

The first thing Ned searched for as he groped around the fore-castle was a lantern. He found one near the cook's quarters, and lighting it, proceeded to investigate.

He regretted that he could not penetrate safely to the cabin, for there was stored the clothing and baggage of the party. He determined to visit the ship again, however.

"I will carry what I can, especially for Professor Ballentine's present comfort," murmured Ned, coming on deck again. "Hello, boys! Row along to where I am, to catch some things I want to take ashore."

Ned first selected quite a stock of boxes and cans from the cook's store, some tools, two guns and powder flasks he found, a hammock, mattress, and quite a variety of goods.

He also cut away a quantity of rope, a large piece of sail-cloth, and secured the binnacle lamp. These he dropped into the life-boat, and, following them, found that they made quite a cargo.

It was after midnight when they reached the little river.

"Now then, boys," said Ned, "keep as quiet as you can. We won't unload here. I propose dragging the boat past the present camp and to the place we selected this afternoon."

"What for?"

"Because it's a much more desirable spot for a home, and because we can make the Professor more comfortable. Come, boys, who votes for all-night work and a surprise for our patient in the morning?"

"All!"

"Come ahead, then, and be silent as mice in passing the camp."

They did not awaken any of their sleeping comrades as they pulled the boat by the rope up the river.

The spot Ned had selected was admirably located for a camp. The stream ran by it, furnishing pure, fresh water, while its slight elevation commanded a fair view of interior and coast.

There was a velvety plat of grass backed up by a clump of high spreading needle palms, and here the boat was beached.

Like phantom figures in the moonlight, the five boys laboured for several hours. Ned directed their movements, and they soon had the sail-cloth formed into the roof and side of a house, while the cook's stores were distributed conveniently.

"It looks as home-like as our old tent in last summer's excursion," remarked Ernest.

They dragged the boat down the stream to the original camping-place, and then went to sleep.

It was not until after breakfast that Ned announced to the Professor that he had found a more desirable spot for a camp, and asked him to allow them to remove him.

Professor Ballentine was first fearful as he found himself unable to move unaided, then undecided, and finally agreeable to Ned's wishes.

They carried him to the boat and landed him safely at Camp Ballentine, as they had named the new place of rendezvous.

The Professor regarded the ship-shape house and treasures from the Neptune in open-mouthed amazement.

But when they lifted him to a broad, easy hammock, supplied with a mattress and pillow, and presented him with a bottle of liniment found in the schooner, for his injured limbs, tears stood in his eyes.

"You are all too kind to me," he murmured; "you are more like sons than scholars."

"Why shouldn't we be," cried bluff Dick Wilson, "when you've been like a father to us?"

The Professor looked quite serious when Ned told of their unauthorized visit to the wreck, and begged of Ned

to be careful in making further visits until he was able to direct or accompany them.

The entire day was devoted to perfecting their new home, and each boy managed to make a hammock or swinging-bed by means of the ropes Ned had brought from the wreck.

There was abundance and variety now in their larder. The Professor was very thoughtful all day, and evidently decided that they were veritable castaways. He seemed formulating some plan of systematic work for the future.

The weather continued delightful, and in the cool of the evening the boys wandered in little groups where they listed.

They began to observe and realize more carefully their surroundings. Wild grapes, a fruit resembling quinces, the cabbage palm, and various nut-trees had been discovered in the forests where the cypress and ferns and bushes with woody stems abounded.

A whole world of sea-birds infested the rocky head-land, including frigate birds, boobies, sea-gulls and albatross, and in the interior Ernest Blake averred he had seen snipe, partridge, cockatoos with their red throats, and parrots as large as ducks.

Along the sandy shore, in places composed of brilliant crystals, the fragments of bivalve shells, cuttle bones, and protoxide of iron, they came across turtles, scallops, craw-fish, and many another curious thing.

One of these was an object which, to the curious, careless glance of the boys, seemed half butterfly, half snail.

"We found it sailing the waves like a ship," explained Elmer Ray to Professor Ballentine.

"It is a ship in a way," replied the old tutor. "This is the paper nautilus, a kind of shell-fish, furnished with a membrane that serves as a sail. It has the eyes and beak like other mollusks, but no arms or feet in the place of which you see these circles of cupless tentacles. It floats like a feather, and, with sails outspread, might soon reach the land we have left."

These last words set Ned thinking, and, as he noticed an anxious, careworn expression on the Professor's face, he began to realize that the new life so enjoyable to their careless souls must be tinged with sorrow and anxiety to the old tutor, who was thinking of the parents to whom he was accountable for the safety of his youthful charges.

He got nearly all the boys around him, and then developed a new plan.

"We'll light the binnacle-lamp and swing it near the rocks for night, and build a day signal on the beach," he said.

"So ships passing may see us?" inquired Ralph Warden.

"Exactly."

"They may never come here."

"We will try the experiment anyway. There's another thing of importance, too, we must not forget, boys."

"What's that, Ned?" inquired a dozen voices.

"We must send a bottle afloat with an account of our shipwreck."

"On that big ocean?"

"Yes. If the paper nautilus can float across it, why not an air-tight bottle? Yes, boys, we'll do it, and in the bottle we must put a *round robin!*"

(To be Continued.)

It was John Stuart Mill, the philosopher, who said—  
"I ride third-class because there is no fourth-class."