



THE CAPTAIN TEACHING JOBY TO READ.

HOW JOBY PAID HIS FARE.

CHARLES LOTIN HILDRETH.

The sun had set, but the lower edges of the wild, stormy-looking clouds massed in the west were still aglow with vivid, crimson fire. In the east the gray gloom of the coming night was mounting up the sky, and here and there a pale star already glimmered in the dusk. A brisk wind, or, what sailors call 'half a gale,' was blowing, and the waters of the English Channel were breaking in short, angry waves, of a deep green in the hollows, and snowy white where their crests curled and spouted in hissing foam. Far off to the southward a dim, bluish line, which only the experienced eye of a seaman could have recognized as land, marked the coast of France, while in the opposite quarter the chalky headlands of England gleamed faintly in the fading twilight.

The stout ship 'Falcon,' leaning gallantly to the wind, was making her way down the Channel, bound for America. The sails had been reefed, the cables coiled, and everything made snug for the night. Captain Essex, pleased, as an old sailor always is when his vessel is well away from the dangers of the land, and making good progress under a steady wind, paced to and fro on his quarter-deck, gruffly humming a little song, the greater part of which was lost in his thick, bushy beard, though now and then you might have caught some words, as 'The sea is the place for me, my lads,' or 'A lively ship and a willing crew.'

Captain Essex's little song was interrupted by a sudden commotion in the forward part of the vessel. There was a sound of loud, angry talking, a hasty scuffling of feet, followed by the frightened sobbing of a child.

'Hallo!' exclaimed Captain Essex, 'What is the meaning of that row?'

'A stowaway, sir,' answered one of the men from below.

'A stowaway on my ship?' growled the captain. 'Bring the rascal here! We'll give him a taste of the rope's end first, and then—but what is that?'

'The stowaway, sir,' was the response, as two of the crew approached, leading between them a very small and very ragged boy.

The anger in the captain's face gave place to a look of astonishment, mingled with pity, as his eye rested upon the shivering form of the intruder. But he maintained the sternness of his tone as he addressed the boy.

'Well,' said he, 'what are you doing here?'

'N-nothing, sir,' was the trembling reply. 'Who are you, and where did you come from? Speak up, now! No nonsense!'

'I'm Joby—Job Oliver, sir,' said the boy, between the sobs, which he vainly endeavored to choke down. 'I live in London, by the docks, sir.'

'What are you doing here, then?'

'I—I hid away down below, and—and

they found me. I wasn't doing anything. I didn't touch a thing. I thought they wouldn't mind. I'm not very big, you see, and I don't weigh much.' He broke down with a gasp, and pressed his small, grimy fists into his streaming eyes. Then, as the captain remained silent, but continued to gaze at him with a tremendous frown, he made a brave effort to go on with his story.

'I haven't any mother or father, you see, and I have to earn my own living. Everybodysays, "He's too small. What's he good for?" and they don't take me; though I am strong. I can lift a trunk—a little one. I can run errands, very fast; but everybody says, "Oh, he's too ragged and too dirty." If I could get jobs, you see, I could get me a new pair of clothes. But I can't get jobs, and I can't get clothes, and everybody don't want me, and—a fresh storm of sobs shook the small frame.

'But you haven't told me yet what you are doing on board this ship?' said the captain, preserving his severity with an effort.

'They said the ship was going to America,' answered the boy. 'Everybody is rich in America. Everybody wants you there, you see. Tom Dixey went there, and he makes a load of money.'

'That's all very well,' responded the captain; 'but people who go to America pay for their passage, and to hide away so as to go without paying, is just the same as stealing so much money. Don't you know that?'

Evidently the boy had never taken that view of the question. He looked up at the captain's stern face with a frightened and startled expression. Then he began a hurried search in the pockets of his ragged jacket. From one he drew forth two coppers, from another a silver sixpence, and from a third a shilling, much battered, clipped and defaced. These he held out toward the captain.

'This is all I've got now. I earned the sixpence and the two pennies; the shilling a gentleman gave me. It's broken but it's good silver, all the same.'

'And what am I to do with these?' asked the captain.

'To pay my fare,' replied the boy. 'It's most enough, I think. I will earn the rest soon when I get over there.'

The good captain could maintain his gravity no longer. A smile lighted up his rugged features, as he said kindly: 'There, there Joby, keep your money, my boy. You are an honest little fellow, after all. You shall stay with me on the 'Falcon,' and we will make a man of you. How will that suit you?'

Joby was delighted, of course. The sailors, who are wonderfully handy at such things, devised a suit of clothing for his small body. He speedily became a great favorite with the crew of the 'Falcon,' proving himself to be active and intelligent, and, what is far better, absolutely honest and truthful. The captain had grown very

fond of Joby, and as for Joby—well, it was not long before everybody on board knew what Joby thought of the captain.

The 'Falcon,' which was a sailing vessel, had met with head winds constantly since leaving the Channel, and on the fourth week out was struck by a heavy gale from the northeast. All day long the good ship labored with the mountainous waves, leaping and plunging till it seemed as though the groaning, creaking masts must come out of her. But she was a staunch, well-built craft, and had passed safely through many a worse tempest.

With the fall of the night, the gale increased in violence. The sails had been reduced to the heavy lower canvas, just sufficient to steady the vessel. The captain remained on deck, taking a position near the rail, where he could keep an eye on the rigging. Near him, sheltered by the bulwarks, sat little Joby, on a coil of rope.

At first the noise and confusion, the thunder of the water, the shriek of the wind through the cordage, and the wild pitching of the ship had frightened the boy. But when, by the light of a lantern near by, he saw the calm, resolute expression on the captain's face, he felt relieved and rather enjoyed the excitement of the storm.

Suddenly, just as the captain was shouting an order through his trumpet, a vast billow seemed to rise out of the gloom and bear down upon the ship. It struck the vessel's side with an awful roar, throwing tons of water on the deck. Before he could save himself, the captain was lifted from his feet and flung overboard into the sea.

Almost at the same instant a small figure was seen to leap upon the rail, clinging there a moment, and then leap outward into the darkness and disappear.

'Man overboard!' The terrible cry rang above the roar of the tempest. For a moment all was panic and confusion. Then, under the mate's command, the ship was rounded to, with her head to the wind, and a boat ordered to be lowered.

'No use,' said one of the men to the mate, who stood by the rail, near where the captain had fallen overboard, 'we could never find them in the daytime, let alone such a night as this.' 'I am afraid not,' answered the mate, sadly. 'Poor old man! poor boy! Hark! what was that?'

'Falcon, ahoy!' The shout came aloud and strong from the darkness, not twenty yards from where the ship lay.

'The captain!' cried a dozen glad voices, 'Belay your jaw there, ye lubbers! Tail on to that line and haul us aboard, or we'll be adrift.'

Line! Us! what could he mean? But the mate had already discovered a curious thing—a light but strong rope, fastened to a ring in the bulwark and extending outward into the darkness, towards the spot whence the captain's voice proceeded. It was drawn tight, as if some heavy burden were towing at the end of it.

In an instant sturdy arms were pulling at it with a will. Then a stout rope was lowered, and up it, like a monkey, scrambled Joby, followed more slowly by Captain Essex.

Then a great cheer went up, drowning the roar of the storm itself, as the crew gathered about the dripping forms of the captain and his little friend. A few words served to explain what had happened.

Joby, with his eye on the captain, had seen him carried overboard. He knew that one end of the coil of light, tough rope upon which he sat was secured to the bulwark, for he had tied the knot himself, that very day. Without pausing to think of his own danger, he took the free end of the rope between his teeth, and was in the water nearly as soon as the captain himself.

Though he could swim like a duck, he was borne helplessly along on the crest of the waves, almost into the arms of Captain Essex, who caught him as he was sweeping by. The captain fastened the line about both of their bodies; and, partly swimming and partly towed by the ship, they had managed to keep their heads above the water until the 'Falcon' was hove-to.

The storm blew itself out during the night, and the next morning dawned clear and calm. All the forenoon Joby was observed to be very grave and silent, as if he were pondering some important question. Finally he presented himself before the captain in his cabin.

'Well, my boy,' said the captain, 'what can I do for you?'

'A man's life is worth a good deal of money, isn't it?' asked Joby, twirling his cap nervously as he spoke. 'Not a boy like me, but a grown man.'

'Yes, of course, my lad,' replied the captain. 'A man's life is supposed to be the most valuable of his possessions.'

'Well, then,' said Joby, twirling his cap still more nervously, 'they say I saved your life last night. I don't say it was much, you see. Any fellow who can swim could do the same; only I happened to do it.'

'Yes, you certainly did it, Joby. And what then?'

'You see—you see,' stammered Joby, 'I—I thought that would pay for my passage; then it wouldn't be stealing, you know.'

Joby could not make out why the captain's honest eyes should suddenly grow moist, nor why the captain's strong right arm almost squeezed the breath out of his small body; nor yet why the captain's voice should be so husky, as he said:

'Joby, my lad, while old Tom Essex's hulk holds together, and a single timber of him floats, you shall never want for a berth, or be without a friend.'

AMONG QUEEN VICTORIA'S most cherished possessions are three bracelets. In these are mounted thirty-three miniatures of her grandchildren, taken in infancy or early youth.



THE WORTH OF A MAN'S LIFE.