

# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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## DICK RAYNOR'S VOYAGE.

BY WILLIS BOYD ALLEN.

Dick Raynor was known all up and down Surf Point as a "first-rate fellow." When anything lively was going on, Dick was sure to be there. No boating party, or clamming excursion, no half-day picnic of any sort was complete without Dick Raynor.

He was one of those jolly, easy-going, ready-to-laugh sort of boys that are sure to make friends, get into scrapes and out again—all with marvellous rapidity and frequency.

"Let me keep Raynor in school two weeks at a time," said the school-master, "and I'll show you a fine scholar."

But Dick preferred sunshine to study, help to classics, and a whale-boat, with a fresh breeze to all the Propositions of Euclid, and even to Cicero's Orations. Queer boy, that Richard Raynor!

"Nat," said Dick mysteriously, one afternoon, "come down to the cod-rocks, will you, and bring your line and a pail of bait? While we fish, I've got a plan to talk over with you."

"What is it?"

"You'll see!"

"Oh, say!"

"You come along, will you? Mother wants a mess of perch for breakfast," and the boy's roguish eyes twinkled.

Dick, I am sorry to say, was not in the habit of purveying for the household. Indeed, his mother's errands were usually so many clouds in his sunny sky. He felt that he was a much-abused boy when he was told to split and bring in an armful of wood, or step down to the grocer's for sugar and meal.

Nat Howland could not resist his chum's appeal, though he was under contract, so to speak, to play second base in the "Comets" that afternoon.

They soon had a dozen golden and bronze fish flapping about on the rockweed. Then Dick unfolded his plan.

A big three-masted schooner was to sail from Surf Point a week later, in ballast for Atlanta, Georgia, from which port she was to freight a cargo of southern lumber to Boston.

"What I propose is," remarked Dick, first looking over his shoulder and lowering his voice, "for you and me to go in her!"

Nat actually turned pale under his freckles.

"Why, we can't!" he managed to stammer.

"Why not, I sh'd like to know?" demanded Dick, with energy. "We can crawl down into the hold the night before, and—"

"But we've got to go to school—"

"Nonsense! There's no use in hanging 'round the Point all our lives, chopping wood, and—doing things," he added rather vaguely. "We want to see the world," with a sweep of his hand.

"Lots of fellows have done it, just the way 'Bill Bobstay' did." And he produced a tattered pamphlet, in which the extraordinary adventures of that individual were narrated in bad type and worse English.

Well, the long and short of it was that Nat wouldn't go. He was accustomed to follow Dick into almost every kind of a scrape, but he drew the line at running away to sea.

Dick was too good-natured not to part friends with him, so, with a solemn charge to secrecy as to his own intentions, he threw the perch into the basket on the few remaining clams, and the two strolled homeward.

"I'm out of tea, Dick," said his mother, as she met him at the door, not noticing his fish at all, but looking particularly pinched, and untidy, and careworn. "Just step down to the store and get me half a pound of Oolong, that's a good boy!"

Dick glanced volumes at Nat, set his

fish in on the kitchen table, and went, without a word.

Two, three, four days went swiftly by. Dick was more heedless than ever at school, and was so restless at night that his mother came in and laid her hand upon his forehead to see if he were sick. Dick's heart misgave him.

"I'm all right, mother," he said, giving her worn hand a little pat. The next morning but one the three-master was to sail.

On the following afternoon Dick wandered to and fro, unable to conceal his excitement. Finally, he halted at old Cap'n Ben's front door.

Cap'n Ben was a "character" in Surf Point village. He had commanded a full-rigged ship in his day, and could tell stories from morning to night of whales

"One mast square rigged, and one fore 'n' aft?"

"Right you are," said Cap'n Ben, approvingly. "Sit down, boy. That is, unless ye've something to do."

"No," said Dick, plunging his hand into his pocket, and flushing a little. Then, suddenly—

"There's something I want to ask you about, Cap'n Ben."

"What is it, Dick?"

"Won't you tell?"

The captain took a long squint down the keel of the brig before answering.

"I won't, my boy, unless you say I may arter we've got through our talk."

That was enough for Dick, and, sure of a sympathizer, he poured out his plans for the morrow.

"Won't it be glorious, Cap'n?" he al-

sea run away, leaving my mother and two sisters in a lecture house up back in the country.

We were bound for Lower California fer hides—like that feller that writ a book about the same sort of a v'yago, only he was a relation of the owners, and was treated well. I wasn't. Boy, ye can't guess the misery an' sufferin'—not the big kind of sufferin' like a soldier in battle, with drums beatin', and fife playin', but in the night, with fingers raw and froze, with ice water dashin' over me every day and every night for nigh a fortnight off the Cape, so seasick I wanted to die, so wet, an' cold, an' achin' all over I used ter cry in the dark, and long, oh, how I longed fer that lecture house where I knew mother was sufferin', too, because I had deserted her like a coward." Here Dick Raynor winced, and changed his position a little on the chips.

"Wall, to make a long story short, I was gone two year-an' a half; an' then I steered across country fer home.

"Boy, when I got there it was jest comin' on arly evenin'. Thar was no light in the house."

"Mother! I sung out, 'Mother, yer boy's come home! Ho ain't never goin' away again, unless ye let him freely an' gladly!'"

"Not a sound from the lecture house, standin' gray an' still under a big pine. I tried all the doors. They were fastened up, an' the blinds were shot tight.

"Mother! But she didn't answer."

"I turned away then, and kind o' staggered up the dark road till I found myself beside a buryin' ground I knew only too well.

"There were pines thar, too, and as I leaned against the wall I heard 'em whisperin' an' sighin' overhead. O Dick, my boy, what would I have given thon to look my mother in the face, to hold her thin, tired hand that had worked so hard for me, and that I had left stretched out after me, trembling, and empty, empty!"

A sob came from the pile of chips, but the captain went on as if he had not heard it.

"When I lifted my head I looked into the buryin' ground—I couldn't seem to help it—an' thar, sure enough, it was, I could jest see it through the dusk—a new heap of gravel—"

"O Cap'n, don't, don't!" cried Dick, springing to his feet. "I can't bear to hear it."

"Wall, ef you're determined to set sail for Georgy to-morrow," said Cap'n Ben, "I s'pose we might's well say good-bye—"

"I'm not going," gulped Dick, drawing his sleeve across his eye. "I—I didn't think about mother feelin' bad and needin' me. And if she should should die, like your mother—"

"Bless ye, my mother didn't die," struck in the old sailor heartily. "Ye didn't let me finish my yarn. She was only down 't a neighbour's, and pretty soon I heard wheels comin', and her voice, her own voice, talkin' in the dark."

Oh, that was good! Was she glad to see you?" cried Dick, all in a breath.

"Glad?" Wall, I guess we c'n skip that part." Here Cap'n Ben had recourse to his sleeve for an instant. But I hope it don't change your mind 'bout stayin' on shore, jest because mother didn't—"

Not much, said Dick, with emphasis. "Good night, Cap'n. I'm going home. Praps mother wants something!"—Sunday Afternoon.

A small boy, says an exchange, surprised his teacher at one of the grammar schools by asking her how far a procession of the Presidents of the United States would reach if they were placed in a row. On her expressing her ignorance, he calmly announced, "From Washington to Cleveland."



THE CAPTAIN TOOK ONE LONG SQUINT.

and sharks, and tempestuous voyages in the "Sarah Ann" and half a dozen other vessels.

Having retired from the deep sea, he was content to live on shore in the hulk of an old schooner, long ago stranded and dragged up out of reach of the tide. He owned a dozen lobster pots, and these gave him occupation and recompense enough for his simple life.

On this particular afternoon, the old man was fashioning a toy ship for one of the many youngsters who regarded him as a whole ship-yard, Nautical Institute, and Arabian Nights combined.

"Hullo, Dick," said Cap'n Ben, as the boy drew near.

"Hullo, Cap'n. What you making?"

"Wall," said the ancient mariner, "I reckon she'll be a 'mophrodite brig. I ain't turned out one of them craft this year."

most shouted, as he reached the climax. "A real voyage, just like the ones you used to take. Praps we'll have a storm. Don't I hope we shall?"

Cap'n Ben laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, with a very kindly look in his keen old eyes.

"You're a good boy, Dick," said he, "and a plucky one, but uncommon keardless and thoughtless. Hope thar'll be a storm." Goin' off unbeknownst! Here, you jest lay down on this pile o' chips and let me tell y' a story while I polish off this 'ere hull."

Dick, nothing loth to hear the story, but rather dubious as to the moral to be conveyed, flung himself down. The soft murmur of the surf, far out on the point, came to his ears as the old man talked.

"When I was nigh onto a year younger'n you be," began Cap'n Ben slowly, "I slipped cable and put out to