

THE PANCAKE PREACHER

the shore. It was greatly to his relief when, about four o'clock, he saw the ship's boat push off from the shore, and move with unsteady strokes and uneven course toward his vessel.

"They're drunk, every — cur of them," he muttered. "Not likely we can sail to-night even if we get the wind."

Before many minutes the boat had come alongside the schooner, and the tipsy sailors climbed up the rope ladder to the deck. Only one of them, the second mate, who, from his tall, lank figure, was commonly called "Sliver Jim," was at all sober, and he also had been drinking "some."

As was his wont, the captain poured a stream of profanity on the returned crew. But they had come back even earlier than he had anticipated, and a little less drunk than usual. The customary cursing was, therefore, less elaborate. The captain would scarcely have known himself, and the crew would have been unspeakably amazed, if he had allowed the occasion to pass without giving them "a blessing," however modest or considerate.

The young mate in the fore-castle heard the noise of the home-coming, but remained within, reviewing a Latin grammar. He was less than eighteen years of age, and had risen quickly to the position which he held. At fourteen years of age he had left school and taken to sailing, and, judging from his physical appearance, life on the Great Lakes had agreed with him. He was not beyond medium height, but his frame was massive, and he was easily the strongest man on the vessel. Sailors soon find out the comparative strength