

# HOMeward BOUND.



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## CHAPTER I.

### "MATES."

"**S**POKEN to the new Parson, Tom?"

Tom took the pipe from his mouth, and burst into a loud laugh.

"Parsons and I, we be birds of the same feather, bai'nt we, Sam?"

Even Sam was forced to join in the laugh, for it was well known throughout Scard that Tom Winter's shadow never darkened a church door.

"Ah, you may laugh, Tom; but Parson and you'll

be having words together 'fore long, I'm thinking."

"Not if I knows it," grunted Tom; "no Parson's preaching for me."

"Ah, but this Parson don't preach at you, Tom; 'pon my honour, he don't; he's as different from most Parsons as chalk from cheese."

"Chalk or cheese, he be a Parson, though!" and Tom thundered out these words as though that settled the matter.

"Aye, and a smart one; reads a chap through at a glance, I bet, for all his tongue lies so quiet."

"Then he's been reading of you, I s'pose," sneered Tom, "and told you to throw away your baccy."

"Not he; never said a word on't; asked me to come to a meeting, though—men's reading, or summat of that sort," and Sam hung his head a trifle shamefacedly; "and says 'fore the month is out he hopes to know every soul in Scard; so there's no way out of it, old fellow," and Sam slapped his friend on the back. "You and the Parson, sooner or later, you're bound to be having words together."

"Look ye here, Sam," said Tom, taking his pipe from his mouth, and turning angrily on his friend, "I'll have no more of your chaff; that there Parson fellow, meddle he once with me, he'll not meddle again," and Tom Winter brought down his fist with such a thud on the railing over which he was leaning that it rang and rang again.

Tom Winter's blood was beginning to get up, Sam May saw; and once Tom Winter's blood was up, he was not a man to be trifled with, Sam well enough knew; so with a laugh he turned on his heel and sauntered down to the quay.

Tom Winter and Sam May were boatmen of Scard, and fine specimens of English boatmen they were—