

it time to interfere, and, drawing nearer, began in a loud, half-threatening tone:

"Say, now, Captain—" but before he could get out another word, Ben wheeled round, his face aflame with anger, and rising to his utmost height, he shook his mighty fist in Evil-Eye's face as he roared:

"Curse you! Hold that infernal tongue of yours or I'll tear it out of your throat."

Involuntarily Evil-Eye shrank back from the giant who towered so threateningly above him, and satisfied that he would not venture to interfere again, Ben turned to resume his talk with the Captain, while the other, with a shower of imprecations, slunk off down to the boat, where he sought to vent his venom by abusing Ben before the crew.

For some time longer the conversation between Ben and the Captain continued. What arguments Ben used, or what inducements he offered, Eric never knew, but oh! what a bound his heart gave when the two men separated, and Ben came towards him with his sombre face so full of relief as to appear almost joyful.

"It's all right, my lad," said he, grasping Eric's shoulder with his iron hand. "You're to come with us. Let's hurry up now, and get into the boat."

Eric could not speak for joy and gratitude. His heart seemed to swell within him as though it would burst. A look of unspeakable thankfulness, and a passionate pressure of his hand were Ben's reward, and he—huge and rough-moulded as he was—asked for nothing more.

Evil-Eye scowled terribly when Eric sprang into the boat, but dared only mutter his protests, for, clearly enough, Ben was in no mood for trifling, and the Captain had come over to his side.

Without waiting for an invitation, Prince promptly leaped in beside his young master. The men in the boat laughed at this, and the Captain, noticing the dog, said:

"Let him come. He's too good to leave."

The first attempt to pass the breakers was successful, and in a few minutes more Eric, with a feeling of glad relief beyond all power of words to express, stood upon the schooner's deck, and looked back at the island which for well-nigh half-a-year had been his prison, and was still his beloved parents' grave.

The low broad weather-beaten hut was easily visible.

"How good God was to protect me there!" thought he, as he recalled the many scenes of violence he had witnessed. "I wonder what is to become of me now. But I won't worry. He has saved me from the Island. He will take care of me."

With many a "Yo! heave-ho!" the anchor was raised, the schooner's broad wings set to catch the breeze already blowing, and soon she was speeding away southward, steering for Boston harbor.

The expedition manifested in the embarking had not been unnecessary. With the sunset came heavy lowering clouds, and with the dark a series of squalls, which developed into a storm that raged all night, requiring the best seamanship of those on board the schooner to bring her safely through. As the day advanced, however, the wind abated, and by noon had quieted into a brisk breeze that carried the trim vessel along bravely.

All going well, they ought to make Boston ere dark, and Ben called Eric up into the bows to tell him what had been decided concerning him. Eric was greatly relieved when he heard the arrangement. On their arrival at Boston, he was to be kept in close confinement in the fore-hold until the time for the sailing of a vessel bound for England,

of which the Captain knew. He was to be placed on board the vessel, and to work his passage as cabin-boy. When the ship reached England, he might make his way to his friends as best he could. By that time the wreckers, (none of whom intended to return to Sable Island, for they felt sure that the wreck of the *Francis* would lead to investigation, and the place be made too hot for them) would have disposed of their booty, and scattered beyond all reach of the law.

Ben did not add, as he might have done, that in order to effect this arrangement he had to bribe the Captain by turning over to him one-half of his interest in the schooner's cargo.

But Eric was already so grateful for all that had been done in his behalf by dear big Ben, that even this could hardly have increased his gratitude. He thanked his protector over and over again. The very thought of once more setting foot in England filled him with delight, and blinded him to the many intervening difficulties over which his boyish sanguineness carried him as though they were of no moment whatever.

Ben took his meed of thanks very quietly. The truth was, he had grown very fond of Eric during the months they were so much together. Eric had taken him into his fullest confidence, telling him all about Oakdene, and his life there and at his school. Ben had reciprocated by giving Eric an account of his life, and so they both felt as though they had known each other for years instead of months. And now that the time was drawing near when their ways would thenceforth be far apart, the separation meant a very different thing to Ben from what it did to Eric. To Eric it meant home and friends again, even though that home was shadowed by his parents' loss. To Ben, a relapse into the old evil ways, from which the influence of Eric's presence had for a time delivered him. The giant's heart was heavy, and his rugged, sombre countenance presented a striking contrast to that of the boy beaming with hope and joy beside him.

The favorable breeze held on, and ere the sun sank to rest beyond the Western hills, the schooner was gliding up Boston Bay at a rate that carried her to her place of mooring before the darkness came. The anchor dived with a heavy splash into the swirling water, the chain rattled noisily through the hawse-hole, and the voyage was ended.

A boat was lowered into which the Captain and Evil-Eye got. The former invited Ben to accompany them, but he declined, the truth of the matter being, that he intended to keep watch and ward over Eric until the time came to take him to the English ship.

The boat rowed off to the wharves, and before it returned Eric was sound asleep in the close but otherwise not uncomfortable quarters Ben had fitted up for him in the fore-hold.

He was awakened by the singing of the men as they toiled at the windlass, and the rattling of the chain as it came slowly up link by link out of the water. Then he heard the water rippling against the schooner's bow, and he knew that she was moving, rightly surmising that she was making her way to a berth beside one of the wharves. During all that day there was continual motion on deck, and the imprisoned boy made shift to while away the long hours by guessing what it meant, and what the sailors and wreckers were about. Ben brought him a bountiful breakfast, and dinner, and tea, and stayed with him while he ate, but did not seem much disposed to talk. He did not yet know when the English ship was to sail, but thought it would be soon.

The schooner became much quieter by night-fall, for the majority of those on board had evidently gone ashore, and so complete was the silence at times that the vessel seemed to be deserted. There was a clock not far away which rang out the hours very clearly, and Eric heard seven, eight, nine and ten o'clock strike ere he fell asleep, for he was in a high state of excitement. After he had been asleep he knew not how long, he was roused by two men talking in loud tones on the deck just above him. They were evidently disputing about something, and were much the worse for liquor. Presently one of them shouted:

"It is there. I know it is. I'll prove it to you."

Then came the sound of the fore-hatch being lifted aside, and the light of a lantern was flashed into the hold. Whatever it was the man sought, he soon found it, for triumphantly exclaiming:

"There now. Didn't I say right?" he drew the hatch back again, and with his companion went stumbling off to the cabin.

Eric had shrunk back into a corner on the hatch being opened, for he knew not what the men might be about, but when the restoration of perfect silence assured him that they had gone, he crept to the spot underneath the hatch and looked up.

The instant he did so he saw something that caused his heart to leap to his mouth, and his whole frame to fairly shiver with intense excitement. It was a star shining brightly into his eye out of the clear blue vault of heaven, and whose cheery beam, falling like a spark upon tinder, set him afire with hope. The sailor in his drunken carelessness had left the hatch unfastened and drawn a little aside. The way of escape was open!

With bated breath and wildly beating heart, Eric raised himself softly, and pushed at the hatch. At first it refused to move, but exerting a little more strength it slid away a few inches, making no perceptible noise, and bit by bit he pushed at it until there was an open space large enough to permit him to pass through. Then using extremest caution, he lifted himself until he could survey the deck, and peered eagerly into the semi-darkness to discover if there were any of the men about. There was no moon, but the stars shone their brightest, and accustomed as Eric's eyes were to the darkness he could see fairly well.

Putting forth all his strength he swung himself up on the deck, and then crouched in the deep shadows of the foremast for a few moments. Not a soul was in sight, not a sound disturbed the still air. The black line of the wharf rose but a few feet above the bulwarks. Gliding across the narrow intervening space Eric got upon the bulwarks, and thence with one active spring upon the wharf. The wharf was as deserted and silent as the schooner's deck. Along one side was piled a line of casks and barrels, in the deep shadow of which he crept with the quietness of a cat until the big warehouses were reached. Then, straightening himself out, he moved more rapidly until he came out upon the street.

The street opened to right and left of him, leading away he had not the slightest knowledge whether. Taking the right turning he hastened along, determined to appeal for aid to the first respectable looking person he might meet. By the dim light of the occasional oil lamps at the street corners he could make out that he was in a street of taverns, shops, and warehouses, some of the first named being still open, although the hour must have been very late. There were few persons about, and as these all appeared to be seafaring folk, he carefully avoided them, keeping in the shadows of porches and alleyways until they passed.