

enough that she was bound for, and gaining upon us, too.

"Presently he spoke out, 'Well, lads, there's no help for it that I can see, but this—let them come and find a clear hold and an empty ship. They may make of it what they can then. A man can't swing for that anyhow.'

"Well, sir, at it we went. We put a sail over the side of the ship for a blind, and then to work. It was tobacco done up in canvas bags, made handy for the sake of easy carrying. Half of us went down in the hold, and slung up the bags as fast as ever we could; and the rest were slipping them over the side of the ship, under the sail and into the sea. Eh, how we worked! 'Heave away, lads,' the captain kept saying; 'as well not do it at all as leave a bag behind—a single one will show them the game we've been up to.'

"Bit by bit we were stripped to the waist, and steaming with the heat of it from captain to cabin-boy. Pity enough it seemed, to be slinging the stuff over like that; but it was too late to think about that now. 'At it, my hearties,' says the captain. 'It will be something to laugh at to see the officer come aboard, and set his chaps to search the ship, and find an empty hold. Heave away, my lads.'

"We laughed at the captain's joke, and worked all the fiercer for his bit of fun. Of course the hold soon began to show the difference in the cargo, working as we were. But we were beginning to get a bit fagged and spent.

"'Fling away, lads,' the captain kept saying, himself doing the work of two men. 'They will spoil our laughing if they find anything left.'

"And then again it was still, except the splashing of the bags in the sea.

"We were beginning to think that we should do it.

"A quarter of an hour more, and 'tis clear,' cried the captain, joyfully; and every man felt that he could breathe again. We were going at it for our lives, and never an eye or an ear for anything else. Presently the captain sees that the boy was getting a bit done up, and he tells him to run out and look how the cutter was coming along. He was gone for a second, and then he came back, and you wouldn't have known him. We all stopped to look at him—we couldn't help it. His face was as white as death; and there he stood, with his eyes staring as if they would drop out of his head. His mouth was wide open, but he couldn't say a word, and his hands were stretched out before him. The captain began swearing at him, and asked him what he meant. But the lad he couldn't utter a sound. It was more like a boy out of his senses than anything else. Then the captain jumps up and grips his arms and shakes him. The poor little fellow managed to gasp out—'It won't sink!' And he fell down in a faint.

"It won't sink! We guessed in a moment what he meant. We hurried away to the stern of the ship, but nobody expected to see anything like the sight that was waiting for us there—a sight, sir, to fetch a man's heart out of him. It was a beautiful morning, like this. And there right away in the glistening track of the sun was the cargo. You could see the line of the canvas bags, rising with the bit of swell, and shining in the light, one after the other, reaching away to the cutter herself; there they were, every one of them proclaiming our guilt to all the heaven above us, and to every ship that was up and down the coast. Our hands just went down, sir, and there we sat, every one of us still as death, with his eyes set on that dreadful line of evidence against us, and every man with those words ringing in his soul—'It won't sink!'"

My friend was silent for a minute or two, and I thought the story was finished, at any rate so far as he cared to tell it. I had turned to enjoy the delicious stillness and the exquisite beauty of the scene, when he began again, but in another tone—

"Well, sir, it did not end there. I little thought at the time what would come out of that empty hold; and least of all that it could be any good. Of course I often used to think a bit seriously about things, and meant to mend; but somehow it never came to anything. Still my dear old mother kept praying on for me, and in spite of everything she would always hold to it that I should come right some day. 'Prayer is not much good if it isn't stronger than the devil and sin,' she would say, even when father and the rest of them had given me up. It was somewhere about two or three years after the adventure with the cutter, that one night—the last night in the year, it was—I had gone down the river in my boat, thinking I might get

some wild fowl, for there were a good many in the river. It was a dull misty night when I started. I got down some distance and then pushed away in under the bank, waiting for the moon to get up. It was all as still and quiet as could be, with never a sound but now and then the cry of a curlew, or the wings of the wild ducks overhead. The moon was getting up behind the hill, and the trees were standing all black against the light, and the silver shining between their trunks and branches. From ever so far off there came the sound of a peal of bells, ringing the old year out.

"The last night of the year,' I said to myself. Of course I couldn't help feeling a bit sad at the words, though I can hardly tell why. But as I sat there in the stillness, it began to come to my mind how I used to kneel down at my mother's side while she taught me to pray. I could hear her voice quite plain telling me of one good man and another, and of what they had done to make the world better. And I felt her hand laid upon my head again, and could see her sitting by the fire with her eyes closed and her lips moving, and I knew she was praying God to bless me.

"I sighed as I thought of it all, and said half aloud, 'If I died to-night, there isn't a soul in the world that would thank God that I ever lived.' I began to feel as if out of joint with everything. The more I thought of it the plainer I saw that my whole life was a failure. God had made me for himself, and here I am living as if there were no God, and no eternity. There would be a terrible account to settle some day. And here another year was almost gone.

"I did not think myself any very great

there in the mist and shadow of that side of the river, and there came a flock of ducks right down within easy shot. I was thinking about the pledge and never saw them till they were right on me. Then I put my gun to my shoulder, and in a minute more I should have a brace, but that very second it came into my mind that the public-house where I met my mates was called 'The Wild Drake.' 'You shall go,' I cried out, half laughing as I said it—'go for a token that by God's help I have done with 'The Wild Drake' for ever and ever.' Well, I knew I should make short work of the old company, and of the old ways, too, as soon as I had done with the drink. Then I thought of one thing and another. I would go with mother on Sundays, and a half a dozen things would come to my mind that I would have done with. My resolution seemed to grow with every new surrender, and all my heart was lighter and gladder for everything that I gave up. My whole life should be changed, and this new year should have a brighter tale to tell than any that I had ever lived before. Then I thought I would push off the boat and get away home, and tell the dear old mother what I meant to do.

"Ah, sir, I can never forget it. I had pushed off and turned round homeward, and just settled to the oars, feeling as if everything was right—wind and tide and all was fair. There right in front of me was the glistening water, stretching like a sheet of silver away towards the moon. In an instant it all flashed back upon me as plain as I ever saw anything in my life. I could see the cabin-boy with his pale face and his hands stretched out, and I seemed to hear him cry again—



"IT WON'T SINK."

sinner—not then—for I never got drunk, nor went into bad ways like other fellows did. As for smuggling, it never occurred to me that there was any harm in that, except for the company it brought me into. It was the emptiness and uselessness of my life that kept troubling me. The moon was rising higher, and the light fell on the flat stretch of shore opposite to me, gleaming in the pools here and there, and in the little curves and hollows that the tide had left. And somehow it came to be a picture of my life—it lay ugly and useless like the mud—no good. You couldn't grow anything in it, and couldn't even walk on it; or build on it, there was no foundation for anything. A life like that mud-bank, I said to myself with a shudder. My sad thoughts went slowly sinking down within me, until now the moon rode clear and full in the sky, lighting up all the woods opposite to me, and seeming to make it stiller than ever. Then out upon the silence came the pealing of the bells. Should the new year be no better than the rest?—only another stretch of mud, foul and ugly and useless?

"I bowed my head on the side of the boat, and prayed God to help me. By his grace, from that night I would be another man. I would just give up anything, everything I could think of that hindered my being a good man. Though I did not get drunk, I made up my mind to have done with the drink; never would I cross the threshold of the public-house again."

My friend laughed as he came to this part of the story. "I signed the pledge, sir, but it was in a new fashion, too—perhaps never a temperance pledge was signed that way before. I was sitting

'It won't sink!' I had been clearing the hold, pitching the cargo into the sea, but there it was; right away behind me, like as if it stretched up to the very throne of God, there was every word that I had ever spoken; everything that I had ever done, every wish that I had ever felt—there it lay, right out in the light of God. My soul sank down in helplessness and horror. 'It won't sink!' were the words that kept ringing over and over again in my ears.

"I just flung myself at the oars with a desperate fierceness. It was no good my trying—not a bit. It did not matter what I did; there seemed nothing else for it but to give right in to everything that was bad. Whatever I did, wherever I went, there was all the past stretching out before God—nothing forgotten; nothing buried! It was no use playing the fool like this any longer—clearing the hold when the cargo wouldn't sink. Tears filled my eyes, partly because all my hopes were gone, and partly because I was so helpless to make things any better. I just pulled away fierce and almost mad, wishing with every stroke of the oar that I could get down under the water and end it all.

"Everything seemed to mock me. So on in that stillness I went, feeling the wretchedest soul that ever lived, just as if I was dragging that dreadful past after me with every stroke of the oar. I couldn't undo a thing of it, couldn't unsay a word! It seemed a mockery to ring bells in a world like this.

"But as I pulled on the fierceness died out of me, until all that I felt was a great burden of helplessness. My hold of the oars grew slacker, until I stopped pulling altogether, and just drifted with the tide. Tears filled my eyes and rolled down my cheeks. I looked right

away up into the heavens—there was only a star or two shining, but somehow it made me feel that God was looking down upon me, and surely, I thought, he must pity me. Could I not kneel down and tell him all about it? And my mother's sayings came to my mind—that prayer is stronger than the devil and sin. I pulled ashore and knoed down and began to pray. I just pleaded guilty to it all. 'There it lies, Lord, floating out under thine eye, all the past,' I cried in my distress. I told him that I did want to start afresh, but that it was no use if I had always to go dragging the past after me like this. I did not like to ask the Lord to stick it all, but I did ask him what he could do with it. The more I prayed the more sure I felt that he would help me. I had forgotten all about the time, and just knoed on in prayer. How long I had been there I can't tell, perhaps for an hour or more. Then all in a moment, I don't know how, but I could sooner doubt my own life than doubt this, it was like a blaze of light on my mind—everything was as clear as day. The Lord Jesus Christ had come on purpose to deliver me from that past. It was gone—all gone. It was all cut off and sunk. I looked, and it was as if I could see across the shining water, and there was not a speck upon it, not one black sin left floating there. My sins were buried in the depths of the sea. I shouted for joy. No poor condemned sinner ever felt so glad at his escape as I did that night. The past was sunk—no eye could see it; none could ever find it again; it was gone, to be remembered against me no more for ever. Turn where I would it was sunshine and calm. There was no condemnation. Once again I looked up with my eyes filled with tears, but they were tears of joy this time.

"So that is what came out of that summer morning's adventure. And that is how I began the New Year, thank God, and how I began a new life, too. I have very often thought of it since, and said to myself—'It's no good clearing the hold if the cargo won't sink.'"

**KEEP WAX AWAY FROM THE SUN.**

"I lost my temper again to-day," said Madge, dolefully.

"How did it come about?" asked her mother. "Every time that happens it is easier again."

"Oh, I just went home with Sara and Belle, and they teased me, as they always do. They mimicked my voice and made fun of the way I held my hands in giving my recitation. They know I can't bear to be mimicked. I get furious in a minute."

"It seems to me," said Aunt Rebecca, looking up from her work, "that the safest thing for you would be to keep away from those girls. They always stir you up, and you know it. There is an old saying that 'he that hath a head of wax may not walk in the sun.'"

Madge laughed at the quaint words, but her mother said, seriously: "Daughter, your temper grows hot at a teasing word as quickly as wax melts in the sun; and since you know your weakness, one way to help it is to keep away from temptation. 'Tis the only safe and sensible way, and you will do well to follow it."—Sunday Evangelist.

**When I Have Time.**

When I have time, so many things I'll do  
To make life happier and more fair,  
For those whose lives are crowded now  
With care,  
I'll help to lift them from their low  
Despair—  
When I have time!

When I have time, the friend I love so  
Well  
Shall know no more these weary, tolling  
Days,  
I'll lead her feet in pleasant paths always,  
And cheer her heart with words of  
Sweetest praise—  
When I have time!

When you have time, the friend you hold  
So dear  
May be beyond the reach of all your  
Sweet intent,  
May never know that you so kindly  
Meant  
To fill her life with sweet content—  
When you had time!

Now is the time! Ah! friend, no longer  
Wait  
To scatter loving smiles and words of  
Cheer  
To those around, whose lives are now so  
Drear,  
They may not need you in the coming  
Year—  
Now is the time!