

broom which Aunt Martha had left standing by the door to sweep the water out with, and commenced an exhibition of fencing. Then, the doors of the rooms being wide open, they began a series of mutual attacks,—rough and tumble, the hardest fend off,—chasing one another round from room to room, each watching to get advantage of the other, during which they received some pretty hard knocks. The sport had become so fierce, and the noise so violent, that Aunt Martha begged Uncle Tracy to go out and overawe the disturbers of the peace by moral power, but not to hurt them.

The door of Uncle Tracy's room was opposite the one from which Ike was emerging ; and, hearing the old man coming, he stopped, looking very demure, and holding his weapon behind him. Uncle Tracy looked at him steadily and somewhat sternly ; and Ike, holding up his hand, stepped forward, pointing to the door of the front room, saying, in a deep whisper, "In there !"

Uncle Tracy, without saying anything, moved on softly, and thrust his head into the door, where Bill was waiting, in ambush, to receive his adversary. In an instant the broom came down on Uncle Tracy's head with a whack, and he found himself sprawling across the entry. Aunt Martha ran out to pick him up, and for a few moments there was a scene.

Fortunately it was the broom part, saturated with water, that struck him ; but for about a minute and a half he could not have told the name of the town he lived in, nor who was going to be the next President. Ike threw his cane aside, and stood by, with a very long face, listening to the lecture which Uncle Tracy gave Bill, part of which was directed at him.

"I thought it was Ike," said Bill in reply. "Well, I didn't," replied Uncle Tracy, rubbing his head ; and order was restored.

## CHAPTER X.

HOMEWARD BOUND.—DRIFTING DOWN THE RIVER.—THE ANCIENT FISHERMAN.—BITES.—PULLING IN THE BLUEFISH.—AN INTERCEPTED LETTER.—CAPTAIN BOB ON TRUTH.—HIS SEALING VOYAGE.

Ike and Sim had extended their visit to two weeks, and were ready to return by the same packet which had brought them up, which they were to signal to stop for them. The signal was set, and they bade everybody good-by ; no one, however, being very urgent to have them stay but Bill, who, though a little older than they, had found them capital company. He went down to the landing

with them, where they awaited the coming of the packet on the ebb tide. She was a good-sized vessel, with a latteen sail, to lower when she passed under the bridge before reaching Rivertown ; and they saw her tall sail over the bushes as she approached.

In a few minutes after bidding Bill goodbye, they were on the packet, drifting down stream with the slack tide ; for there was not a breath of air stirring. The way was long to Rivertown, and promised little of interest to the young voyagers. The river was very beautiful, bordered by deep woods and majestic rocks, whose dark shadows lay upon the waters ; but they did not care much about such things. They would talk for a moment to people in boats, make signals to any one they might see on the shore, shout to hear their voices echo among the rocks ; but boys are impatient, and so they were bored on board the packet. There was a little cabin in "The Sally Ann" (which was the vessel's name), and they went down into it to see what it was like. It was a little close place, with two small holes in the stern for cabin windows, and a shelf each side, on which, if hard put to it, one or two might sleep. The boys stretched themselves on these shelves, and looked out dimly over the still water far behind.

There was an elderly passenger, who was also annoyed by the slow movement of the boat. He had grown tired of viewing the scenery, and thrown his magazine one side, and now asked the skipper if he had a fishing-line on board. One of the men opened a little closet near at hand, and produced a line ; and then, as there was no other bait, he brought a piece of fat pork to put on the hook. Thus provided, the gentleman threw over his line, the sinker on which being heavy, it sank quickly to the bottom, the tide keeping it in place. Then the fisher began the customary performance of pulling the line up and down, keeping the sinker a little way from the bottom, and poising it so that the least nibble might not escape him. There is nothing that pleases a lazy man so much as this kind of fishing—of course, if he catches anything ; and, when he is too old to carry a pole all day through bog and brier, it is just the kind to "taper off with," and brag about like an old Nimrod. So he fished.

"What's that ?" said Sim in a whisper, as he saw the line dropped into the water.

"Somebody's fishing, I guess," replied Ike, who had been about half asleep.

"He can't catch anything."

"No, of course not."

"I don't believe he'll get a bite,"

"Nor I."