

tall, broad-shouldered, with sinews like ropes (as the rolled-up sleeves of their jerseys showed), and faces bronzed and tanned with exposure to wind and weather. "Just the men to man the lifeboat on a stormy night," a bystander might have observed; and right he would have been: in fact, more than once both Tom and Sam had taken their lives in their hands and done so.

"Splendid fellows!" you say; and splendid men, physically, they were; dauntless in courage, calm in danger, steady of hand, and cool of head; and yet—and yet—who could say how long Tom Winter's nerves would remain strong—his hand steady? Of late he had become a pretty frequent visitor to the "Red Dragon." And as to Sam May—well, physically he had courage enough, but morally he would show the white feather at a jeer.

Tom and Sam had been friends from childhood. Side by side they had sat on the same bench at school, and many were the boyish scrapes they had been punished for together; and now, wherever the brown sails of the fishing fleet of Scard proclaimed that they were plying their daily trade, in storm or in calm, by daylight or moonlight, Tom and Sam's boats would generally be found hard by one another.

"Mates" the Scard folk called them—aye, and the thought that they were "mates" sometimes gave Sam May's mother a good deal of anxiety.

Old Mrs. May lived in one of the small white-washed cottages in the narrow street that ran down to the quay. All her married life had been spent in that cottage; there she had been brought as a young bride by her sailor husband; there her children had been born, and from thence she hoped never to move till her call came to the better "Home" above.



"THEN HE'S BEEN READING OF YOU."

Mrs. May thought all the world of her "boy Sam"; and Sam—watch the smile that would break over his face, and the wave he would give to his "sou-wester" as, returning home from fishing, he caught sight of his old mother peering through the diamond-paned window for him, and that would soon show you what store Sam set by his mother. It speaks well for a man when he keeps a warm corner in his heart for his mother.

Nine curly heads had once nestled beneath the roof of the cottage; but now four were lying beside their father in the peaceful God's-acre on the breezy hill-side, four were out in the world with homes of their own, and Sam, the youngest, was the only one Mrs. May had left to her.

"And 'tis all of a piece with the rest of my life," Mrs. May would say, while her face would light up with a sweet smile. "Goodness and mercy, they've followed me all the days of my life; and 'tis like the tender love and care of the dear Lord not to leave me without a prop in my old age."

There was one wish Mrs. May had ungratified as regards her boy Sam, and that was about "the one thing needful." She longed that before her Home-call came, her boy would take his stand by the side of the Lord Jesus, as one who loved His Day, and His Book, and who sought to walk in His footsteps.

And Sam as a boy had seemed to be setting his face Heavenwards. Always full of life and fun, he was in Sunday School a model of good behaviour, and his teacher spoke of him as one of the best boys.

By-and-bye there came a change of circumstances: the Sunday-school teacher who had gained such a good influence over Sam married and left Scard; and Mrs. May was laid low with rheumatic fever, which reduced her strength to such an extent, it was only rarely and on very fine Sundays that she could hobble to church. And Sam had not the courage to hang out his flag boldly and go to church alone. He knew well enough that that meant running the gauntlet of bantering remarks from his week-day companions who would be seated by their doors idly smoking their pipes or scanning the newspaper.

Mrs. May grieved much over this want of backbone in her boy; she knew how the old Book says, "The fear of man, it bringeth a snare," and "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven." Over and over again she repeated these verses to Sam, and earnestly, on her knees, with tears, did she pray that, dauntless and strong as her boy was in the things concerning this life, more courageous and bold he might become in the service of Him Who had bought him with His Blood. Fully aware, then, of this weakness in Sam's character, and knowing how easily he was influenced even by a jeer, it was no wonder that