

RALPH GACHORN

A STAR IN A PRISON;

A TALE OF CANADA.

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CHAPTER I.

BUNNY HAS AN ADVENTURE.



ALL through the day the whip of the west wind had been laid upon the face of the deep, and the long waves of Lake Ontario still heaved in rebellion at its lash. The sky above was gray, the water below was leaden, but, from a rift of cloud in the west, a red gleam shot from the sinking sun across the rolling surface. Directly in the path of this was a small boat.

At one end of the craft sat a man, a large dark man, with a bushy beard, and black, black eyes. He wore the oiled coat of a fisherman and an oiled-silk sou'wester was on his head. He was in no state of good humor this evening. Things had not been going well lately with Fisherman Jack, and his ruffled temper was accustomed to venting itself upon anything within reach.

That thing at present was a small boy, who crouched at the other end of the boat, with the rope of the rudder about his body. But he was trembling so that he could scarcely draw upon the cord sufficiently to keep the craft with its end to the billows. This lad had an honest, round face, and beautiful blue eyes. His hair fell over his white brow in a tangle of waving

tresses, and his broad, boyish chest and straight shoulders gave the promise of a man with a noble physique. He was a very pleasing child to look upon. Had he possessed a father and mother he would have been the idol of their eyes. As it was, he was merely a trembling little fellow without a relative, so far as he knew, in all the wide world. He knew little of himself save that his name was William Hare, and that he had always been called Bunny. Ages and ages ago, it seemed to him, he had drifted into Fisherman Jack's cabin; since then he had helped with the fishing and had received for his wages chiefly abuse. Indeed, lately it seemed that Jack was harder to please than ever; but then, he had been drinking more heavily for the last few months. To-night Bunny had made some mistake in adjusting the nets. Jack had sworn at him, and now was glaring at him with angry eyes.

"See here, young fellow," he was saying, "I have put up with you just as long as I will. You do not earn your bread. Then there are the clothes to be thought of. You earn the clothes still less. I want you no more. You will leave my house this night, and never set foot in it again!"

A big lump came into Bunny's throat. Where should he go? Jack's cabin was all the spot he knew as home, and he did not want to leave it.

"But, Jack—" he faltered, with beating heart.