

Castlemon Harry

No Moss: or, The Career of a Rolling Stone



Harry Castlemon

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of a Rolling Stone**

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Содержание

CHAPTER I.	5
CHAPTER II.	10
CHAPTER III.	15
CHAPTER IV.	21
CHAPTER V.	25
CHAPTER VI.	30
CHAPTER VII.	34
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	36

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CHAPTER I. FIRE QUARTERS

"Four bells, sir!" reported the messenger-boy, to the officer who had charge of the deck of the Storm King.

"Very good. Quartermaster, make it so."

The silvery tones of the little bell rang through the vessel, and immediately there began a great noise and hubbub on the berth-deck, which, but a moment before, had been so quiet and orderly. Songs, shouts of laughter, and noises of every description, that can be made only by a lot of healthy boys just turned loose from their studies, arose through the hatchway, and presently the crew came tumbling up the ladder. The foremost held a guitar under his arm; the one that followed at his heels brought a checker-board; a third had a box of dominoes; and the boy who brought up the rear carried a single-stick in each hand, and went about challenging every one he met to a friendly trial of skill. Some of the crew walked aft to converse with their officers; the boys with the checkers and dominoes seated themselves on deck to engage in quiet games; he of the single-sticks very soon found an antagonist; and the sailor with the guitar perched himself upon the heel of the bowsprit, and, after tuning his instrument, cleared his throat, preparatory to treating his companions to a song containing the information that he had at one time "Sailed in the good ship Bessie."

The second dog-watch (the hours from six until eight in the evening) was a season of recreation with the students attached to the Storm King, and they never failed to make the most of it. A first-class boy, or an ordinary seaman, could then walk up to the executive officer and challenge him to a contest with broadswords, without committing any breach of discipline; and the first lieutenant could talk sociably with his men, with no fear of being brought before the principal and reprimanded for unofficer-like conduct. The boys played, sang, ran races through the rigging, swung Indian clubs and dumb-bells, and, of course, yelled all the while at the top of their lungs.

The Storm King had now been in possession of the principal of the academy about two months, and was every day growing in favor with the students. Indeed, the addition of a navy to the academy bid fair to cause some radical changes in the programme of studies, for military honors were at a heavy discount, and all the students were working for positions on board the yacht. No one cared for the colonel's silver eagle now, but every body cast longing eyes toward the anchors he wore in his naval shoulder-straps. The little vessel had had at least one good effect. She had put ambition into the boys, elevated the standard of scholarship, and convinced such lazy fellows as Martin, Rich, and Miller, that they must pay more attention to their books, or be left behind by every student in the academy.

The yacht was in commission now: the Stars and Stripes floated from her peak, and strict naval discipline had been established. She mounted a "Long Tom" amid-ships, in the shape of a six-pounder pivot gun; and on the berth-deck was an ample supply of small arms, consisting of cutlasses, pikes, pistols, and muskets. The crew numbered twenty boys, including captain, lieutenants, masters, midshipmen, warrant and petty officers, and seamen. They were dressed in the uniform of the United States navy; and the first lieutenant, whose whole soul was wrapped up in his duties, had drilled them until they were as handy and expert as the crew of any man-of-war.

The boys never grew tired of their work: they were passionately fond of this new branch of the service, and their efforts to perfect themselves in every department of their duties were amusing,

and sometimes ridiculous. On one occasion, a frigate came into the harbor and anchored a short distance from the Storm King. Instantly the students were on the alert, for that was the time to learn something. Captain Steele ordered his executive to follow the man-of-war in striking the time of day; and this show of respect very soon attracted the attention of the commodore, who, in the afternoon, put off in his gig to visit the Storm King, where he was piped over the side, and received with all the ceremony due his rank. The students obtained liberty, visited the vessel, talked with the old tars on the streets, and the result was soon apparent: the boat's crew began to pull the regular man-of-war stroke; the seamen took to wearing their caps on the back of their heads, hitched up their trowsers with their elbows, grumbled in the most approved sailor fashion when any thing went wrong with them, and, when they walked, they rolled from side to side like vessels in a gale of wind. They remembered all the sea-phrases they heard the old tars use, and never failed to bring them in on all proper occasions. It was certainly laughable to hear a fair-haired little fellow exclaim, "Sink my tarry wig!" whenever he heard any thing that astonished him.

The boatswain's mate of the yacht made friends with the boatswain of the frigate, put himself under instructions, and soon learned to use his whistle with wonderful skill, and to issue his commands in a voice which seemed to come all the way up from his boots. And then, when he gave an order, he would hasten obedience by such expressions as – "Rouse a bit, there!" and "Make a break, now, bullies!" In short, before the frigate left the harbor, the young sailors had made great improvement in all the minor branches of their profession, and often told one another that their rivals at the academy had a good deal to learn before they could make the crew of the yacht take back seats.

Harry Green was still executive officer of the Storm King. The Court of Inquiry, which he had requested in his report of the attack made on the yacht by the Crusoe band, had been held, and the lieutenant came off with flying colors. The only particular in which he had failed to carry out the orders of his superior officer was in permitting the governor to escape: but that was something he could not prevent. Sam, in his desperation, had jumped overboard before the students could get near enough to seize him; and Harry had but little difficulty in proving, to the satisfaction of the Court, that not only was it impossible to pick him up, but that the attempt to do so would have endangered the vessel and the lives of his crew. Of course, when Harry was cleared, his officers and men were cleared also, and allowed to retain their positions on board the yacht, much to the disappointment of their rivals, who wanted to man the vessel themselves. But, after all, the escape from disgrace had been a very narrow one – so much so, in fact, that the only thing that restrained the students from venting their spite upon the projector of the attack – Tom Newcombe – was the fear of a court-martial, and dismissal from the navy. They were all highly enraged at Tom, and, one day, two of the seamen stopped him on the street, and told him that if he ever got another idea into his head about that yacht and attempted to carry it out, they would certainly duck him in the harbor. The interview took place in front of Mr. Newcombe's residence. Tom wisely held his peace, and made no reply to the young sailors' threats until he was safe inside the gate, when he drawled out:

"Didn't I tell you that, if I did not own and sail that yacht, nobody should? Well, I meant it. I've got another idea."

The young tars, being well acquainted with Tom, understood the meaning of this declaration, and hurried off to report the matter to the first lieutenant. Harry listened with evident uneasiness, and, after taking a few turns across the deck, went ashore to consult Captain Steele.

"If it was any body else in the world," said the executive, after he had told his story, "I should laugh at it; but, coming from the source it does, I know it is no laughing matter. Newcombe has given us abundant proof that he is a reckless, bull-headed rascal, and, if he once gets an idea, he sticks to it, and one might as well talk to the wind as to attempt to reason with him. I can not imagine what new scheme he has got into his head, but I am satisfied that the yacht is in danger. What a

pity it is that that boy does not spend the time he wastes in studying up plans for mischief, upon his books! he would soon be the best scholar of his age in the village."

Captain Steele, as may be imagined, was not at all pleased with the information he had received. He was afraid of Tom, and he did not hesitate to tell his lieutenant so. He could not, of course, determine where the threatened danger was coming from, but he was as firmly convinced as was the executive that trouble was brewing in some quarter. He could only order his subordinate to keep a bright lookout at all times, especially at night.

"I'll do that," soliloquized Harry, as he returned to his vessel, "and if Tom Newcombe comes around the upper end of this harbor with any more Crusoe bands, he'll not escape as easily as he did before. I don't want to see him hurt, because his father gave us that vessel, but I'll teach him that I am tired of living in constant fear of having the yacht destroyed and my commission revoked."

This incident happened about two weeks before the commencement of our story, and, during that time, an event occurred that caused considerable excitement in the village, and relieved the lieutenant of a great load of anxiety. It was the sudden and mysterious disappearance of the members of the Crusoe band. Tom Newcombe went up to bed, one night, as usual, and, the next morning, he was gone; and so was his shot-gun, and fishing-tackle, and a good portion of his clothing. Xury, Jack Spaniard, Friday, and Will Atkins were also missing; and, what was more, nothing had ever been seen or heard of them since their departure. They had disappeared as completely as though they had never existed at all. The event had been a nine-days' wonder, but now nearly every one, except the students, had ceased to talk about it. Their curiosity had been aroused, and they left no stone unturned in their efforts to find the means of satisfying it. They made inquiries of every body, guessed, wondered, and speculated, but all to no purpose; for even the talkative Tom Newcombe had left the village without giving any one so much as a hint of his intended movements. On the evening in question, some of the crew started the all-absorbing topic by saying, as they had probably done twenty times before, that they could not imagine what had become of Tom, or what his object could have been in running away. As far as the object he had in view was concerned, Harry also confessed ignorance; but said he believed Tom had started with the Crusoe band for the North Pole. The boatswain was sure that he was on his way to South America; and one of the quartermasters thought his face was turned toward the Rocky Mountains.

"Now, fellows, I'll tell you all about it," said Jackson, who, if he ever forgot the Crusoe men, had only to look at his hand, which bore a long, ragged scar from the wound made by the bayonet that had been thrust through it: "In the first place, imagine the most impossible enterprise in the world – something that nobody but Tom Newcombe would ever think of attempting; in the second, make up your minds which is the most outlandish place on the globe; then put the two together, and you have the key to his last movement."

"I wonder if he is the leader of the expedition!" said one of the midshipmen; "perhaps Sam Barton has turned up again."

"Impossible! he could not have lived two minutes in those waves."

"Well, we know one thing," said Harry; "and that is, we are rid of our arch enemy, and the yacht is safe. But I would give something to know what his new idea was."

"Quartermaster, strike eight bells," said the officer of the deck.

The movements that followed this order, showed how successful the lieutenant had been in his efforts to establish discipline among the noisy, fun-loving boys who composed his crew. Scarcely had the bell been struck, when the desperate broadsword fight, that had been going on on the forecastle for the last quarter of an hour, was brought to a close; dumb-bells, Indian clubs, and checkerboards quickly disappeared; the star-gazers came down out of the rigging; the quartermaster once more put his spy-glass under his arm, and began planking the deck; and quietness and order took the place of the confusion and noise that had reigned supreme a moment before. The hammocks were piped, the anchor watch set, the boatswain's whistle was heard again, followed by

the injunction, "Keep silence, fore and aft!" and the crew of the yacht was disposed of for the night. The officers went into the cabin, and those who were to stand watch that night soon turned in; while the others, never forgetting the rivals on shore who were working night and day to dislodge them, resumed their books. On the berth-deck the lights were turned down too low to admit of study, the rules forbade conversation, and the only thing the students could do was to tumble into their hammocks.

"Now, then," whispered the boatswain's mate, as he settled himself comfortably between the blankets, "I wonder if that lieutenant will allow us to sleep in peace to-night. He hasn't called us up to put out a fire for two weeks."

Among other things in which Harry had drilled his men until they were almost perfect, was fire quarters; and he had rung so many alarms that the students began to call him the "fire lieutenant." Of course he never took them away from their studies, but he had an uncomfortable habit of calling them up in the night. Harry sometimes pored over his books until nearly twelve o'clock; and when every one, except himself and the officers and men on watch was asleep, he would come out of his cabin and ring the ship's bell as if his life depended upon it. The crew would tumble out of their hammocks and hurry to their stations, some manning the pump, and others getting out the hose and buckets, and all of them growling lustily to themselves, because they knew there was not a spark of fire on board the vessel. These false alarms, although annoying to the students, had the effect of making them thoroughly posted in their duties; and Harry was satisfied, that if, by any accident, his little vessel should really catch on fire, the practice the crew had had would enable them to save her. He afterward had reason to congratulate himself that he had been so particular on this point.

At one o'clock, every one on board the Storm King, except the officers of the deck, quartermaster, and the two seamen who stood the anchor watch, was sound asleep. The night was very dark – so dark that the watch did not see a skiff which approached the vessel, propelled by slow, noiseless strokes. But the skiff was there, and, when it had been brought alongside the yacht, the bow-oarsman arose to his feet, and fastened into the fore-chains with a boat-hook, after which, a figure in the stern sheets placed his hands upon the rail, and drew himself up until he had obtained a view of the vessel's deck. He could not see much on account of the darkness, but his ears told him that the presence of himself and companions was unsuspected; and, having satisfied himself on this point, the visitor, whoever he was, clambered carefully over the rail, and a moment afterward was crouching on deck at the head of the ladder which led down into the forecabin.

"What's that?" exclaimed one of the watch, suddenly interrupting the story he was relating to his companion.

"I didn't hear any thing," replied the other.

"Well, I imagined I did. Every dark night that I stand watch, I think of the Crusoe band."

"O, they're a hundred miles from here by this time – perhaps more. Go on with your yarn."

The young sailor listened a moment, but as the sound which had attracted his attention was not repeated, he resumed his story; whereupon, the figure at the hatchway arose to his feet, and stealthily descended the ladder. He was gone about five minutes, and then re-appeared, crawled noiselessly across the deck, and had just placed his hands upon the rail, when he was discovered by one of the watch.

"Hallo! Boat – ship – I mean, man – ahoy!" shouted the young tar, evidently at a loss to determine how he ought to hail a stranger found on deck of his vessel, under such circumstances.

Both the watch made a rush for the mysterious visitor, who disappeared over the rail like a flash; and, by the time they reached the side, he was in his boat, which was moving off into the darkness. But he did not get away in time to escape recognition by the watch, both of whom stood for an instant as if petrified, and then called out, in amazement and alarm,

"Tom Newcombe!"

"Where?" exclaimed Jackson, the officer of the deck, hurrying forward.

"In his boat there, sir, with half a dozen other fellows. He has been on board the vessel; we caught sight of him just as he was climbing over the rail."

The officer was thunderstruck. The presence of their evil genius at that hour, and under such circumstances, boded no good to the yacht and her crew, and, for a moment, Jackson stood holding fast to the rail, imagining all sorts of terrible things. He would not have been astonished if the waters of the harbor had suddenly opened to swallow up the vessel and her sleeping company. He even thought he felt the deck rise under his feet, and held his breath, expecting to hear an explosion, and to find himself struggling in the water amid the wreck of the Storm King. But nothing of the kind happened: the yacht remained right side up; and if Tom Newcombe had placed a barrel of gunpowder in her, with a slow-match attached, intending to blow the vessel and her crew to atoms, there might yet be time to frustrate his designs.

"Quartermaster, spring that rattle!" shouted the officer, as if suddenly awaking out of a sound sleep – "Smith and Simmonds, lower away the jolly-boat."

Jackson ran below to report the matter to the first lieutenant; the sailors hurried off to execute their orders; and, before Tom Newcombe and his companions were out of sight of the yacht, they heard the rattle calling the crew to quarters.

"Wake up, sir," cried Jackson, roughly shaking his superior officer by the shoulder – "Tom Newcombe!"

The second lieutenant knew that the mention of that name would arouse the executive sooner than any thing else.

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed Harry, "you don't say so! Where is he?"

"In his boat, now, and going down the harbor at the rate of ten knots an hour. He has been on board this yacht doing some mischief, of course, and I am expecting every instant to find myself going to the bottom. His pirate crew is with him."

"The Crusoe band!" Harry almost gasped.

"There are several fellows with him, and I don't know who else they can be."

"Call away the jolly-boat, and man her with an armed crew," said Harry. "Mr. Richardson!"

"Here, sir," answered the midshipman, who had just come into the cabin with his boots in one hand, and his coat in the other.

"Take charge of the jolly-boat, pursue those fellows, and capture them, at all hazards, if they can be found. Mr. Jackson, stand by to get the vessel under way immediately."

The second lieutenant sprang up the ladder, followed by the midshipman, and, a few moments afterward, Harry heard the boat's crew scrambling over the side, and the boatswain's whistle calling the men to their stations.

"Am I doomed to live in constant fear of that fellow as long as I remain at the academy?" said the first lieutenant to himself. "What could he have wanted here? I'll have the yacht searched at once, and discover, if I can, what he has been up to."

But the executive soon learned that it was not necessary to search the vessel to find out what Tom Newcombe had been doing, for, just at that moment, he was alarmed by the rapid tolling of the bell, and Jackson burst into the cabin, pale and excited.

"The yacht is on fire, sir!" said he.

Harry, too astonished to speak, hurried on deck, and, to his consternation, saw a dense smoke arising from the fore-hatchway. The students did not grumble now at being called to fire-quarters, for this was not a false alarm; the inside of the galley was a sheet of flames.

CHAPTER II. SAM BARTON'S HARBORING PLACE

Tom Newcombe seemed to possess, in a remarkable degree, the faculty of creating a disturbance wherever he went, and his re-appearance in the village was the signal for a general commotion. Johnny Harding came in for a share of the trouble, and was the hero of an adventure that gained him an enviable reputation in Newport. In order that the reader may understand how it came about, we must go back and describe some events with which he is not acquainted.

For two weeks after the Spartan sailed with the fisher-boy on board, Tom Newcombe led a most miserable life. His father took especial care that every moment of his time, from eight in the morning until four in the afternoon, should be occupied with some business or another, and, in Tom's estimation, this was the very worst punishment that could be inflicted upon him. In addition to that, the law against going outside the gate after dark was rigidly enforced; and thus Tom was thrown upon his own resources for recreation.

There were few boys in the village he cared to associate with now. He avoided the students, and Johnny Harding and his set, as he would a pestilence; but he was not always successful in his efforts to keep out of their way, for he had a good many errands to do about the village, and at almost every corner he met somebody he did not want to see. Besides, Johnny had taken up his position behind Mr. Henry's counter; and, although he had become a steady, well-behaved boy in other respects, he was as full of mischief as ever, and seemed to take unbounded delight in tormenting Tom. Mr. Henry's store was but a short distance from the office; and as Johnny was constantly running up and down the wharf on business, he met Tom frequently, and never failed to make particular inquiries concerning the welfare of the young ruffians who had composed the Crusoe band.

"Ah, *good* morning, captain!" he would say, raising his hand to his cap with a military flourish, "how's the governor? and how does the society come on?"

Tom sometimes made an angry reply; but generally he would take to his heels, and as soon as possible get out of hearing of his tormentor. Nine times in ten he did not better himself any; for, while he was running away from Johnny, he would encounter some one else who had something to say about the yacht or the Crusoe band. He was thus kept continually in hot water, and he knew that such would be his condition as long as he remained in the village. There was one way of escape, and that was to do as Johnny Harding had done, when he came home from the memorable expedition of the Night-Hawks. He saw his folly, acknowledged it, and resolved that his future life should make some amends for it. He held to this determination; and was now in a fair way to make a man of himself. Tom, however, did not possess the moral courage to do this. He was one of those boys who are always in the right, and he did not believe that the troubles he had got into were the results of his own misdeeds. He laid the blame upon somebody else – principally upon his father, at whom he was highly enraged. He wanted to get out of the village, and he set his wits at work to conjure up some plan to induce the merchant to send him to sea, or permit him to make another contract with Mr. Hayes; but Mr. Newcombe thought the office was the best place for Tom, and told him so in a manner so decided, that the boy knew that argument was useless.

All this while he had been busy with his plan for the organization of a new secret society, but he was obliged to confess that, under the circumstances, it was not likely to amount to any thing. He needed the assistance of the old members of the Crusoe band; but his father had ordered him to have nothing further to do with them, and, more than that, he took care to see that the order was obeyed. Tom, knowing that he was closely watched, kept aloof from the ferry-boys, and when his work for the day was over, he found relief from his troubles by sailing about the bay in the Mystery.

One evening he extended his cruise around Block Island; and it was then an incident happened that brought about the events we have yet to describe. He was sailing around a high rocky promontory which formed the southern part of the island, his mind, as usual, busy with his new scheme, when he was aroused by hearing his name pronounced. He looked toward the shore, and was frightened nearly out of his senses when he discovered a boy, who bore a strong resemblance to Sam Barton, standing on a rock at the foot of the bluff, waving his hat to him. Tom was not superstitious, but he believed, with every one else in Newport, that the governor had deliberately put an end to his existence by jumping into the harbor on that stormy night, and his sudden appearance in that lonely spot was enough to startle him.

"Come ashore, Muley; I want to talk to you."

The voice certainly sounded like Sam Barton's, and Tom, astonished and perplexed, brought the *Mystery* up into the wind, and sat gazing at the bluffs as if he hardly knew whether or not it was safe to venture any nearer to it.

"Don't you know me, Muley?" asked the boy on shore. "I'm Sam Barton."

"Why, you were drowned," returned Tom.

"Drowned! Not much, I wasn't. I ketched hold of a spar that happened to be in the water near me, an' here I am all right."

Tom, being now convinced that the boy on shore was really the long-lost governor of the *Crusoe* band, filled away, and, when the *Mystery* had approached within a few feet of the rock, Sam said:

"Now, Muley, you're close enough. I want to ask you one question before you come ashore. Have you gone back on me?"

"No, I haven't," replied Tom, who had already told himself that the meeting with Sam was most fortunate, and that, with his assistance, his new idea could be successfully carried out, "but I have a small account against you. You made me captain of the yacht, without my asking you for the position, and then refused to obey my orders, and broke me without one word of excuse or apology. I didn't like that very well, but as our expedition proved a failure, I don't care so much about it. What are you doing, governor? and how came you here?"

"Are you sure you won't tell any body in the village that you saw me?" demanded Sam. "You see, I am afraid of Bobby Jennings and Mr. Grimes, an' I don't care about tellin' you too much till I know how fur you can be trusted."

"I won't say a word to any body – honor bright," replied Tom.

"Wall, then, come ashore, and let me get into your boat, an' I'll show you where I live."

Tom complied with the request; and the governor, after shaking him cordially by the hand, and compelling him to promise, over and over again, that he would keep every thing that passed between them a profound secret, seated himself at the helm, and turned the *Mystery's* head down the shore. The wind was blowing briskly; and at the end of the promontory was a chain of sunken rocks, that extended a considerable distance below the foot of the island, and over which the waves dashed and foamed, throwing the spray higher than the *Mystery's* mast-head. These rocks were quite as dangerous as they looked; for more than one vessel, in attempting to enter Newport harbor during a gale, had gone to pieces there. They presented an insurmountable obstacle to the young navigators of the village, who had explored every little bay and inlet on the island, except those in the vicinity of "The Shoals," as these rocks were called. The slightest breeze would there raise a sea that threatened destruction to any thing that came within its reach; and when the weather was calm, the rocks could be seen above the water in all directions, standing so close together that the bravest of the boys dared not risk their boats among them. Tom knew the place well; and we can imagine his astonishment when he saw that Sam was shaping his course as if he intended to pass between the rocks and the bluffs on the island.

"Keep out, governor!" he shouted, in alarm. "You'll smash us all to pieces if you go in there."

"Now, you just trust me, Muley, an' I'll see that no harm don't come to you or your boat," replied Sam, confidently. "I've got a safe harborin' place here, and this is the way to get to it."

Tom had seen the time that he would have positively refused to trust his fine boat among those rocks. He was naturally a very timid boy, and, although he had been accustomed to the water and to sail-boats from the time he was large enough to handle a tiller, a fresh breeze and a few waves always made him extremely nervous. But the events of the last few months had developed in him at least one quality which his companions had never supposed him to possess. He was getting to be a very reckless sort of fellow; and, although he clutched his seat and held his breath when the *Mystery* dashed in among the waves off the point, he looked quite unconcerned. He was really frightened, however, and that was not to be wondered at. Sam was attempting something that no one had ever had the courage to try before; and no doubt Tom felt a good deal as did the mariners of old when approaching the terrible Cape Bojador, which they believed marked the boundaries of navigation. But the governor knew just what he was doing. He proved himself an excellent pilot, and in a few moments he rounded the point, and, entering a little bay where the water was comparatively quiet, he directed the boat's course toward what appeared to be a solid wall of rock. A nearer approach to it, revealed a narrow creek that led into the island. Sam steered into it, skillfully avoiding the rocks on either side; and when the *Mystery's* bow was run upon the sand, Tom jumped ashore and looked about him.

"Well, Muley, what do you think of me for a sailor?" asked Sam, looking at his companion with a smile of triumph. "Aint that something worth braggin' on? I wouldn't be afraid to take your father's biggest vessel through there."

"But how would you get her out again?" asked Tom. "You couldn't beat up against the wind, for the channel isn't wide enough."

"Of course not; I couldn't take the *Mystery* out that way, much less a big ship. Did you see them high rocks at the lower end of the shoals? Well, when you want to go home, I shall take you right past them."

"O, now, I won't go," drawled Tom, looking at Sam in great amazement. "I did notice them, and I know the waves must be ten or fifteen feet high there."

"That's nothing. The channel runs close alongside them rocks, an' is wide an' deep enough to float a frigate. If you want to go home in your boat, that's your only chance."

While this conversation was going on, Tom had made a hurried examination of the governor's harboring-place, which was far ahead of the cave in the village, and must have been expressly intended to serve as a refuge for some person, who, like Sam, thought it necessary to keep aloof from his fellow-men. The creek was simply an arm of the bay, which did not extend more than twenty yards into the land, where it formed a cove large enough to shelter half a dozen sail-boats. It was surrounded by precipitous cliffs, which hung threateningly over the water and whose sides were so thickly covered with bushes and trees that the rays of the sun could not penetrate through them. The entrance was effectually concealed by rocks which had fallen from the bluffs above, and a fleet might have coasted along the shore without discovering it. On one side of the cove was a little grass plat, which sloped gently down to the water's edge, and here Sam had erected a rude cabin, which was furnished with a bed, fire-place, cooking utensils, and other articles of comfort and convenience. A skiff was drawn up on the bank in front of the cabin, a sail and a pair of oars rested against the eaves, and in a frying-pan, which stood on a bench beside the door, were several fish which Sam had caught for his supper.

"Well, Muley, what do you think of it?" asked the governor, when his visitor had examined every thing to his satisfaction. "I'm livin' Crusoe life now, aint I? I'd like it a heap better than ferryin', if I only had something besides fish and water-melons to eat."

"Water-melons!" repeated Tom: "where do you get them?"

"O, I hooks 'em. There's plenty on the island, an' I was just goin' out after some when I saw you. I've got one left, an' it's in the spring, behind the cabin, coolin' off."

"How did you get out without your boat?" asked Tom, looking up at the overhanging cliffs. "You can't climb those rocks."

"You couldn't, but I can, 'cause I know where the path is. You see, I am an old fox, an' I've got two holes to my burrow. If Mr. Grimes an' Bobby Jennings find out where I am, an' come here with a boat to ketch me, they'll see me goin' up them rocks like a goat; an' if they come down the path – which they aint no ways likely to do – I'll take to my boat. Come with me now, Muley, an' I'll show you something."

Tom followed the governor around the cabin, past the spring in which was the water-melon Sam had spoken of, and which he said they would eat when they came down, and presently found himself standing at the foot of a narrow, winding fissure, that led to the top of the cliff. This was one of the holes to Sam's "burrow" – the path of which he had spoken. It proved to be very steep and slippery, and, before they had accomplished half the distance to the summit, Tom was obliged to sit down and recover his breath. The second time he stopped, he found before him a yawning chasm which extended across the path, and seemed to check their farther progress.

"Can you jump it, Muley?" asked the governor.

Now, as the chasm was fully ten feet wide, and Tom could see no chance for a running start, he thought this question entirely unnecessary. No boy who had any desire to live would have thought of attempting to jump it; for, if he missed his footing when he landed on the opposite side, he would fall about forty feet. That was what Tom thought, and that was what he told the governor.

"Well, I have done it many a time," said Sam, "an' I can do it again."

As he spoke, he stepped to a tree beside the path, and began to unfasten a rope which led down from some place above – Tom could not see where, for the bushes that covered the side of the cliff were too thick. Grasping the rope with both hands, the governor stepped back a few feet, then ran swiftly to the brink, and, springing into the air, alighted safely on the other side of the chasm.

"I don't like that way of getting over," said Tom, looking down at the rocks beneath him; "that rope might break."

"I'll risk that," was the reply. "It's strong enough to hold half a dozen fellers like us, an' it is made fast up there to a tree as big around as your body. Ketch it, Muley, an' come on."

The governor let go the rope, which swung back to Tom's side of the chasm, and the latter, with a good deal of trembling and hesitation, prepared to take his turn. He made two or three false starts – stepping back for a short run, as he had seen the governor do, and then suddenly stopping when he reached the brink of the chasm, and thought what would become of him if the rope should break loose from the tree above; but his fear of being laughed at was stronger than his dread of the rocks, and finally he drew in a long breath, and launched himself into the air. Somewhat to his astonishment, he accomplished the feat very easily; and when he found himself safe on the opposite side, he straightened up and looked at the governor as if he had done something wonderful.

Sam fastened the rope to a bush, and once more led the way up the path, which grew steeper and more difficult the nearer they approached the summit. In some places the cliff was quite perpendicular, and the only way they could advance at all was by drawing themselves up by the bushes that grew out of the crevices of the rocks. They reached the top at last, however, and then Sam stopped, and, pointing through the leaves, showed Tom several men at work in a field, and a farm-house in the distance.

"I hooks them fellers' water-melons," observed the governor.

"What if they should discover us now, and come after us?" said Tom.

"Let 'em come. They wouldn't find us, I reckon; an', even if they did, they couldn't ketch us, fur they couldn't get across that gully. But they don't dream of any body's livin' down here, in this dark hole. If they miss their water-melons, they lay the blame on some of the village boys."

Tom did not care to remain long on the cliff, for he was afraid that something might happen to direct the attention of the farmers toward him and his companion, and he had no desire to run a race with any body down that steep path. He might make a misstep, and that would be a calamity, for he would bring up among the rocks at the bottom of the chasm, and there would not be enough left of him to carry out his new idea by the time he got there. But, although it was quite as difficult and tedious a task to go down the cliff as to ascend it, no accident happened to them. They reached the chasm in safety, crossed it with the aid of the rope – this time without any hesitation on Tom's part – and were soon stretched on the grass in front of the cabin, refreshing themselves with the water-melon.

CHAPTER III. A NEW PLAN

Tom was no less delighted than astonished at what he had seen in the governor's harboring place. The cove was so romantic, and it was so cool and pleasant down there among the rocks and trees! It was a famous place for reflection, and, as Tom stretched himself out on the grass, and looked up at the bluffs above him, he told himself that he would be perfectly willing to pass the remainder of his existence there. What could be more glorious than the life of ease Sam was leading? He had no business to bother him, no father to keep an eye on all his movements, and no merciless village boys to torment him; but he was free from all care and trouble, was his own master, and passed his time serenely in doing nothing. That was just the life that suited Tom. If other boys were foolish enough to allow themselves to be shut up in an academy for ten months in the year, or were willing to drag out a miserable existence within the dingy walls of a store or office, that was their lookout, and not his. He would not do it for any body. He would leave the village before he was twenty-four hours older; and if he ever placed his foot inside its limits again, it would be because he could not help himself.

"Governor," said he, "you always were a lucky fellow. Here you have been during the last two weeks, enjoying yourself to the utmost, and free to go and come when you please, while I have been cooped up in the village, scarcely daring to stir out of my father's sight, compelled to work like a slave for eight hours in the day, and have been badgered and tormented until I have sometimes wished that the earth would open and swallow up Newport and everybody in it, myself included. You must be happy here."

"Well, I should be," replied the governor, "if I only had something good to eat, an' was sartin that Bobby Jennings an' Mr. Grimes would never trouble me."

"You may make yourself easy on that score," said Tom. "Bob Jennings is a thousand miles from here by this time. He has gone to China, and will not be back for three years."

As Tom said this he settled back on his elbow, and proceeded to give the governor a history of all that had happened in the village since the night the Crusoe men made the attack on the Storm King. He told how Harry Green had taken him and the rest of the band to the academy as prisoners of war; repeated what the principal had said to them; explained how Bob had lost his boat, and found a friend in the man who had paid him the forty dollars in gold by mistake; and how he had obtained a berth on board the Spartan, and gone to sea, leaving his mother well provided for. He wound up by dwelling with a good deal of emphasis upon the resolve he had made to pay off Harry Green for what he had done, and hinted, mysteriously, that the first lieutenant would live to regret that he had ever presumed to act contrary to the wishes of Tom Newcombe. Sam could scarcely believe some portions of the story that related to Bob Jennings. He was sure that the fisher-boy had given one of the gold pieces for the Go Ahead No. 2; and, even if he had not, the governor could not understand how a boy so hard pressed as Bob had been – who had more than once been at a loss to know where his next meal was coming from – could resist the temptation to use a portion of the money, especially when he knew that the man who had paid it to him would never be the wiser for it. Sam acknowledged to himself that the truth of the old adage he had so often heard Bob repeat – that "honesty is the best policy" – had been fully exemplified.

"Now, that's what comes of bein' born lucky," said he, after he had thought the matter over. "That ar' Bobby Jennings is a gentleman, now, an' goes about holden' up his head like he was somebody; while I am a rascal an' an outlaw, not darin' to show my face outside this yere cove, an' livin' in constant fear of Mr. Grimes, an' the State's prison. This is a hard world, Tommy."

"O, now, have you just found it out?" drawled Tom. "If you had seen as much trouble as I have, you would have come to that conclusion long ago. I heard Harry Green say, one day, that it was the very best world he ever saw, and that it could not possibly be any better. If I was as lucky as he is, I would say so too. He holds high positions among those Spoonneys at the academy, every body in the village speaks well of him, and he gets along through the world without the least difficulty; while I – just look at me! I won't stand it; now, that's all about it! I'll raise a breeze in that village one of these fine days, that will make the people there think they have never known any thing about Tom Newcombe."

Tom always worked himself into a passion when he talked about the wrongs he imagined the world had done him; and as he dwelt upon Harry Green's success – which he foolishly attributed to luck, instead of downright earnest labor – and drew a contrast between their stations in life, he got angrier with every sentence he uttered; and when he declared that he "wouldn't stand it," he jumped up and stamped his foot furiously upon the ground, to emphasize his words.

"Well, now, Muley, I can't see the use of talkin' on that ar' way," said the governor. "The world has been mighty mean to us, but it might have used us a heap worse."

"O, now, I can't see it!" drawled Tom. "I'd like to know if I wasn't used just as badly as I could be when I lost that yacht?"

"Of course not. You might have been put in jail, like the rest of the fellers."

"What fellows?"

"Why, Friday, Will Atkins, an' all our crowd."

"They are not in jail. They are ferrying on the harbor every day, and nobody troubles them. If you were to go back to the village, no one would say a word to you."

The governor shut one eye, and looked at Tom through, the half-closed lids of the other. "Do you see any thing green about me?" he asked. "We stole the skiff – every body knows that – an' it wasn't no fault of our'n that Bobby Jennings got her agin. That's contrary to law, an' Mr. Grimes, bein' an officer, is bound to put us through for it. He thinks that by lettin' them fellers alone he will get me to go back to the village, and then he'll arrest the whole of us, an' pack us off to jail. But I'm too sharp fur him. He said I couldn't pull no wool over his eyes, an' he'll find that he can't pull none over mine, neither."

"But I tell you that every body thinks you are drowned," said Tom.

"That's all mighty nice, but it don't fool Governor Barton. I just aint going back to Newport, 'cause I know it aint safe. I jumped overboard from the yacht 'cause I didn't want to let Mr. Grimes get his hands on me, an' I'd be the biggest kind of a dunce to put myself in his way ag'in. But I say, Muley, don't it beat all the world how them 'cademy swells got out of the hold that night?"

"It doesn't beat me; I know all about it. You broke me, didn't you?"

"I did; but I am sorry fur it now."

"It is rather late in the day to make apologies, governor. If you had treated me like a gentleman, those students wouldn't have got out."

"I don't understand you, Muley."

"Well, I let them out. You understand me now, don't you?"

Sam, upon hearing this, started up from the ground and glared at Tom so savagely that the latter began to be alarmed.

"I couldn't help it, governor," said he. "It's my plan to get even with any fellow who imposes upon me. You played me a mean trick, and I paid you off in your own coin."

"Well, the thing is done now," said Sam, settling back on his elbow, "an' it can't be undone. Perhaps it was the best thing that could have happened to us, fur, since I have had time to think the matter over, I have come to the conclusion that our cruise would not have been a long one. That was a terrible storm, Muley, an' the waves were uncommon high. I found that out the minute I got into 'em. I never expected to come out alive, an' I hadn't any more than touched the water, till I'd

been willin' to give something nice to get back on board the yacht. But luck was on my side for once, an' throwed a spar in my way. Where it come from I don't know; but it was there, an' it saved me. It drifted into the harbor, carryin' me with it; an' when I come to a place where I thought I could swim, I struck out for the wharf. It was then almost daylight, an', as I didn't care about bein' seen, I found a safe hidin'-place an' stayed there durin' the day, thinkin' an' layin' my plans. When night come, I stole this skiff an' started for the island. The next day I found this cove; an', seein' in a minute that it was just the place for me, I brought my boat around, an' I've been here ever since. I've made three visits to the village – that's the way I come to learn the channels – and I've got my bed, all my clothes, an' several other handy little articles I found layin' around. I wanted to see you an' find out what was goin' on, but I didn't dare to show myself, fur I didn't know but you had gone back on me. Rats desert a sinkin' ship, you know, an' when a feller's in disgrace, everybody gets down on him. I'm glad to hear that the other fellers are all right, 'cause I've done a heap of thinkin' since I've been here. Have you given up all idea of findin' Crusoe's island?"

"No, I haven't," replied Tom. "I'd start to-morrow, if I could find any one to go with me. What have you been thinking about, governor?"

"About gettin' away from here. I can't stay on this island much longer, 'cause it's too near the village; an' another thing, grub's scarce. I'm going over to Newport this very night to see them fellers; an' if they'll stick to us, we'll see some fun yet. Will you go?"

"I will," answered Tom, readily; "that is, if you will help me square yards with the principal of the academy."

"I'll do it; there's my hand on it. I always knowed you were a brick, Muley, an' now I'll tell you what I have been thinkin' about since we've been sittin' here. In the first place," continued the governor, helping himself to another slice of the water-melon, "I take it fur granted that Friday, Will Atkins, Xury, an' Jack Spaniard will go with us, an' help us carry out our idea. I know them fellers, an' I am sure they can be depended on. We'll start the Crusoe band ag'in. I will be the head man, as I was before; an' if you'll promise, honor bright, not to try any tricks on us, we'll call you cap'n, an' we'll give you command of the vessel, when we get her."

"All right," said Tom, "I'll not play any tricks on you as long as you obey orders and behave yourselves; but if you get up a mutiny, and try to make me a foremast hand, as you did before, I'll knock the whole thing higher than a kite. You must bear two things in mind, governor: I know more about managing these matters than you do, and I am a better sailor. I was president of the Gentlemen's Club, and grand commander of the Night-Hawks. That runaway expedition from the academy, that made such a stir in the village, originated with me, and I carried it out successfully; and that's more than any other boy in Newport could have done. I was second in command of the Swallow during that cruise, and, if I had had one or two more friends, I would have been made master of her when the fellows put Rich out. If I go with you, I must be captain of the vessel; and, more than that, you must promise, in the presence of the band, to stand by me, and see that my orders are obeyed to the very letter."

"I'll agree to that, Muley," said Sam.

"Call me captain," interrupted Tom; "I never did like that other name. The second thing you must remember is, that, if you and I are friends, the expedition will be successful; but, if you make an enemy of me, I'll ruin it in some way or another. Let's hear the rest of your plan."

"I can tell it in few words," replied Sam: "If the fellers promise to go with us, we must find a vessel somewhere. We want a good one, fur there's no knowin' how many storms we may get into before we reach our island. I'd like to have that yacht, 'cause she's a good sea-boat, an' sails like lightnin'; but them 'cademy swells will always be on the watch now, an' when you see Governor Barton within reach of them bayonets ag'in, you'll see a weasel asleep. Our best plan would be to take the Sweepstakes. 'Squire Thompson leaves her in the harbor, with no one to watch her, an' it'll be the easiest thing in the world to board her, some dark night, an' make off with her. That part of

the business don't trouble me none, but the grub does. I s'pose the few crackers we had on hand when we made the attack on the yacht are lost, or eat up; an' Atkins said there was not much more'n twenty dollars in the treasury. That wouldn't be enough to buy grub fur us six fellers, even if we had it; but I know it's been fooled away fur peanuts an' candy long before this time. Of course, we can't go to sea without something to eat, an' the only way we can get it is to hook it."

"Steal it!" drawled Tom. "O, now, if that's the way you are going to get your supplies, you needn't ask me to help, for I won't do it."

"Mebbe you'll be willin' enough to eat the grub when we get it," returned Sam.

"That's a different matter. Of course, I'll not starve if there's is any thing on board the vessel to eat, but I won't steal. Where are you going to get your provisions?"

"At Mr. Henry's store."

"O, now, suppose you should be caught? That would kill the expedition at once. Johnny Harding sleeps in the store every night."

"Does he?" exclaimed the governor. "That's something I didn't calculate on; but I guess we aint much afraid of him. If we can only get inside the store without awaking him, we can manage him easy enough. I'll have a club, or something, an' the sight of it will keep him quiet while the other fellers are securin' the provisions."

Tom was amazed at the coolness with which the governor discussed this villainous plan for supplying the commissary of the Crusoe band. He was hardly prepared for so desperate an undertaking, and yet, at the same time, he had determined upon the perpetration of an offense which was even more atrocious in the eyes of the law than the one Sam had proposed. When it first entered his mind, he had been terrified at the bare thought of it; but he had pondered upon it so often, and had weighed so many schemes for its accomplishment, that the enormity of the crime had finally dwindled into insignificance. Perhaps, if he had spent as much time in thinking about robbing Mr. Henry's store as he had about destroying the Storm King, Sam's proposition would not have startled him in the least. The fact was, Tom had long been going down hill, in a moral point of view. Like every one else who does not advance, he was retrograding. There is no such thing as standing still in this world. A boy grows better or worse every day of his life. The change may be so gradual as to escape the notice of those around him, but it is, nevertheless, surely going on. The truth of this had been fully illustrated in Tom's case. From studying up schemes for mischief, which were simply intended to amuse himself and companions, he had come, by easy steps, to think seriously of attempting a crime, to revenge himself upon his father, the students, and the principal of the academy. He did not expect to accomplish it without being discovered; and he knew that, if he was captured, his punishment would be something more terrible than any thing he had yet experienced. But this thought did not deter him. He was resolved to carry out his new idea, if within the bounds of possibility, and to escape the consequences by running away from the village.

"Well, cap'n, what do you say?" asked the governor, after Tom had sat gazing thoughtfully at the ground for several minutes. "We must have something to eat, an that's the only way I know of to get it."

"You can do as you please," was the answer. "I shall not take any part in robbing the store; there is too much danger in it."

"Well, we can get along without your help. You can stand by and look on. You said something about gettin' even with them 'cademy swells, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did. I am going to burn that yacht."

It was now Sam's turn to be astonished. He started up and looked at his companion as if he hardly believed that he could be in earnest.

"O, I mean it, governor," said Tom, with a decided shake of his head.

"Now, if you will listen to me, cap'n', you will keep away from them 'cademy fellers. They think a heap of that little vessel, an' if they ketch you tryin' to burn her, they won't be no ways backward about givin' you a good drubbin'. Besides, you'll have Mr. Grimes after you."

"I have thought the matter over thoroughly, Sam, and nothing you can say will turn me from my purpose. Do you suppose that, after all that has happened, I am going to let those fellows enjoy quiet possession of the Storm King? No, sir; I won't do it. She rightfully belongs to me, and if I can't have her, nobody shall. When I meet those sailors strutting about the village, showing off their new uniforms, and see Harry Green planking his quarter-deck with all the dignity of an admiral, I feel as if I'd like to sink the vessel and her crew in the deepest part of the ocean. If my father had given her to me, as he ought to have done, I should now be the happiest boy in the world; as it is, I am the most miserable. I don't expect you and the band to run any risks, governor. All I ask of you is to pull me alongside the yacht, and I'll do the rest. I'll slip on board with a bottle of coal-oil in my pocket, and if I can once get into the galley without being discovered, I'll finish her."

The governor gazed at Tom in silent wonder and admiration. The latter's plan for "squaring yards" with the principal was likely to involve him in considerable danger, and Sam could not help acknowledging to himself that it was something he would not dare undertake. He had great respect for courage, and he believed that he had been sadly mistaken in Tom. He began to stand in awe of him, too; for a boy who could conceive of such an exploit, and talk so calmly about it, after the experience he had already had with the students, might indeed prove a dangerous person to make an enemy of. The governor secretly determined to keep on the right side of Tom.

"Well," said he, at length, "I promised that I would help you, an' I'll stick to it."

"If you don't, I'll do the job alone," declared Tom. "I'll board the yacht some night, and set fire to her, even if I know that the students will catch me in the very act. But it is getting dark, and I must go home."

"Come ag'in to-morrow afternoon, cap'n'," said the governor. "I'll have the other fellers here then, an' we can talk the matter over."

Tom promised to be on hand; and after Sam had piloted his boat out of the cove into still water, he filled away for home, feeling happier than he had done for many a day. We are so well acquainted with him, that it is scarcely necessary to say that he passed a sleepless night, and that during the following day he lived in a state of constant excitement. Of course he was certain of success – he always was, in spite of his former experience – and of course he gave full sway to his imagination, and indulged in pleasing anticipations of the life of glorious ease upon which he was soon to enter. There would be no Johnny Harding to bother him (Tom spent a good deal of time in trying to decide upon some plan to punish Johnny before he left the village); no stern, unreasonable father to interfere with his grand ideas; no care or trouble of any description to mar his happiness; but his days would be passed in one continual round of enjoyment. Every one who came in contact with him noticed that he was in wonderful spirits – not morose and sullen as he had lately been, but gay and active, and, for a wonder, industrious. This was enough to excite the suspicions of his father, who watched him more closely than ever, but could discover nothing wrong.

Tom remained at the office until four o'clock, and then went home. He kept the back streets, to avoid meeting any of his acquaintances, but, to his intense disgust, he ran against two of the crew of the Storm King, in front of his father's house. They were the ones who threatened him with a bath in the harbor if he attempted to carry out any more of his plans against the yacht, and whom Tom alarmed by declaring that he had another idea already.

"O, now, I'd like to see you duck me in the harbor," drawled Tom. "If you think you can scare me, you are very much mistaken. I'll astonish you, one of these days."

"You had better be careful how you talk, captain," said one of the young tars, placing his hand on the gate as if he had half a mind to follow Tom into the yard; "we are in no humor to listen to any threats."

"Now, haven't I told you a dozen times that I want you to quit calling me captain?" whined Tom. "I've stood your insults just as long as I am going to. I've got a splendid idea."

Tom turned on his heel, and walked down the lawn toward the wharf where the Mystery lay; and when he had hoisted the sails, he started for the island, to keep his appointment with Sam Barton. On the way he overtook and passed a yawl, in which were seated the four members of the Crusoe band; and the significant manner in which they shook their heads at Tom, satisfied him that the governor had talked the matter over with them, and that they were ready to join the expedition.

He found Sam on the rock where he had met him the day before; and when he had piloted the Mystery into the cove, he conducted Tom up the path that led to the summit of the bluff, and together they returned to the rock, to await the arrival of the other members of the band. They came at length, and in a few minutes the yawl was lying in the cove beside the Mystery, and the Crusoe men were seated on the grass in front of the cabin, talking over their plans.

The arrangements for the cruise were speedily completed. It was unanimously agreed by the band that the only way to get their provisions was to rob Mr. Henry's store (to Tom's great surprise, not the slightest objection was made to this proposition); that they should capture the Sweepstakes, and assist Tom in destroying the yacht; that Sam should be chief of the band, Tom captain of the vessel, and Xury, in view of the skill he had exhibited in navigating the yacht down the harbor on that stormy night, should be first mate. It was further agreed that the members of the band should go back to the village, collect all the articles of the outfit, and, as soon as it grew dark, return to the island, where they would remain concealed until they were ready to start on their cruise.

"You see," explained the governor, "when you five fellers run away, it'll be sure to raise a big fuss, and mebbe Tommy's father will try to find him. But he'll never think of lookin' fur him so near the village; an' here we'll stay, as snug an' comfortable as bugs in a rug. The fuss will die out after awhile, an' then, some dark night, we'll pay our last visit to Newport."

This programme was duly carried out; and, while every body was wondering what had become of the runaways, and Mr. Newcombe was sending his tugs up and down the bay, in all directions, in the hope of hearing some tidings of the missing Tom, he was safely sheltered in Sam Barton's retreat, enjoying a foretaste of Crusoe life, happy in the society of the young vagabonds he had chosen for his companions, and never wasting a thought upon the home and friends he had deserted.

CHAPTER IV. TOM IN TROUBLE

For the first time in a good many months, Tom was willing to acknowledge that he was a happy boy. The life he led in Sam Barton's harboring-place exactly suited him. He had plenty to eat, no work to do, and nothing to trouble him. By virtue of his rank, he was exempt from all camp duty; and the only labor he had to perform during the day-time was to dispose of his meals when Friday said they were ready. When he felt so inclined, he took part in the conversation, and discussed with the others the best methods of carrying out the plans they had determined upon; but he believed the position he held warranted the display of a little dignity on his part, and he generally kept aloof from all his companions, except the governor, and spent the most of his time in dozing and building air-castles. If the Storm King had been destroyed, he would have been willing to pass the remainder of his days in the cove. That would save him the trouble and inconvenience of a long voyage at sea, which, reckless as he was, he was in no hurry to undertake. What if the Sweepstakes should be caught out in a storm, like the one they had experienced the night they made the attack on the yacht? The captain did not like to think about this; but the question would now and then force itself upon him, and he finally determined that, if he found himself likely to get into trouble, he would shirk the responsibility by turning the command of the vessel over to his mate.

On the evening of the fourteenth day after the Crusoe men had taken up their abode in the cove, Tom lay upon the grass, gazing into the water, and lazily fanning himself with his hat. The band had been employed, during the day, in enlarging the cabin, and Tom had condescended to lend a very little assistance, and was now resting after his labors. A fire was burning brightly under the bluff, and, before it, supported upon sticks driven into the ground, were half a dozen fine fish, which, under the influence of the heat, were emitting an odor that would have tempted an epicure. A coffee-pot simmered and sputtered on a bed of coals that had been raked out on one side of the fire, and on the other stood Friday, the cook, watching some potatoes that were roasting in the ashes. A short distance from the fire was the table, laid for supper. It was a little knoll, thickly covered with grass, which answered the purpose of a tablecloth. The most prominent object upon it was a huge piece of beech bark, which did duty as a bread-plate – only it was filled with crackers, instead of bread; and, judging by the quantity it contained, Friday must have thought his companions would be very hungry after their day's work. Around it were arranged the dishes with which each member of the band had been required to provide himself – a tin plate and cup, and also a spoon, knife, and fork. Two more pieces of bark lay near the fire, waiting to receive the fish and potatoes.

The outfit provided by the band for their former expedition, and which fell into the hands of the students when they recaptured their vessel, had been restored to the owners by the principal, and they had brought it to the island with them. Will Atkins was now engaged in stowing it away in the cabin, Xury was arranging the beds, and Jack Spaniard was fixing up some brackets to receive the guns.

The governor was off reconnoitering. He had issued orders prohibiting his men from going outside the cove in the day-time, but he himself ascended to the upper world at least once in every two or three hours, to see what was going on, and to satisfy himself that the farmer on whose land the cove was situated had seen nothing to arouse his suspicions.

"Now, then," said Friday, "supper's ready. Will Atkins, go after the governor."

"Who made you an officer?" replied Atkins. "Go yourself."

"Now, look here," exclaimed Tom, raising himself on his elbow, and looking indignantly at the cook, "by whose authority do you issue commands here? There are a captain and mate in this society now, and all orders must pass through them."

"I forgot," said Friday. "Cap'n, will you tell somebody to call the governor?"

"Mr. Mate," drawled Tom, "be kind enough to send a man after the governor."

"Will Atkins," said Xury, "go up an' tell the governor that if he wants any grub he'd best be gettin' down here."

The order came from the proper authority this time, and through the proper channels, and Atkins could not refuse to obey.

This style of passing orders had been introduced by Tom, and was what he called the "man of war routine." He insisted that it was no more than right that all the officers should have something to do with whatever was going on; and, after a few objections from Sam, who did not like to surrender any of his authority, he had carried his point. The governor was sharp enough to see, after a little reflection, that this rule, if strictly carried out, would establish him more firmly in his position than ever before. By allowing his officers to show their authority on all occasions, they would be kept good natured; and if any trouble arose in the band, he could depend upon their assistance and support. There were two among the Crusoe men, however, who were not at all pleased with this state of affairs, and they were Will Atkins and Jack Spaniard. By carrying out Tom's system they were made hewers of wood and drawers of water to their companions; and Will Atkins, who was a turbulent fellow, declared that he wouldn't stand it – that there would be a big fuss in the society some day, if the officers persisted in making a servant of him. He always obeyed orders, because he was afraid to refuse; but he growled about it like any old sailor.

"I think this is a purty how-de-do," said he, sullenly, as he started off to obey the mate's command. "It's 'Will Atkins, do this!' 'Will Atkins, do that!' That lazy governor, an' Muley, an' Xury can set around an' do nothin'; but Atkins can't have a minute's peace."

"Go on, and obey the order," said Tom, sternly. "If I hear another word out of you, I'll report you to the governor."

This thread silenced the dissatisfied member of the Crusoe band. He knew, by experience, that the chief had a very unpleasant way of dealing with rebellious spirits, and fear of bodily harm kept him quiet.

By the time Friday had dished up his supper, Atkins returned with the governor, who threw himself upon the grass at the head of the table, while his officers seated themselves on each side of him. He passed his cup to the cook to be filled with coffee, and, as he did so, he ran his eye over the table, and smiled with great satisfaction.

"This is a heap better grub than I had while I lived here alone," said he. "Friday, you know I am heavy on taters; why didn't you cook more of 'em?"

"Them's the last," was the answer.

"Then we must lay in a new supply," said Sam. "We'll go up after dark, an' hook a bushel or so. I've been watchin' them fellers up there, fur the last half hour; an' I notice they have left a good many piles of taters in the field. It'll be the easiest thing in the world fur us to get as many as we want."

The matter was settled without any further remarks. The governor's orders had thus far been received and obeyed without comment; and so small and uninteresting an enterprise as robbing a potato-patch was not worth talking about. The Crusoe men had done such things so often that they thought no more of them than they did of going fishing.

But this expedition was destined to be rather more exciting than any of a similar kind in which they had ever engaged; and if they had only known what was to happen before morning, and could have looked far enough into the future to see the long string of events that was to result from the governor's order, it is probable that they would one and all have refused duty.

Supper over, the Crusoe men lounged on the grass, in front of the cabin, and talked of what they had done, and what they intended to do – all except Friday, who busied himself in clearing the table, and washing the dishes. At sunset it was quite dark in the cove; but the governor knew

there was still plenty of light on the cliffs above, and he waited nearly two hours more before he gave the signal for action.

"I reckon we can be movin' now," said he, at length. "I don't s'pose there is any danger, but, of course, it will be well for us to keep our eyes an' ears open. If them fellers up there havn't found out by this time that there's something goin' on, it aint no fault of our'n; fur we've made mighty free with their fruit an' vegetables durin' the last few nights. Cap'n, see that each man is provided with a sack to put the taters in."

Tom repeated the order to his mate, who went into the cabin, and presently returned with an armful of bags, which he distributed among the band. The chief then lighted his lantern, and, every thing being ready for the start, led the way toward the cliff, the ascent of which was regarded by the members of the band as the worst part of the undertaking. The fissure along which the path ran, was as dark as midnight; and the faint light which the governor's lantern threw out, afforded them but little assistance in finding their way.

They had made the ascent so often, however, that they had become quite familiar with the path, and there was no danger of losing their way, or of falling over the rocks. They crossed the chasm by the rope bridge in safety, and finally reached the summit, where the governor extinguished his light, and stopped to reconnoiter. Every thing was still, and Sam was satisfied that the coast was clear, although he thought it best to give his men a few final instructions.

"There don't seem to be nothin' wrong," said he, "but, bein' an old fox, I know it aint always best to put too much faith in appearances. We won't go straight to the field, 'cause there may be somebody on the watch, you know; an' if they see where we come from, they'll discover our hidin'-place, an' then we can bid good-by to all hopes of ever seein' our island. If they get after us, we'll scatter out an' hide from 'em – we can easy do that in the dark – an' when they're gone, we'll meet here. But remember, fellers, we aint comin' back without them taters."

Sam, who had by this time become well acquainted with the country about his hiding-place, once more placed himself at the head of his men, and led them down the shore for a quarter of a mile; and after passing through two or three fields, came up on the other side of the potato-patch. If the farmer was on the watch, this maneuver would lead him to believe that Sam and his band had come from the village.

The governor had no difficulty in finding the place where the farmer had left his potatoes, and after he had ordered two of the band to act as sentries, he set to work with the others to fill the bags.

For a wonder Tom labored as hard as the rest, and without once noticing how sadly he was soiling his hands and clothes. He was rendered extremely uneasy by the precautions the governor had taken to avoid capture, and he was anxious to get the work done as soon as possible. When his bag was filled, he tied it with a string he had brought with him for the purpose, and was making some desperate efforts to raise it to his shoulder, when an exclamation from one of the sentinels caused him to drop his burden as if it had been a coal of fire.

"See there, fellers!" whispered Xury.

"Look out, men!" chimed in Will Atkins. "I hear something."

Tom looked, but could see nothing. He knew there was danger near, however, and without waiting to see what quarter it was coming from, he jumped over his bag of potatoes, and drew a bee-line for the beach at a rate of speed that astonished himself. He had not made more than half a dozen steps, when an appalling yell rang out on the air, followed by the roar of a gun which sounded so loud that Tom, in his terror, thought it must have been fired close to his ear.

"Halt there, you villain!" shouted a voice close behind the flying captain of the Crusoe band.

Tom heard the order, and knew it was addressed to him, but he did not heed it. He ran faster than ever, the sound of rapidly pursuing footsteps lending him wings. But all his efforts were in vain. The footsteps grew louder, and presently Tom felt a strong hand grasp his collar. A moment

afterward he found himself lying flat on his back, with a heavy weight on his breast holding him down.

CHAPTER V. ATKINS REFUSES DUTY

Tom Newcombe had his first fight that night. He resisted the active young farmer who had seized him, to the best of his ability, although, for all the good it did him, he might as well have surrendered himself a prisoner at once. But the captain of the Crusoe band had a great many reasons for not wishing to be taken prisoner. In the first place, he was pretty well known in that country, and he was afraid that the farmer might recognize in him the son of the richest man in Newport; and, even if he did not, he would know that Tom had come from the village, and he would, of course, take him back there in the morning. Then what would become of him? What would his father do? and what would Johnny Harding, and the rest of the fellows, have to say about it? Above all, what would become of the expedition, and the plan he had laid for destroying the Storm King? His capture would put an end to all the bright dreams in which he had indulged during the past two weeks, and he would once more find himself an errand-boy in his father's office, deprived of every privilege, watched more closely than ever, and teased and tormented by his thoughtless acquaintances, who would never allow him a moment's peace. Tom thought of all these things, and he was surprised at himself when he found that he was fighting for his liberty with a courage and determination he had never supposed himself to possess. He kicked and thrashed about at an astonishing rate, and finding that his efforts were wholly in vain, he tried to frighten his captor by threatening him with a terrible vengeance if he did not immediately release him.

"What do you mean?" roared Tom, striving desperately to unclasp the strong fingers that were holding fast to his collar. "Let me up, or I'll give you cause to remember this night's work as long as you live. Let me up, I say."

"Well, I swan!" exclaimed the farmer, peering down into Tom's face, "I thought you made a poor fight for a man." Then hearing footsteps behind him, he looked up, and called out to some one who was approaching – "I say, Josh, they're only little brats of boys; they aint men at all. I wish I had a good apple-tree switch."

"O, now, you wouldn't use it on me if you had one," drawled Tom.

"Wouldn't! I'd like to know what's the reason?"

"Because you wouldn't dare do it. I always get even with any one who imposes on me, so you had better mind what you are about."

"I don't want any insolence now, for I aint in just the mood to stand it. If you and your crowd are the same fellows who have been prowling around here for the last week, you have stolen more than twenty dollars worth of garden truck. Get up here, you young robber!"

The farmer jerked his prisoner roughly to his feet, and by this time Josh came up. The arrival of re-enforcements, and the ease with which he was handled, convinced Tom that further resistance was useless, and he began to beg lustily.

"O, now, if you will let me go I'll never do it again," he pleaded.

"O yes, we'll let you go," was the encouraging reply. "We'll lock you up till morning, and then take you over to the 'squire; that's what we'll do with you. Catch hold of him, Josh."

His captor held fast to one arm, Josh took hold of the other, and Tom was marched off between them. Of course he pulled back, and tried hard to escape; but the stalwart young farmers walked him along without the least difficulty. When they reached the house, they pulled him up the steps that led to the porch, and opening a door, ushered him into the kitchen, where Tom found himself in the presence of the female portion of the farmer's family.

"Here's one of the rogues, mother," exclaimed Josh. "Sit down, and let's have a good look at you."

If Tom at that moment could have purchased his freedom by promising that he would give up his new idea, and leave the students in quiet possession of the Storm King, he would have done it, gladly. He sank into the chair Josh pointed out to him, and sat with his chin resting on his breast, and his eyes fastened on the floor, not daring to look up long enough to ascertain whether or not there was any one in the room with whom he was acquainted. He knew that half a dozen pairs of eyes were looking at him with curiosity; and he felt that if he had never before been utterly disgraced, he was now. No one spoke to him, and in a few minutes the silence became so oppressive that Tom would have welcomed a thunderstorm, or an earthquake. He twisted about in his chair, whirled his cap in his hand, and gazed steadily at a crack in the floor, until he was relieved by the noise of feet on the porch, which was followed by the entrance of the farmer, with the rest of the party who had been guarding the potato-patch. Then, for the first time, he mustered up courage enough to look around him. He noted two things – one was, that every person in the room was a stranger to him; and the other, that he had a companion in his misery, in the shape of his mate, who, unlike his superior officer, did not seem to be at all abashed at finding himself the center of so many eyes. He held his head up, and looked about him as if he felt quite at his ease.

"Well, we've got two of them," said the farmer, in a tone of great satisfaction, "and I guess we've frightened the others so badly that they'll let us alone in future. But how is this?" he added, glancing first at the rich man's son, and then at the ragged, bare-footed ferry-boy. "There must have been two parties of them."

"No, there wasn't," said Xury. "We all belong to one crowd."

"What's your name?" continued the farmer, addressing himself to the captain of the Crusoe band.

"O, now, I'm Tom – "

"Avast, there!" cried Xury, so suddenly that he startled every one in the room. "His name is Muley, mister – that's his name."

"Muley? Muley what?"

"Muley nothin' – just Muley. That's all the name he's got. My name is Xury, an' that's all the name I've got."

Tom was astonished at the impudence of his mate. He had been on the point of revealing every thing, for, now that he was a prisoner, he could not see the use of further concealment. According to his way of thinking, the expedition had been nipped in the bud, his splendid idea could not be carried out, and if the farmer had questioned him closely, he would have told him all about the Crusoe men and their hiding-place. It made no difference to Tom that he had promised to keep these things secret. He was in trouble, and all he cared for was to get out of it. Xury, however, was a very different sort of boy. He had promised never to reveal any of the secrets intrusted to his keeping, he had sealed the compact by shaking hands with his chief, and he would have endured almost any punishment before proving himself unworthy of the confidence of his fellows. Besides, he did not believe that the affairs of the band were so very desperate. He knew that the governor would never desert him, and as long as he and Tom remained on the island, there were some hopes that those of the band who had escaped would find means to effect their release.

"Of course I know that those are not your right names," said the farmer, at length, "but I am not particular about that, for when I take you to the village to-morrow, I can find out all about you. What did you intend to do with those potatoes?"

"Eat 'em," answered Xury. "What else does a feller do with taters?"

"Have you eaten all the fruit and vegetables you have stolen during the last week?"

"Sartin."

"Well, I'll put you where you won't steal any more to-night. Josh, you and Bill take them down cellar and leave them there with the rats."

"That don't scare me none," said Xury. "I never saw no rats yet I was afraid of. What will you do with us in the mornin', mister?"

"I intend to break up these midnight plundering expeditions, by making an example of you. I shall take you before 'Squire Thompson."

"What do you reckon he'll do with us?"

"He will put you in the House of Refuge for three or four years, most likely, and I think that would be a good place for you. Take them away, boys."

Josh lighted a candle and led the way into the cellar, followed by Tom and his mate, Bill bringing up the rear. While the young farmers were examining the windows and door, to make sure that their prisoners could not escape, Tom took a hurried survey of his quarters, which he found to be cheerless in the extreme. Three sides of the cellar were supplied with windows – narrow apertures, placed about as high as his head from the floor, and protected by stout iron bars which were set into the walls. On the fourth side was a heavy door, secured by a padlock. Tom took these things in at a glance, and quite agreed with Josh, when he said,

"Now, then, you young robbers, you are secure for the night."

"And I would advise you to keep quiet, and not go to kicking up any fuss down here," chimed in Bill. "If you feel like going to sleep, you can lie down on those boxes."

Josh and Bill took their departure, and the Crusoe men were left to their meditations, and to the companionship of the rats. Tom heard them close and lock the door at the head of the stairs, and, groping his way to a box in one corner of the cellar, he sat down to think over his situation; while Xury, whistling softly to himself, began an examination of the windows. This coolness and indifference amazed Tom, who could not understand how a boy, with the prospect before him of serving out a term of years in the House of Refuge, could take matters so easily.

"O, now, quit that whistling," drawled Tom, who found it hard work to keep back his tears.

"What fur?" demanded Xury. "There's no use of bein' down in the mouth, cap'n. Scoldin' an' frettin' won't help us none."

"Did any body ever see so unlucky a boy as I am? Other fellows get along through the world without any trouble, but something is always happening to bother me. To-morrow morning I shall be taken back to the village."

"Well, I sha'n't. I aint goin' back to Newport till the governor says the word."

"But those men up stairs will make you go," drawled Tom.

"They'll have to find me first, won't they? If they think they can keep a Crusoe man in this cellar all night, they'll find out their mistake in the mornin'. They'll go to bed before long, an' then we'll see what we can do."

As Xury said this, he stretched himself out on the box beside his captain, and settling into a comfortable position, waited patiently for the farmer and his family to retire to rest. He expected to be free before morning; and, as his examination had satisfied him that he could not effect his escape without assistance, he was depending entirely upon the governor. Had he known what was going on at that moment, a short distance from the house, he might not have had so much faith in the chief's ability to release him.

Sam, Jack Spaniard, Friday, and Will Atkins, more fortunate than their fellows, succeeded in eluding their pursuers, and met on the bluff, above the cove, and sat down to rest after their long run, and to talk over the events of the night. The governor reported the capture of Tom and his mate. He was but a short distance from them when they were overtaken, although he did not know who the unlucky ones were, until he met the band on the cliff. The Crusoe men were dismayed when they learned the extent of their loss, and some of them were strongly in favor of abandoning their enterprise. Will Atkins, especially, was very much disheartened, and urged his companions to return to the village at once.

"The jig is up now, fellers," said he, "an' I, fur one, am goin' home. Tommy an' Xury are captured, an' the first thing we know, we may be gobbled up, too. An' even if we aint, we four fellers can't rob Mr. Henry's store, an' take the Sweepstakes besides."

"Now, Atkins, who asked you fur any advice?" demanded the governor, angrily. "The expedition aint dead yet, even if two of us have fallen into the hands of the enemy. As soon as we get rested we'll go up to the house, an' if we can find out where the cap'n an' Xury are, we'll help 'em."

"I've run risks enough," returned the discontented member. "I just aint a goin' up to the house."

"What's that you say?" exclaimed the chief, astonished and enraged to hear his authority thus set at defiance.

"I say I sha'n't go up to the house," repeated Atkins, decidedly; "an' I mean it."

"Why, you wouldn't have us to leave them two fellers without once tryin' to help 'em, would you?"

"I don't care what you do. You can do as you please, an' so will I."

"Now, Atkins, have you forgot them lessons I have given you? If you don't look out I'll have to larn you a few more. You're gettin' to be mighty sassy, lately."

"You can't scare me none, governor, fur I aint alone like I used to be. I've got at least one good friend in the band. Jack, you'll stand by me."

"I will," replied Jack Spaniard, who arose from the rock where he had been sitting, and walked over to the side of the mutineer. "You see, governor," he added, "me an' Atkins have got tired of doin' all the work. You never let us have things our way at all, an' we aint a goin' to stand it no longer. If you want to help the cap'n an' Xury you can do it yourself."

The governor listened to this speech in silence. He had been expecting a demonstration of this kind from Atkins, but he was not prepared for so decided an opposition to his authority. Atkins had long shown a disposition to make trouble in the band, and during the last three days he had been more disorderly than ever. The governor had often heard him grumbling to himself, and he had made up his mind to whip all the rebellious spirit out of him at the first good opportunity. That opportunity was now presented; but Sam did not think it safe to attempt to carry out his resolve. Atkins was backed up by Jack Spaniard, and with his aid, he was likely to prove more than a match for the redoubtable bully. If Tom and his mate had been there to assist him, he could have crushed the rebellion in short order.

"Of all the mean things that have happened in the band since I got to be governor, this yere is the beat," said Sam, after a moment's pause. "You two fellers promised, not more'n two weeks ago, to obey all orders, an' to stand by your friends, if they got into trouble; an' now you are goin' back on your word. There aint no honor about such fellers as you be. Friday, whose side are you on?"

"On your'n, governor; I don't think we shall ever see our island now, but I'll stick to you as long as any body does."

"All right!" exclaimed the chief, immensely relieved. "Jack Spaniard, you're always been a good, law-abidin' man, an' if you'll come away from that feller, I won't say nothin' to you; I'll let you off easy. An' you, Atkins, you've been spilin' fur a good drubbin', an' the only way you can escape it, is by sayin' that you'll tend to your duty, an' obey orders like a man had oughter do. Let's hear from you."

"I won't do duty," replied Atkins, sullenly.

Jack Spaniard hesitated a moment before he answered. He knew that those who had dared to oppose the governor, had thus far been brought to grief, and he was almost inclined to take him at his word, and leave Atkins to fight his own battles. But he had been highly incensed by the new rules Tom had introduced into the society, and, believing that he was as good as any body, he did not like to be obliged to act the part of a servant. More than that, the events of the night had dampened his ardor. He began to see that there were a multitude of risks to be run, and a good

many obstacles to be overcome, before they could begin their intended cruise, and he thought it policy to abandon the enterprise before he found himself in serious trouble.

"Me an' Atkins will stick together," said he.

"Very good," replied the chief; "an' you an' Atkins may make up your minds to sup sorrow with the same spoon. I am governor of this band, an' I'll come out at the top of the heap yet; now you mark what I say. What are you goin' to do?"

"We're goin' into the cove after our share of the outfit," replied Will Atkins. "When we get it, we're goin' back to the village. Come on, Jack; we've wasted time enough in talkin'."

The two mutineers began to descend the cliff, keeping their eyes fastened on the governor, and holding themselves in readiness to resist any attack; but, to Friday's surprise, Sam made no attempt to detain them.

CHAPTER VI. THE GOVERNOR'S STRATEGY

When Atkins and his companion had disappeared down the path that led to the cove, Sam placed his hands behind his back, and began pacing thoughtfully to and fro, while Friday, dismayed and perplexed by this unlooked-for event, and utterly unable to discover any way out of the difficulty, stretched himself on the ground and waited for the chief to speak.

The affairs of the band were certainly beginning to look desperate. With two of his best men in the hands of the enemy, two more setting his authority at defiance, and with only one companion upon whom to depend, what could the governor do? A less determined and persevering boy would have given up in despair; but Sam, who, since the idea of leading Crusoe life had been suggested to him, had thought and dreamed about nothing else, was not easily discouraged. He was resolved that he would not abandon the course of action which had been determined on by the band a few days before; but he could not carry it out unless assisted by the two mutineers, and, as they could not be coaxed to listen to reason, they must be compelled. He would punish them for their disobedience, and show them, once for all, that his authority could not be resisted with impunity.

"Friday," said he, "I'll never forget you fur this night's work. You've got the best name of any of us, an' so has Will Atkins. The Friday the book tells about stuck to Crusoe like a brother, an' Atkins done nothin' but study up meanness an' mischief. Our Atkins is doin' the same thing; but he won't make nothin', no more'n the one he's named after did. He'll be glad enough to come to terms by mornin', now you see if he aint. We don't intend to let him an' Jack Spaniard go back to the village to blow on us, an' the first thing to be done is to fasten 'em in the cove, so that we can find 'em when we want 'em."

"How are we goin' to do it?" asked Friday.

"We'll take down the bridge," replied the governor, with a chuckle, "an' then let's see 'em get out. They don't know the channels across the shoals, so, of course, they won't dare to try to sail out; an' after the bridge is gone, there's only one way they can get across the gully. I'll larn 'em how to get up a mutiny."

The chief, after lighting his lantern, led the way down the path, and presently came to a halt on the brink of the chasm. Atkins and Jack Spaniard having crossed it a few minutes before, the rope was on the opposite side, and Friday could see no way to obtain possession of it.

"I'll tell you how I am goin' to manage it," said the governor, in answer to an inquiring glance from his companion. "I told you there is one way to get across, even after the bridge is gone, didn't I? Well, do you see this tree here? It leans over the gully, an' one of its limbs runs into the tree on the opposite side that the rope is made fast to."

Friday elevated his lantern and gazed up into the darkness, but could see nothing more than a dense canopy of leaves and branches hanging over the chasm. He shuddered at the thought of attempting to cross on so frail a bridge. "I wouldn't go up there fur nothin'," said he, "an' I wouldn't advise you to try it, either."

"Well, it aint the pleasantest job in the world," replied Sam, carelessly, "but I know just where the limb is, an' I am sure I can cross on it. Howsomever, I am free to confess, that if I could think of any other way to get the rope, I wouldn't try it."

"If you can cross that way, what's the reason that Will Atkins an' Jack Spaniard can't do it too?" inquired Friday.

"'Cause, after I get over an' come back, nobody will ever cross the gully that way again. We'll pull the limb down. Now, you hold the lantern up high an' give me all the light you can. It's mighty dark up there, an' I don't care about missin' my hold an' fallin' down on them rocks."

The chief scrambled up the cliff to the tree of which he had spoken, and began to ascend it. He worked his way up with the agility of a squirrel, and presently disappeared from the view of his man below. When he came in sight again, he was on the limb that stretched out over the chasm, and which was bending and cracking beneath his weight in a manner that made Friday extremely nervous. But Sam resolutely held on his way, and finally swung himself safely into the branches of the tree on the opposite side. After securing the rope, he threw one end of it to Friday, made the other fast to the limb on which he had crossed the gully, and a few moments afterward he slid down the bluff and seated himself on the ground beside his companion, to recover his breath.

"I'll show them fellers what they are about," said he, wiping the big drops of perspiration from his face. "I'll larn 'em how to get up a mutiny, after promisin', honor bright, to obey all orders. Now, if we've got muscle enough to break that limb, we are all right."

"Couldn't Atkins make a bridge, by cuttin' down one of them trees?" asked Friday.

"No, he couldn't. The trees on that side won't fall across the gully, 'cause they all lean the other way. Ketch hold, now, an' pull fur life."

The governor and his man grasped the ropes, and, exerting all their strength, suddenly found themselves lying flat in the path. The limb, unable to resist the strain brought to bear upon it, parted with a noise like the report of a cannon, and fell crashing into the gully, carrying with it a perfect avalanche of rocks and earth which it detached from the opposite bluff. That bridge was destroyed, and there was no way of escape for the mutineers.

The next thing was to untie the rope from the limb which lay at the bottom of the chasm. The only way it could be accomplished was for one of the Crusoe men to go down into the gully, and this Friday volunteered to do. Accordingly, the end of the rope which they held in their hands was made fast to the nearest tree, and Friday, after tying the lantern around his waist, descended out of sight. In a few minutes he re-appeared, climbing the rope, which was pulled up and hidden away in the bushes.

"That job is done," said the chief, with a long breath of relief, "an' them two fellers are fastened up as tight as if they were in jail. I'll larn 'em how to get up a mutiny!"

"But, governor, how will we get across?" asked Friday.

"Easy enough. One of us will climb up an' make one end of the rope fast to this tree that leans over the gully, an' we'll swing back an' forth just as we did before. The next job we've got to do aint so easy. It's one I don't like; but, if I was a prisoner, I'd think it mighty mean of my men if they deserted me, an' I'm goin' to do to the cap'n an' Xury just as I'd like to be done by."

The governor and his man ascended to the top of the bluff, and bent their steps toward the farm-house, which was now shrouded in total darkness. The inmates had all retired to rest, happy in the belief that those of the band who had escaped had made the best of their way to the village, and that their potato-patch was safe for the rest of the night. But the Crusoe men, apprehensive that the farmer might still be on the watch, were at first very cautious in their movements. They walked around the house several times without seeing any signs of the enemy, and, growing bolder by degrees, began to search the out-buildings, hoping that Tom and his mate might be confined in one of them. But their efforts to ascertain the whereabouts of their unlucky companions were unrewarded, and, after half an hour's fruitless search, even Sam began to get discouraged.

"Mebbe they have taken them to the village already," he whispered, leaning disconsolately against a corner of the house. "If they have, the expedition is up stump, easy enough, an' we can bid good-by to all hopes of ever seein' our island. What's that? Didn't you hear some one call?"

"I thought I did," replied Friday, "but I wasn't sartin'."

"I say, governor, are you deaf? Look this way. Here we are."

The words seemed to come from the ground at their very feet; and the governor and Friday heard them plainly enough this time. Their attention was drawn to one of the cellar windows, and there they saw the two prisoners, with their faces pressed close against the bars.

"What are you doin' down there?" asked Friday, in an excited whisper. "Are you locked up?"

"I reckon," replied Xury. "We wouldn't stay here if we wasn't, would we?"

"O, now, yes, we're locked up," drawled Tom, who, delighted as he was at seeing the chief, could not forget his lazy way of talking. "But you are going to let us out, are you not?"

"Sartin. That's what we come here fur, an' we'll do it if we have to burn the shantee."

"You needn't go to all that trouble, governor," said Xury. "Do you see that door around there on the other side of the house?"

Sam walked around the building, and when he came back, he said that he had seen the door.

"Well," continued Xury, "all you have got to do is to raise a rumpus out there, an' awaken the people up stairs."

"Humph!" sneered Sam.

"Hold on till I get through, governor. Of course, when they hear you, they'll come out an' foller you; an' when the men have all left the house, one of you can slip back an' cut down that door an' let us out. Here's an ax to do it with," he added, passing the implement through the window to the chief.

"That's a good idea, after all," said Sam.

"Friday, you take the ax, an' I'll do the runnin'. I'll lead the fellers toward the beach, an' you stay here an' watch your chance to beat down that door. How many folks are there in the house, Xury?"

"Ten altogether – six men an' boys, an' four women," was the reply. "I know, 'cause I counted 'em."

"Of course, the women will stay in the house," continued the governor, addressing himself to Friday; "an' when they hear you cuttin' at the door, they'll be sartin to come out an' holler at you; but that needn't scare you. Now, then, how shall we awaken the folks?"

The chief had scarcely propounded this question, when it was answered in way he had not expected. A window above him was thrown open, a head appeared, and a voice called out, "Well, I swan!"

The governor and his man did not wait to hear what the farmer had to say next. The enemy were aroused, and an opportunity was given them to try the plan Xury had suggested. Friday, who well understood the part he was expected to perform, sprang around the house out of sight; while Sam started across the field toward the beach.

"Stop there, you young rascal!" shouted the man in the window. "Josh! Bill! Wake up, an' get out there! Those robbers have come back again!"

The window came down with a crush, and Friday, who had by this time concealed himself behind a corn-crib, a short distance from the cellar door, heard a great commotion in the house. Lights flashed from the windows, men and women run about calling to each other, and presently the door opened and Josh and Bill appeared.

"There they are!" exclaimed one discovering Sam, who was by this time well on his way across the field; "hurry up there, boys. He's got a long start, and is running like a scared turkey."

These last words were addressed to the men in the house, who came out one after another, some without their hats, some bare-footed, others pulling on their coats as they ran, and all following after Bill and Josh, who were flying across the field in hot pursuit of the governor. Friday, from his hiding-place, counted them as they sprang down the steps, and when the sixth man had left the house, and was out of sight in the darkness, he straightened up and prepared for action. He listened a moment to the shrill, excited voices of the women, and clutching his ax with a firm hold, he came out from behind the corn-crib and ran toward the house. A few rapid steps brought him to the cellar door, which he attacked furiously. The first blow he struck echoed through the cellar like a peal of thunder, alarming the women up stairs; and the second brought them to the porch, where they stood watching Friday's operations in speechless amazement. The Crusoe man, intent

on releasing his companions, gave no heed to what was going on around him, until a chorus of angry screams arose from the porch; then he started and trembled a little, but was not frightened from his work. He redoubled his efforts, the door began to bend and groan, and was finally forced from its fastenings, and Tom and his mate sprang out. Then the screams arose in greater volume than before, and reached the ears of the farmer and his men, who abandoned the pursuit of the governor, and returned to the house with all possible speed. But they were too late; for, long before they arrived, Tom and his companions had made good their escape. The shattered door, and the ax lying where Friday had thrown it after effecting the release of the prisoners, were all that were left to remind the farmer of the Crusoe band.

CHAPTER VII. THE GOVERNOR STORMS THE REBELS

"Hip! hip! hurrah!" exclaimed Tom Newcombe, in an excited whisper, "I am free once more, and I'll have a chance yet to destroy that yacht. If the crew of the Storm King only knew what is going to happen, they would be sorry that I escaped."

"You can thank me for it," said Sam.

"An' me, too," chimed in Xury. "I was the one who found the ax in the cellar an' studied up the plan the governor carried out."

"I guess I had oughter have a little of the praise," observed Friday. "It aint every feller who would have stood there an' cut down that door with all them women hollerin' at him."

"We've all done well," said the chief, "all except Will Atkins an' Jack Spaniard, an' they are cowards an' traitors."

The Crusoe men were gathered on the bluff at the head of the path, sweating and panting, and congratulating themselves on the success of their undertaking. The governor, especially, regarded it as something well worth boasting of, and he was in excellent spirits. His society, although it had thus far failed to accomplish the object for which it was organized, had already made for itself a brilliant record. It had performed an exploit in the village that would be talked about and wondered at as long as the military academy should stand, or the present generation of boys exist. Its members, acting under his instructions, had overpowered three times their number of students, captured their vessel, and would certainly have got out to sea with her but for the treachery of Tom Newcombe. But, great as was this achievement, it sank into insignificance when compared with the one they had just performed. The chief had succeeded in releasing the prisoners confined in the farm-house, and that, too, with the assistance of only one companion, and in the face of a mutiny that had, at one time, bid fair to break up the Crusoe band. The governor assumed the lion's share of the honor of this exploit, and, as he thought, with good reason, for he had run all the risk. He had led the men away from the house, and given Friday a chance to cut down the door. His affairs had looked desperate a little while before, but by his skill and determination he had succeeded in bringing some order out of the confusion, and the only thing that remained to be done was to punish the traitors, which was a matter he could attend to at his leisure. He believed that the rebellion had already died out, and that, when he descended into the cove, he would find the mutineers ready to accept any terms he might see fit to offer them.

"What's become of Atkins and Jack Spaniard?" asked Tom, who seemed, for the first time, to notice the absence of those worthies. "I don't see them anywhere."

"Didn't I say that they were traitors and cowards?" replied the governor. "Listen, now, an' I'll tell you all about it."

Sam then proceeded to give Tom and his mate a glowing description of the mutiny, and, during the course of his narration, he artfully aroused their indignation by dwelling upon the meanness and cowardice displayed by Atkins and Jack Spaniard in deserting the band at the very time their services were most needed, to assist in releasing the prisoners, and wound up by telling how he had secured possession of the rope and pulled down the limb, thus cutting off all chance of escape for the mutineers. Tom and Xury were highly enraged, especially the former, who denounced the faithless Crusoe men in the strongest terms. He also took occasion to impress his auditors with the fact that the society could not long exist without the hearty co-operation of all its members, and that no punishment was too severe for one who could refuse to hasten to the relief of a comrade in distress. Tom made a long speech on this subject, emphasizing his remarks by shaking his fists in the air, and stamping his feet on the ground, and all the while forgetting that,

when questioned by the farmer in the house, he had been on the point of committing the very sin he was so loudly condemning. Xury remembered the circumstance, but he did not think it worth speaking about.

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