

THE POSTMASTER

CHAPTER I

I MAKE TWO BETS—AND LOSE ONE OF 'EM

SO you're through with the sea for good, are you, Cap'n Zeb," says Mr. Pike.

"You bet!" says I. "Through for good is just *what* I am."

"Well, I'm sorry, for the firm's sake," he says. "It won't seem natural for the *Fair Breeze* to make port without you in command. Cap'n, you're goin' to miss the old schooner."

"Cal'late I shall — some — along at fust," I told him. "But I'll get over it, same as the cat got over missin' the canary bird's singin'; and I'll have the cat's consolation — that I done what seemed best for me."

He laughed. He and I were good friends, even though he was ship-owner and I was only skipper, just retired.

"So you're goin' back to Ostable?" he says. "What are you goin' to do after you get there?"

"Nothin'; thank you very much," says I, prompt.