

I MAKE TWO BETS

"Go you," says he. "You'll be married inside of three years — or five, anyway."

"One year that I'll be at work — steady work — and five that I'm married. You're shipped, both ways. And I wear a seven and a quarter, soft hat, black preferred."

"If I don't win the first bet I will the second, sure," he says, confident. "'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands,' you know. Well, good-by, and good luck. Come in and see us whenever you get to New York."

We shook hands, and I walked out of that office, the office that had been my home port ever since I graduated from fust mate to skipper. And on the way to the Fall River boat I vowed my vow over and over again.

"Zebulon Snow," I says to myself — not out loud, you understand; for, accordin' to Scriptur' or the Old Farmers' Almanac or somethin', a feller who talks to himself is either rich or crazy and, though I was well enough fixed to keep the wolf from the door, I wa'n't by no means so crazy as to leave the door open and take chances — "Zebulon Snow," says I, "you're forty-eight year old and blessedly single. All your life you've been haulin' ropes, or bossin' fo'mast hands, or tryin' to make harbor in a fog. Now that you've got an anchor to wind'ard — now that the one talent you put un-