

"Why, yes, Mr. Rider, I guess so; and if you'll jest bring your brandy bottle on, I'll try to show you how well I can do that are sort of business."

Mr. Rider, thinking his joke upon Asa was rather a hard one, as the most ready means of atoning for it, called upon Mrs. Rider to bring forward the bottle at once.

"Come," said Mr. Rider, "let's take a drop," turning out a glass himself, and then passing the bottle to the sailor and Mr. Sampson.

"I can drink brandy all weathers," said Bill Stanwood, filling up a good stiff glass; "but if I could only jest find somebody that could show me how to work brandy-way, I should rather have it than all the brandy that ever was made in the world."

"But what do you mean by this brandy-way you talk about?" said Jonathan. "Seems to me that's a new kind of a wrinkle; I don't understand it."

"Why, I mean," said Bill, "I want to know how to measure brandy-way; that is, how to measure off so many rods on the ground brandy-way. I never heard of but one man that fully understood it and that was Master Bradman; and I've been told that he knew it as well as he did the multiplication table. I've been hunting for that man a fortnight all round in these towns about here, and it's plaguey strange I can't hear nothing of him."

"Well, I don't know anything about your measuring brandy-way," said Jonathan, "and as for Master Bradman, I'm sure there haint nobody by that name kept school in this town these twenty years. For I've lived here twenty years, and know every schoolmaster that's kept school here since I came into the town. But, if I may be so bold, what makes you so anxious to learn about this brandy-way business?"

"Why, I've reasons enough," said Bill; "I'll tell you what 'tis, shipmate," he added, giving Jonathan a familiar slap on the shoulder, "if I could only learn how to measure fifteen rods brandy-way, I wouldn't thank King George to be my grandfather. I should have as much money as I should want, if I should live to be as old as Methusaleh."

"You don't say so?" said Jonathan, his eyes evidently growing larger at the recital. "I should like mighty well to know how that's done."

"Well, I should a good deal rather see the money than hear about it," said Asa Sampson, whose ideas were somewhat *waked up* by the effects of the brandy.

"Then you don't believe it, do you?" said Bill. "I could convince you of it in five minutes, if I'd a mind to; for I've got the evidence of it in my pocket. If I could only measure brandy-way, I know where I could go and dig up lots and lots of money, that have been buried in the earth by pirates."

"Are you in earnest?" said Jonathan.

"To be sure I am; I never was more in earnest in my life."

"Well, now do tell us all about it, for if it's true, and you'll give me a share of it, I wouldn't valley taking my old horse and wagon, and going round a few days with you to help hunt up Master Bradman. And if we can't find him, perhaps we can find somebody else that knows how to do it. But do you know pretty near where the money is?"

"Yes, I know within fifteen rods of the very spot."

"And you are sure there's money buried there?"

"Yes, I'm sure of it. I've got the documents here in my pocket that tells all about it. I'm most tired of hunting alone for it, and if you're a mind to take hold and follow it up with me, I've a good mind to let you into the secret, and let you go snacks with me; for, somehow or other, I kind of take a liking to you, and don't believe I shall find a cleverer fellow if I sail the world over."

"That's what you won't," said Mrs. Rider, who began to feel a strong interest in the conversation of the sailor. I've summered and wintered Mr. Rider, and know just what he is; and I don't think you'll find anybody that would help you more in looking for the money, or any cleverer man to have a share of it after you've found it."

"Well, that's jest what I want," said Bill; "so, if you say so, it's a bargain."

"Well, I say so," said Jonathan; "now let's see your documents."

Bill Stanwood deliberately drew from his pocket an old rusty pocket-book, carefully tied together with a piece of twine. He opened it, and took from its inmost fold a paper much worn and soiled.

"There," said he, "that's the secret charm. That's worth more than King George's crown; if 'twasn't for that plaguey little botheration about measuring fifteen rods brandy-way. New I'll tell you how I come by this ere paper. About three years ago, we was on a vige round the Cape of Good Hope, and we had an old Spanish sailor with us that was a real dark-faced old bruiser. He was full of odd ways. It seemed as if he'd got tired of the world and everybody in it, and didn't care for nobody nor nothin'. And every soul on board almost hated him, he was so crabbed-like. At last he was took sick, and grew very bad. Day after day he lay in his berth, and only grew worse. The captain used to send him some medicine every day, but never would go near him, and none of the hands didn't go nigh him, only jest to hand him the medicine when the captain sent it. And he would take the medicine without saying a word, and then lay down again, and you wouldn't know but what he was dead all day, if it wasn't once in a while you would hear him fetch a hard breath, or a groan. I began to pity him, and I went and stood, and looked on him. The cold sweat stood in drops on his forehead, he was in so much distress. And says I, 'Diego, can't I do something for you?' And I s'pose I looked kind of pitiful on him, for he opened his eyes and stared in my face a minute, as if he heard some strange sound, and then the tears come into his eyes, and his chin quivered, and says he,

"Bill, if you'll only jest get me a drink of cold water, for I'm all burning up inside."

"And I went and got him some water, and he drank it, and it seemed to revive him a little. And says he to me, 'Bill, I'm jest going off upon my last long vige.' And then he put his hand in his pocket, and took out this very paper, and handed it to me; and says he,

"I meant to have kept this in my pocket, and let it be throwed with my old carcase into the sea; but you have been kind to me, and you may have it; and if ever you go into that part of the world again, it will show you where you can get as much money as you want."

"That night poor Diego died, and we took and wrapped him in his blanket, and put a stone to his feet, and threw him overboard; and that was the end of poor Diego."

"Poor soul," said Mrs. Rider, brushing a tear from her eye, "how could you bear to throw him overboard?"

"Oh, we couldn't do nothin' else with him, away off there to sea. When a poor fellow dies a thousand miles from land, there's no other way but to souse him over, and let him go. I pitied the creetur at the last, but no doubt he'd been a wicked wretch, and I suppose had lived among pirates. He had scars on his face and arms, that showed he'd been in some terrible battles."

"Well, what was in the paper?" said Jonathan, beginning to grow a little impatient for the documents.

"I'll read it to you," said Bill.

So saying, he opened the paper, which was so much worn