobody ever dared tell me before, and so it came as an unpleasant surprise. Now, though, I am glad you said it."

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

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

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

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

"But you must work," responded Esther, stoutly. "Every one

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

things!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER III
ALARIC TAKES A FIRST LESSON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"There isn't much to tell," replied the boy, in a low tone, and

with an instinctive warming of his heart towards the sturdy lad who had come to his rescue. "I wanted to learn how to play ball, and knowing Reg Barker, asked him to teach me; that's all."

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

"Yes."

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

Alaric admitted that such was the case.

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

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

Had he undertaken to stop a spent cannon-ball the boy could hardly have been more amazed at the result. As the ball dropped to the ground he felt as though he had grasped a handful of red-hot coals. Both his kid gloves were split right across the palms, and the smart of his hands was so great that, in spite of his efforts

to restrain them, unbidden tears sprang to his eyes.

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

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

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

With this the good-natured fellow ran off to take his place in the pitcher's box, leaving Alaric filled with gratitude, and glowing with the first thrill of real boyish life that he had ever known. For a while he stood and watched the game, his still-tingling hands causing him to appreciate as never before the

beauty of every successful catch that was made. He wondered if pitching a ball could be as difficult as catching one, or even any harder than it looked. It certainly appeared easy enough. He admired the reckless manner in which the players flung themselves at the bases, sliding along the ground as though bent on ploughing it with their noses; while the ability to hit one of those red-hot balls with a regulation bat seemed to him little short of marvellous. In fact, our lad was, for the first time in his life, viewing a game of baseball through his newly discovered loophole of experience, and finding it a vastly different affair from the same scene shrouded by an unrent veil of ignorance.

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

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

His sister only said, "Oh, Allie! How can you care to do anything so common? And where did you pick up the notion? I

am sure you never saw anything of the kind in France."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Of course, my boy," replied Amos Todd, still speaking as soothingly as he knew how. "I will let you go anywhere you please, and do what you please, just as quickly as I can find the right person to take care of you, and see that you do nothing

injurious. How would you like to go to France with Margaret and me this summer? I am thinking of making the trip."

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

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

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

Every now and then he asked his father if he had not thought of some plan for him, and the invariable answer was: "It's all

right, Allie; I've got a scheme on foot that's working so that I can tell you about it in a few days."

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

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

CHAPTER IV
THE "EMPRESS" LOSES A PASSENGER

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

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

and physician, a man of the world to take his place as father, and a cultivated woman to act as mother to his motherless boy?

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

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

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

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

that was noted with significant glances by all at the table.

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

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

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

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

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

Up to this point the Sonntaggs had proved very attentive, and had striven by every means to make themselves agreeable to their fellow-travellers. From here on, however, the Professor spent most of his time in smoking and sleeping, while his wife devoted herself to reading novels, a great stack of which had been provided for the journey. Alaric, thus left to his own devices,

gazed drearily from the car window, rebelling inwardly at the lonely grandeur with which he was surrounded, and wishing with all his heart that he were poor enough to be allowed to travel in one of the ordinary coaches, in which were several boys of his own age, who seemed to be having a tantalizingly good time. They were clad in flannels, knickerbockers, and heavy walking-shoes, and Alaric noted with satisfaction that they wore gray Tam o' Shanter caps, such as he had procured at Esther Dale's suggestion, and was now wearing for the first time.

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

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

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

little fun there is in it."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

as he walked.

"Hello! Give us a catch," shouted a cheery voice; and, looking up, Alaric saw a merry-faced, squarely built lad of his own age standing in an expectant attitude a short distance from him. Although he was roughly dressed, he had a bright, self-reliant look that was particularly attractive to our young traveller, who without hesitation tossed him the ball. They passed it back and forth for a minute, and then the stranger lad, saying, "Good-bye; I must be getting along; wish I could stop and get better acquainted, though," ran on with a laugh, and disappeared in the crowd.

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

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

CHAPTER V
FIRST MATE BONNY BROOKS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Funny, wasn't it?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It would seem as if a fellow ought to get plenty to do on those

terms," said Bonny, "though it isn't so easy as you might think, for I've tried it. How do you happen to be looking for work, anyway? Where is your home, and where are your folks?"

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

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

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

"And a baseball," interposed Bonny.

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

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

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

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

"Yes," said Bonny, modestly, "I do know a good deal about boats; for, you see, I was brought up in a boating town, and have handled them one way and another ever since I can remember. I

haven't been first mate very long, though, because the man who was that only left to-day."

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

"Oh, he had some trouble with the captain, and seemed to think it was time he got paid something on account of his wages, so that he could buy a shirt and a pair of boots."

"Why didn't the captain pay him?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ship the crew, anyhow."

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VI
PREPARING TO BE A SAILOR

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

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

had come through his baseball too, and how strangely one thing seemed to lead to another!

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

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

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

"Would they?" asked Alaric, gazing dubiously down at his low-cut patent-leather shoes, black silk socks, and light trousers accurately creased and unbagged at the knees. Besides these he wore a vest and sack-coat of fine black serge, an immaculate

collar, about which was knotted a silk neck-scarf, and a narrow-striped cheviot shirt, the cuffs of which were fastened by gold sleeve-links. Across the front of his vest, from pocket to pocket, extended a slender chain of twisted gold and platinum, at one end of which was his watch, and at the other a gold and platinum pencil-case.

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

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

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

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

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

"Might what?"

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

"Do you mean sell it?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

nervous anxiety. Finally the man said:

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Fifty," said Bonny, firmly.

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

"Fifty."

"Dirty-fife?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Oh, I'll stay," asserted Alaric. "There's no fear but what I

will, if you'll only keep me."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What for?"

"Why, to brush my hair, and – "

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

his feelings, Alaric followed him.

CHAPTER VII
CAPTAIN DUFF, OF THE SLOOP "FANCY"

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

Was not the lad who had brought him to this place a very picture of cheerful health, and just such a strong, active, self-reliant boy as he longed to become? Surely what Bonny could endure he could! Perhaps disagreeable things were necessary to

the proper development of a boy. That thought had never come to him before, but now he remembered how much his hands had suffered before they were trained to catch a regulation ball.

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

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

By the time all these thoughts had flashed through the boy's mind he had gained the sloop's deck, where he was startled by an angry voice that sounded like the bellow of an enraged

bull. Turning quickly, he saw his friend Bonny confronted by a big man with a red face and bristling beard. This individual, supported by a pair of rudely made crutches, was standing beside the after companion-way, and glaring at the bag containing his own effects that had been tossed down from the wharf.

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

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

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

"But Captain Duff, I think – "

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

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

"Who, I? You dare say I'm mistaken, you tarry young swab you!" roared the man, his face turning purple with rage. "Oh, ef I had the proper use of my feet for one minute I'd show ye! Put him ashore, I tell ye, and do it in a hurry too, or you'll go with him without one cent of wages – not one cent, d'ye hear? I'll have

no mutiny where I'm cap'n."

Poor Alaric listened to this fierce outbreak with mingled fear and dismay. Now that the situation he had deemed so surely his either to accept or reject was denied him, it again seemed very desirable. He was about to speak up in his own behalf when the angry man's last threat caused him to change his mind. He could not permit Bonny to suffer on his account, and lose the position he had so recently attained. No, the very first law of friendship forbade that; and so, stepping forward to claim his bag, he said, in a low tone: "Never mind me, Bonny; I'll go."

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

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

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

"What's his name?"

"Rick Dale."

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

"I didn't, sir. You – "

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

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

"All right. I wouldn't have him aboard if he could. Why don't

he take his thundering dunnage and go for'ard, where he belongs, and cook me some grub when he knows I haven't had anything to eat sence sunup? Why don't he, I say?"

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

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

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

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

Gladly exchanging his unaccustomed, and what he considered to be very dangerous, task of wood-chopping for one that he felt sure he could accomplish creditably, Alaric hastened away. He found the grocer's easily enough, and demanded of the first clerk

he met why the stores for the sloop *Fancy* had not been sent down.

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

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

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

"Yes."

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

"I suppose so," assented the boy.

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

In another part of the building he prattled glibly of pâté-de-foie-gras, and Neufchâtel cheese, truffles, canned mushrooms, Albert biscuit, anchovy paste, stuffed olives, Wiesbaden prunes, and a variety of things – all of which were so familiar to the millionaire's son, and had appeared so naturally on all the tables at which he had ever sat, that he never for a moment doubted but what they must be necessities on the *Fancy* as well. Of ten million boys he was perhaps the only one absolutely ignorant that these luxuries were not daily articles of food with all persons above the grade of paupers; and as he was equally without a knowledge of

their cost, he allowed the clerk to add a dozen jars of this, and as many pots of that, to his list, until even that wily individual could think of nothing else with which to tempt this easy-going customer. So, promising that the supplies just ordered should be sent down directly, he bowed Alaric out of the door, at the same time trusting that they should be honored with his future patronage.

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

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

By the time he regained the wharf to which the *Fancy* was moored the flooding tide had raised her to a level with it, and on her deck Alaric beheld a scene that filled him with amazement. The stores that he had ordered had arrived. The

wagon in which they had come stood at one side, and they had all been taken aboard. One of the two men who had brought them was exchanging high words and even a shaking of fists with the young first mate of the sloop, while the other was presenting a bill to the captain and insisting upon its payment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VIII
AN UNLUCKY SMASH

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

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

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

the prophet Elijah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So the unhappy lad, his clothing saturated with cologne, betook himself to the wharf, where, as he slowly walked up and down, filling the air with perfume, he carefully removed bits of

broken glass from his moist pocket, and disgustedly flung them overboard.

While he was thus engaged, the first mate, under the captain's personal supervision, was fumigating the cabin by burning in it a bunch of oakum over which was scattered a small quantity of tobacco. When the atmosphere of the place was thus so nearly restored to its normal condition that Captain Duff could again endure it, Bonny finished stowing the supplies, and then turned his attention to preparing supper.

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

"Fine evening," he said.

"Is it?" asked Alaric, moodily.

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

"Yes."

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

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

"What does she carry?"

"Passengers and cargo."

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

"You may."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It wouldn't have been for me, then," rejoined Bonny, "for I

haven't handled a dollar in so long that it would scare me to find one in my pocket. But why didn't you let them take back the things we didn't need?"

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

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

"That seems odd," reflected Alaric.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At length they paused before a low door, on which Bonny rapped in a peculiar manner. It was cautiously opened by a man who held a dim lamp over his head, and who evidently regarded them with suspicion. He was reassured by a few words from

the young mate; the door was closed behind them, and, with the stranger leading the way, while Alaric, filled with curiosity, brought up the rear, all three entered a narrow and very dark passage, the air of which was close and stifling.

CHAPTER IX
"CHINKS" AND "DOPE"

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

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

This boy, so ignorant of many of the commonest things of life, and yet wise far beyond his years concerning other phases, had

often heard the opium habit discussed, and knew that the hateful drug was taken in many forms to banish pain, cause forgetfulness of sorrow, and produce a sleep filled with beautiful dreams. He knew, too, of the sad awakenings that followed – the dulled senses, the return, with redoubled force, of all the unhappiness that had only been driven away for a short time, and the cravings for other and yet larger doses of the deadly stuff.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"To be sure I do," answered the other, a trifle impatiently. "It's

dope. Most any one would know that. Didn't you ever smell it before?"

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

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

On the pavement were dozens of other Chinamen, with here and there a demure-looking little woman and a few children. Heaps of queer-looking luggage, each piece done up in matting and fastened with narrow strips of rattan, were piled in the corners. At one side was an immense stove, or rather a huge affair of brick, containing a score or more of little charcoal stoves, each fitted for the cooking of a single kettle of rice or pot of tea. About this were gathered a number of men preparing their

evening meal. Many of the others were comparing certificates and photographs, a proceeding that puzzled Alaric more than a little, for he was so ignorant of the affairs of his own country that he knew nothing of its Chinese Exclusion Law.

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

Many thousands of Chinese laborers had come to the United States before the exclusion law was passed, and these, by registering and allowing themselves to be photographed for future identification, obtain certificates which, while not permitting them to return if they once leave the country, allow

them to remain here undisturbed. Any Chinaman found without such a protection is liable to be arrested and sent back to his own land.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"No. You only said passengers and freight."

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

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

"That's right," replied Bonny.

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

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

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

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

Before Alaric could ask why they should be nabbed, Won

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As Bonny seemed disinclined to talk, Alaric refrained from asking questions, and the little party proceeded in silence through

unfrequented streets to the place where their sloop lay. Here the burdens borne by the coolies were transferred to the cabin, where this part of the cargo was left with Captain Duff, and Alaric had no knowledge of where it was stowed.

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

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

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

CHAPTER X
PUGET SOUND SMUGGLERS

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

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

from which all the smuggling operations of these waters are conducted.

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

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

He had just the craft for the purpose, and finally secured a captain who, having recently lost a schooner through seizure by the American authorities for unlawful sealing in Bering Sea, was reckless and desperate enough for the new venture. As this man undertook the run for a share of the profits, he was inclined to

reduce all expenses to their very lowest limits, and had already made a number of highly successful trips. Although the fare to each Chinaman by this new line was twenty-five dollars, it offered such superior advantages as to be liberally patronized, and the boat was always crowded.

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

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

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

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

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

So interested had he now become that he even followed Alaric while the lad made his subsequent purchases. Finally he found himself again near the sloop just as the lad who had excited his curiosity was ordered to the wharf to air himself after his unfortunate experience with the bottle of cologne. At length the officer addressed him, and by dint of persistent questions became confirmed in his suspicions that the dingy old sloop cruised to the Sound with Chinamen and opium.

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

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

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.