HARRY'S ISLAND

BARBOUR

THE CENTURY

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RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

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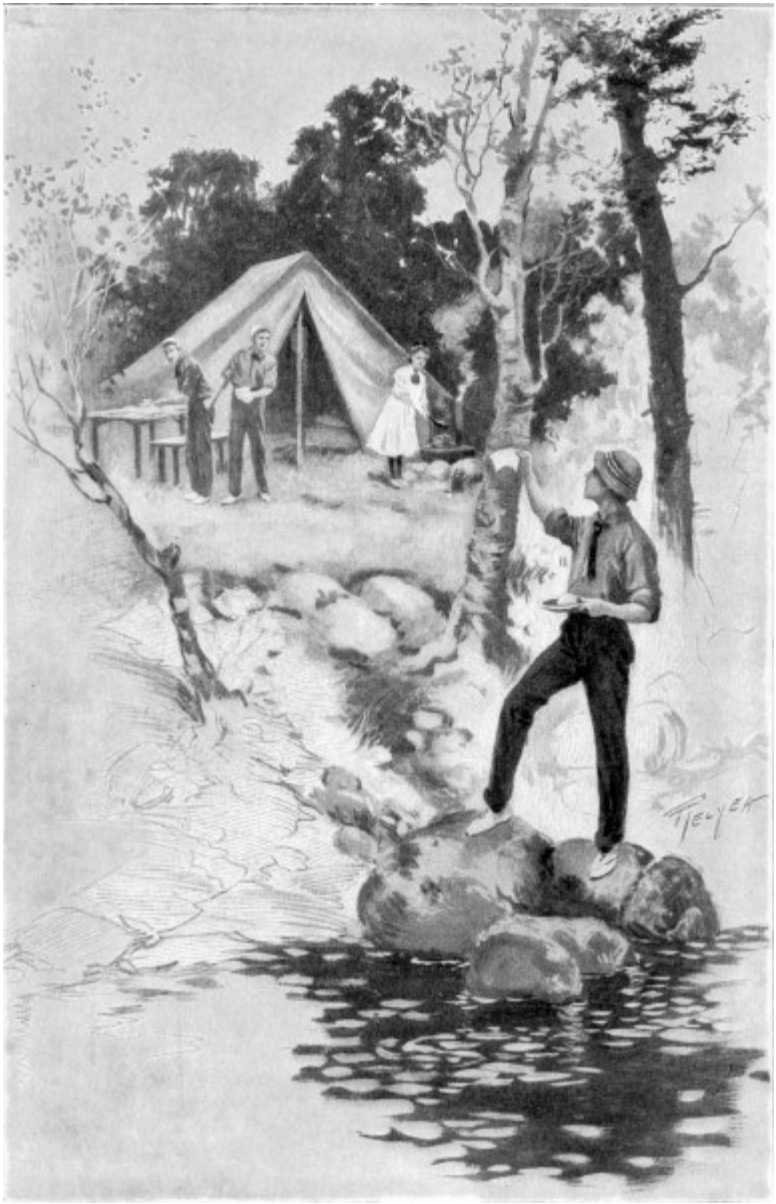

“Chub, who had been sent to the larder, interrupted them”

Harry's Island

By

Ralph Henry Barbour

Author of "The Crimson Sweater," "For the Honor of the School," "The Half-Back," "Tom, Dick, and Harriet," etc.

With Illustrations

By C. M. Relyea

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HARRY’S ISLAND

CHAPTER I
ON HOOD'S HILL

Three boys lay at their ease in the shade of the white birches which crown the top of Hood's Hill, that modest elevation on Fox Island at the upper end of Outer Beach which, with the exception of Mount Emery, is the highest point on the island. From this proud vantage, some twelve feet above the surface of the river, the view was unobstructed for two miles up and down the Hudson. At the foot of the little slope, where coarse grass sprouted from the loose sand, Outer Beach began, shelving abruptly to the lapping waves and shimmering with heat waves; for in the neighborhood of Ferry Hill and Coleville, toward the end of the month of June, the sun can be very ardent when it tries; and to-day it was evidently resolved to be as fervent as it could, for, although it still lacked a few minutes of eleven, the heat was intense even out here on the island.

In front of the three boys and across the river, which dazzled the eyes like a great sheet of metal, Coleville glimmered amid its broad-spreading elms and the buildings of Hammond Academy were visible. Back of them, on the opposite shore and a little farther down-stream, a modest boat-house and landing lay at the margin of the river, and from these a path wound upward until it disappeared into the dim green depths of the grove which spread down the side of the hill. Where the trees ended the red, ivy-draped buildings of Ferry Hill School appeared, crowning the summit of the slope. There was School Hall with its tower, the dormitory, angular and

uncompromising, the gymnasium, the little brick Cottage, and the white barns. And, looking carefully, one could see, beyond the dormitory, fence-like erections of gleaming new boards marking the excavations for Kearney Hall, the new dormitory building which was to be rushed to completion for the next school year.

It would have been apparent even to a stranger that to-day was a gala day, for along the shores for a quarter of a mile up-stream and down, little groups of people were daring sunstroke, while below the Ferry Hill landing rowboats, canoes, sailing craft, and motor-boats rocked lazily on the sun-smitten surface of the water. Every craft flew either the brown-and-white of Ferry Hill or the vivid cherry-and-black of Hammond. The show boat of the fleet was a gleaming, sixty-foot gasolene yacht, resplendent in white paint and glistening brass, which lay just off the lower end of the island, and which had supplied an interesting subject for conversation to the three boys under the birches.

The yacht was the *Idler* of New York, and on board were the Welches, whose son, "Sid," was a student at Ferry Hill, and who had journeyed up the river for to-day's festivities, and were to remain over for the school graduation. Sid had been in a state of excitement and mental intoxication ever since the yacht had dropped anchor yesterday evening and a flippant little mahogany tender had *chugged* him away from the landing to a dinner on board. At this moment, had you known Sid by sight, you could readily have discerned him under the striped awning, the proudest person aboard. With him were several of his school-mates, Chase, Cullum, Fernald and Kirby being visible just now. If there was any fly in the ointment of Sid's contentment it was due to the fact that the three boys

sprawled under the trees here on Fox Island were not aboard the *Idler* instead. He had begged them to come almost with tears in his eyes, but in the end had been forced to content himself with a promise to become his guests in the evening. Sid's devotion was about equally divided among the trio, with the odds, if there were any, slightly in favor of the big, broad-shouldered, light-haired youth who lies with closed eyes beatifically munching a birch twig, and whose name is Dick Somes.

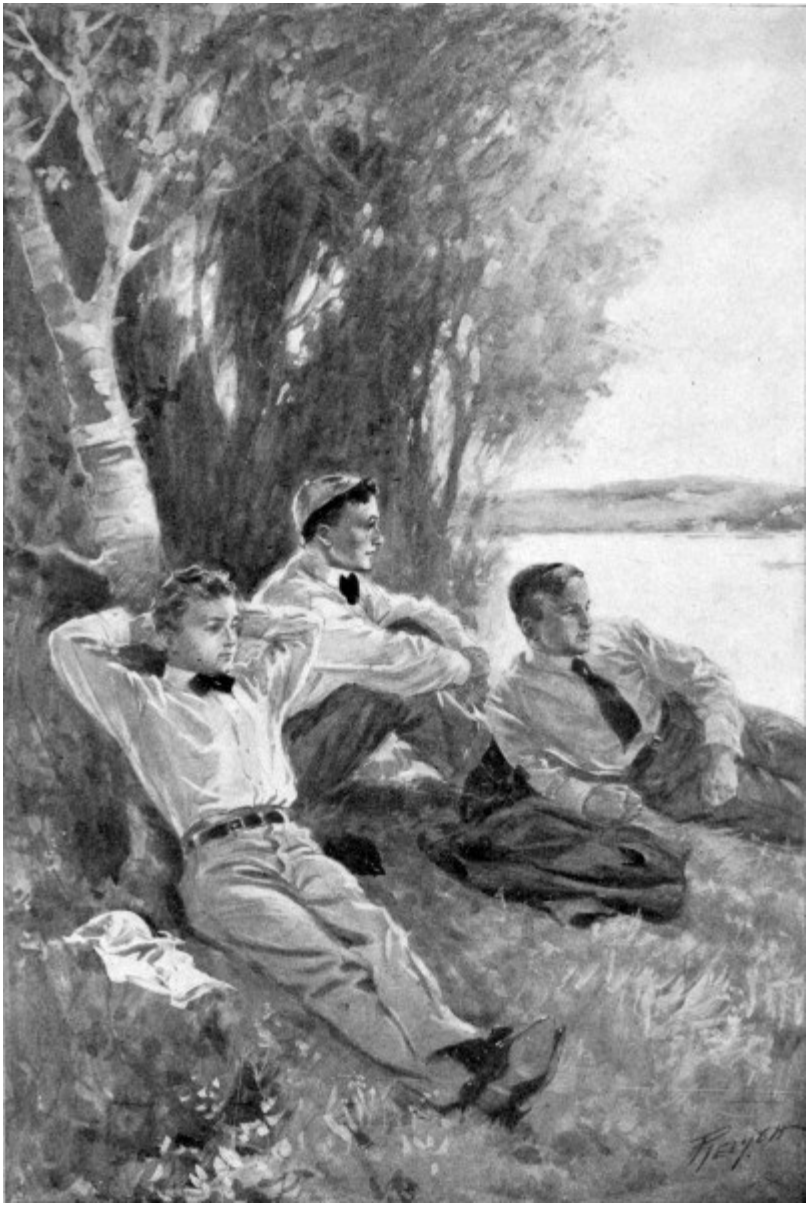
But there are two light-haired youths present, and lest you get them confused I will explain that the other, the boy who is sprawled face downward, chin in hands, he of the well-developed shoulders and chest and hips, sandy hair and nice blue eyes, is Roy Porter. Roy is Dick's senior by one year, although that fact would never be suspected.

The third member of the trio is Tom Eaton, but as he is never called Tom save in banter perhaps it would be well to introduce him as Chub. Chub, like Roy, is seventeen years old. He is more heavily built than Roy, has hair that just escapes being red, eyes that nearly match the hair, and an ever-present air and expression of good-humor and self-confidence. Strangely enough, each of the three has captained one or more of the Ferry Hill athletic teams during the school year just closing, and each has won victory. Roy has been captain of the foot-ball eleven and the hockey team as well; Dick has organized a track team and led it to a well-deserved triumph, and Chub, as captain of the base-ball nine, has plucked victory from defeat so recently—to be exact, only yesterday afternoon—that the feat is still the chief topic of conversation about the school. Roy and Chub are first seniors, and will graduate in less than a week. Dick is a second senior and so is due to

return again to Ferry Hill in the autumn. Already he is pointed to as the probable leader to succeed Roy.

Chub rolled over and sat up Turk-fashion, yawning loudly.

“What time is it, anyway?” he asked with a suggestion of grievance.



“Three boys lay at their ease in the shade of the white birches”

“Four minutes past,” answered Roy, glancing at his watch and then following his chum’s example and sitting up.

“Wonder why it is,” Chub complained, “they can never get a boat-race started on time.”

“Or a hockey game,” added Dick with a chuckle. Roy tossed a twig at him and Dick caught it and transferred it to his mouth.

“Well, I wish they’d hurry,” said Chub. “I’m roasting. Say, wouldn’t you think those folks over there on the bank would die with the heat?”

“It’ll be a wonder if Harry doesn’t die,” said Roy.

“Why?” Dick asked.

“Because she had an examination this morning, and she’s going to try and get through by a quarter of eleven, and then race back here all the way from the Cove in time to see the finish of the race. And that Silver Cove road is just about the hottest place on earth!”

“She’s silly to try to do that,” said Dick anxiously. “You ought to have told her so, Roy.”

“I did. I told her worse than that, but she just laughed at me.”

“You and I are losing our authority now that we’re going to leave so soon,” said Chub, sadly. “Dick’s the only one she will listen to, nowadays.” Dick smiled.

“You fellows ought to know by this time,” he said, “that it isn’t any use trying to dictate to Harry. If you want her to do anything very much you’d much better ask it as a favor.”

“Your wisdom is something uncanny,” replied Chub. “You’d better soak your head or you’ll have a sunstroke or something. You needn’t worry about Harry, though; you can’t hurt her.”

The others received this in silence. Roy looked up the river toward the starting-point of the race almost two miles distant. But the glare made it impossible to discern even the little gathering of boats, and he turned away blinking.

"Just think," said Chub presently, "in another week we three fellows will be scattered to the four winds of heaven."

"Now whose head needs soaking?" asked Dick. "'Four winds of heaven!' My, but you are poetical!"

"I don't just see how we're going to manage that," Roy laughed. "How can three fellows be distributed over four winds?"

"Oh, you run away and play," answered Chub, good-naturedly. "You know what I mean."

"It isn't so bad for you fellows," said Dick mournfully. "You'll see each other again at college in the fall; but I'll be here all alone."

"All alone, with half a hundred other chaps," Chub amended smilingly.

"That's not the same thing," said Dick. "Just when you go and get kind of chummy with some one, why then something comes along and busts it all up."

"Vague but beautiful," murmured Chub. "Why don't you come to college too, Dick?"

"Me? Thunder, I'd never pass the exams!"

"Oh, I don't know. They're not so fierce; Roy expects to get by."

"I'm not so sure that I do expect it," answered Roy,

seriously. “The nearer the time comes to take them the more scared I get.”

“That’s just your natural modesty,” said Chub. “You’ll get through with flying colors, while I—well, I’ll probably be like the chap whose mother was crowing about him. Some one asked her if her son passed the examinations for college. ‘Oh, yes, indeed,’ she answered, ‘Willie did beautifully. He entered with four conditions, one more than any one else had!’”

“I might be able to get in that way,” laughed Dick. “But, say, you chaps, I wish we weren’t going to split up so soon.”

“So do I,” answered Roy. “I’m real sorry at leaving Ferry Hill. I’ve had some bully times here during the last two years.”

“Well, I’ve only been here six months or so,” said Dick; “but I’ve had the time of my life. And of course I’ve got you fellows to thank for that, you and Harry together. I wish—I wish I was going to see you this summer for a while.”

“Well, why not?” asked Chub, eagerly.

“Dad wants me to go over to London and stay with him,” answered Dick. “I hate London. Folks are so stupid there, and can’t talk decent English. Last time I was there I couldn’t make anybody understand what I wanted.”

“Well, you’ve dropped some of your more picturesque expressions since you came up here,” laughed Roy. “Maybe this time you can make yourself understood.”

“What I’d like to do,” Dick continued, “is to stay right here and—”

“Where?” asked Chub, innocently. “On Fox Island?”

“Well, somewhere around these diggings,” answered Dick.

“A chap might do worse than spend a time on this old island,” said Roy, as he leaned back against the trunk of a birch-tree and smiled contentedly. “It’s a dandy camping place.”

“That’s it!” cried Dick.

“What’s it, you old chump?” asked Chub.

“Let’s do that! Let’s camp out here this summer! I’ll beg off from going across, and we’ll have a swell time. What do you say?”

Chub grinned.

“Say, are you in earnest?” he asked.

“Dead earnest!”

“Well, then, let me recommend the water cure again. If you’ll just hold your overheated brow under the surface for a minute—”

“Look here, though, you fellows,” said Roy, suddenly, “why couldn’t we do it? Not for all summer, of course, but, say, for a month or six weeks. Where are you going, Chub?”

“Me? Same old place, I suppose: Delaware Water Gap. Gee! If the folks would only let me, I’d do it as quick as a flash.”

“Well, write and ask them,” said Roy. “I’ll do it if you fellows will.”

“Do you mean it?” cried Dick, eagerly.

Roy nodded, smilingly.

“Then it’s settled!”

“Not for me it isn’t,” objected Chub, ruefully. “You don’t know my dad. If he gets an idea into his head you can’t get it out with a crowbar!”

“Well, you ask him, anyway,” said Roy.

“That’s right,” Dick added with enthusiasm. “And I’ll write across to my dad, to-night. How about you, Roy?”

“Me? Oh, I’ll get permission all right. But, of course, we’ll have to wait until we’ve taken our exams, Dick.”

“That’s so. How long will that be?”

“About ten days from now.”

“Well, that will be all right,” said Dick, cheerfully. “I’ll have everything all fixed up by the time you fellows get back, and —”

“You’ll do nothing of the sort!” exclaimed Chub, emphatically. “Why, that’s half the fun. You’ll just wait for us, Dickums. We’ll borrow one of the school tents and some cooking things—”

“And blankets.”

“And a boat,” added Dick, “and we can fish and—and have a high old time.”

“You bet,” said Chub. “It will beat that old summer hotel all hollow. Me for the simple life!”

“And I tell you what I’ll do,” exclaimed Dick. “I’ll get a little old gasolene launch, and we can make trips up the river —”

“Who’s going to run it?” asked Chub suspiciously.

“I am. It isn’t hard. I can learn in a day or two.”

“Oh, very well, but it’s me for the interior of our island home while you’re learning, Dickums!”

Dick laughed. “That’s all right,” he answered. “You’ll be glad enough to go in it when the time comes.”

“Well, maybe,” Chub agreed. “If it isn’t much worse than the ice-boat I guess I can live through it. How fast—”

“There’s the gun!” cried Roy as a distant boom floated down to them.

“That’s right,” said Dick. “We’d better pile into the canoe and find a place at the finish. Come on!”

CHAPTER II

THE RACE WITH HAMMOND

They scrambled to their feet, slid down the little slope, and crossed the shelving beach to where Chub's canoe, its crimson sides and gold monogram on the bow a torment to the eyes in such sunlight, was nosing the sand. Chub and Roy took the paddles, while Dick, who had never been able to master the art of canoeing, settled himself in the middle of the craft, his knees level with his chin, and looked like an alert toad. The stern paddle grated through the white sand as the canoe was shoved off, and then after a stroke or two that sent the bow toward the stream, the craft slid gently down the river. They kept to the shaded shallows near the shore of the island until Victory Cove was passed, and then headed out into the sunlight glare and drifted down toward where the flotilla lay about the finish line. It was no difficult matter to find a good berth since the canoe was slender enough to worm its way in between the anchored boats. On the edge of the path left for the crews they found a sail-boat lying a few yards above the finish, and up to this they paddled until they could lay hold of it.

"We're under the enemy's flag here," observed Dick pointing to the cherry-and-black banner flying from the mast.

"We'll fix that," Roy answered. "Where's the flag?"

Dick happened to be sitting on it and the cautious way in which he disentangled it from his feet made the others laugh. Chub fastened it to the bow and received a salvo of applause from the occupants of a near-by punt. The punt was only some

ten feet long, but it held eight Ferry Hill boys by actual count. Mr. Buckman, one of the instructors, hailed them from the bow of the judges' boat, a few yards distant, and warned them that they were on the course, but they pretended not to hear him.

"Just as though a couple of feet were going to make any difference!" growled Chub, disgustedly. "Buckman is stuck on himself to-day."

"A nice judge he will make," laughed Dick under his breath. "He will be so excited that he won't have the least idea which boat crosses the line first!"

"I wonder which will," murmured Roy.

"Ours will," replied Chub, stoutly. "I'll bet you we've got 'em beaten already."

"I hope so," Roy answered, "but—"

"Whitcomb told me yesterday that he expected to win," said Dick, "and I guess he wouldn't say that unless he was pretty certain."

"Well, if we win the boat-race it'll make a clean sweep for the year," said Roy: "foot-ball, hockey, track, base-ball, and rowing. We've never done that before, and I'm afraid it's too much to hope for. You can bet that Hammond will do all she knows how to win one event out of the five."

"Yes, but we've got the crew," Chub replied, untroubled. "Hammond will have to take it out in trying. You'll see. They ought to be here pretty quick. Can you see anything, Roy?"

"N-no; at least, I don't think so. Yes, I can, though. There they are, but the sun's so strong—"

“Hammond’s in the lead!” cried a voice from the sail-boat, where, clustered at the bow, a group of Hammond supporters were looking intently up the river. The one who had spoken, a youth in white flannels who held a pair of field-glasses to his eyes, was visibly excited.

“Pshaw!” muttered Dick, disgustedly.

“Don’t you believe it,” said Chub. “He can’t tell at this distance.”

“He’s got glasses,” said Roy.

“I don’t care if he’s got a twelve-inch telescope! He doesn’t know which side Hammond has got, and it isn’t likely he can tell red oars from brown at this distance. You wait until they get under the cliff up there, out of the sunlight, and then you can see for yourself.”

By this time the excitement was beginning to tell on the spectators along the shore and at the finish. Cheers for Ferry Hill and for Hammond floated across the water, and flags began to wave. Then, a mile up the stream, the two four-oared crews suddenly shot their slender craft into the shadowed water and so became plainly visible to hundreds of anxious eyes. The boat having the inner course was leading by fully a length, it seemed, but whether that fortunate boat was Hammond’s or Ferry Hill’s it was still impossible to tell since the courses had been drawn just before the start and the result was not known down here at the finish. Behind the two crews came the referee’s launch, a white speck on the water.

Now it was possible to see the rise and fall of the oars, and —a groan of disappointment arose from the Ferry Hill supporters. The leading boat was Hammond’s; the tips of the

oars showed brilliantly red as they were lifted dripping from the water. Cheers for Hammond broke forth anew, and the cherry-and-black flags waved bravely in the hot sunlight.

"Pshaw!" muttered Dick again. But Chub was still undismayed.

"That's all right," he cried, excitedly. "You wait until they reach the three quarters and then see what will happen. Ed's letting them wear themselves out. He will catch them before the finish, all right."

But the three quarters flag was swept astern and still the Hammond crew held the lead; and, moreover, it was plain to all that Ferry Hill's four was rowing raggedly: Warren at three was splashing badly, and there was a perceptible let-up to the boat between strokes. Even Chub looked worried.

"What's the matter with Billy Warren?" he muttered. "Must think he's a blooming geyser! Oh, thunder, Hammond's just walking away from us! Doesn't Ed see it? Why doesn't he hit it up?"

"Because he can't," answered Roy quietly. "Our fellows are rowed out; that's what's the matter."

"That's right," said Dick, sorrowfully; "we're beaten good and hard. Well—"

Such of the launches as had whistles began to make themselves heard, and the cheering, triumphant on one side and defiant on the other, was continuous. The rival crews were scarce a quarter of a mile distant now, coming straight down the middle of the narrow course, with Hammond leading by a full two lengths. In the sterns the coxswains bobbed back and forth as the eight oars dipped into the water and came out

dripping yards astern, seemed to hang motionless for an instant, and then dropped again under the sunflecked surface. Suddenly there was a low cry from Roy.

"They've hit it up!" shouted Chub. "They're gaining! Come on, Ferry Hill! You can do it! Row, you beggars, row!"

The rear shell was cutting down the stretch of clear water that had separated the two boats, her four oarsmen working despairingly as the finish line drew nearer and nearer. In and out went the long oars, back and forward bent the white-shirted bodies, and the narrow craft responded. In the stern little Perry, the tiller lines clutched desperately in his hands, cried encouragement, entreaty, threats. The bow of the Ferry Hill shell lapped the stern of the Hammond boat by a scant foot. But the effort was costing the crew dearly. Warren was swaying limply above his oar as the battling craft swept into the lane of boats, and in the bow Walker was clipping each stroke woefully. For a moment the two boats clung together, Hammond's rudder hidden by Ferry Hill's bow. Then, while whistles shrilled and hoarse voices shouted, a glimmer of open water showed between shell and shell, just a few scant inches, there was a puff of gray smoke over the bow of the judges' boat and a sharp report and the race was over. For an instant more the brown-tipped oars sank and rose in the wake of the rival shell, and then—

"Let her run!" piped Perry, weakly.

And with the last stroke Warren toppled in his seat.

Chub gave vent to a deep sigh, a sigh that expressed at once disappointment and relief.

"Well, I'm glad it's over," he said. "It was a hard race to

lose, though, fellows." Roy nodded, and Dick said:

"I guess Hammond found it a hard race to win. Look at them."

The Hammond shell was floating broadside to the current a few rods down the stream, and in it only the coxswain and Number Two were taking any interest in affairs. The other occupants were frankly fighting for breath and strength as they leaned forward over their oars. In the Ferry Hill boat Warren and Whitcomb were the worse sufferers, although Walker's white, drawn face showed that he, too, had felt the pace. He and Fernald were paddling the shell toward the referee's launch, which was churning the water at a little distance. Perry called out something to Mr. Cobb, a Ferry Hill instructor, who was on the launch, and a slight commotion ensued. Then the shell drew alongside, was seized and held and Warren's inert form was lifted to the deck.

"By Jove!" cried Roy. "Warren's done up, fellows!"

The engine-room bell tinkled, and the launch moved cautiously toward the Ferry Hill landing, drawing the shell with it. There was a weak cheer for Ferry Hill from the Hammond crew, and the four remaining occupants of the rival shell returned the compliment. And then, with much good-natured raillery, the flotilla broke up, the Hammond boats sending back cheers as they made for the farther shore. The crimson canoe shot across to the landing and the three disembarked.

"You fellows lift her out, will you?" asked Chub. "I want to see how Warren is."

He pushed his way through the crowd about the launch until

he found himself looking into the white, troubled face of the crew captain.

"Ed, it was a good race," he said cheerfully and earnestly as he seized Whitcomb's hand. "We're proud of you. Did anything go wrong?"

"Billy," answered the other wearily. "He had a touch of sun at the half mile and had to stop rowing. We had three lengths on them before that." Chub whistled.

"Say, that was tough luck!" he exclaimed. "What did you do?"

"Soaked Billy with water and pulled three oars for about a quarter of a mile. Then he came around and helped out some, but he wasn't good for much, poor duffer. He's down and out now, and Cobb says he'll have to go to bed. They've sent for the doctor."

"Is he dangerous?"

"No, I guess not. Just a touch of sunstroke. It was frightfully hot up there at the start, and Hammond kept us waiting there in the broiling sun about twenty minutes: something was wrong with one of her slides. Well, I'm going up. I'm pretty well played out. Coming?"

"In a minute. I'll see you in the dormitory. I'm sorry, Ed."

Whitcomb nodded and joined the throng which was filing up the path. Chub returned to Roy and Dick with his news. When the canoe was on its rack in the boat-house, the three followed the others up the winding path under the close-hanging branches of the beeches and oaks, through the gate in the hedge which marked the school's inner bounds and around the

corner of Burgess Hall.

“What time is it?” asked Chub as they paused with one consent on the dormitory steps.

“Eighteen minutes of twelve,” answered Dick, glancing at a very handsome gold watch. “Gee, but I’m warm! And hungry!”

“Echo,” said Chub, fanning his flushed face with his cap. “Let’s sit down here and cool off. What shall we do this afternoon?”

“I was thinking of taking my books somewhere where it’s cool and doing a line or two of study,” answered Roy. “Better come along, Chub.”

“What, study on a day like this? In all this heat? And have a sunstroke like Billy Warren? Roy, I’m surprised at you, I really am!”

“That’s all right; but just remember that we’ve got exams in physics and chemistry on Monday. What do you know about that?”

“I don’t know nothing about nothing,” answered Chub, cheerfully; “and I’m proud of it. But I tell you what we’ll do, fellows: we’ll go fishing.”

“Oh, fishing!” scoffed Roy. “The last time we went, we didn’t get a thing but a ducking.”

“Then let’s go ducking, and maybe we’ll get a fish,” laughed Chub. “Come along, Dick?” Dick shook his head soberly.

“I’d better not,” he said. “I’m no star like you chaps, and I can’t learn a thing in five minutes. I’ve got a terror of an exam

coming; English, you know. It'll take me from now until Monday morning to get ready for it, and even then I bet I'll flunk."

"Well, what do you care?" laughed Chub. "You're not graduating."

"Thank goodness!" said Dick, so devoutly, that the others went into peals of laughter.

"What you want to do," said Dick, when they had sobered down, "is to get those letters written to your dads so they'll go to the Cove in time for to-night's mail. If you don't they won't get off until Monday."

"That's so," Chub agreed. "But, say, fellows, there isn't any use in my asking; the folks won't let me stay up here. Dad will tell me I'm crazy."

"Don't you care," answered Roy. "The truth won't hurt you."

"There's no harm in asking," urged Dick.

"All right, I'll do it now. Come on in and help me."

"Wait a minute," said Roy. "Isn't that Harry coming around the gym?"

"Yes," answered Dick. "And she missed the race. Let's walk over and meet her."

They ran down the steps and followed the curving graveled path which led toward the gymnasium. Approaching them was a girl of fifteen years, a rather slender young lady with a face which, in spite of its irregular features, was undeniably attractive. The tilt of the short nose lent an air of saucy good-

humor, the bright blue eyes were frank and pleasing, and the very red hair suggested a temper. And she had a temper, too, did Miss Harriet Emery, a temper which, to quote Roy, was as sharp as her eyes and as short as her nose. That same nose wasn't by any means free from freckles, wherein it resembled the rest of the face; but already the sun had found its way under the brim of the plain sailor hat, and a healthy coat of tan was hiding the freckles.

“‘Did we win the race?’”

Harry—for she hated to be called Harriet—was the daughter of the principal, Doctor Emery. As she was an only child she had been perhaps a little bit spoiled; or, at least, that is what her Aunt Harriet Beverly often intimated; and as she had been

born and brought up in a boys' school she was not unnaturally somewhat of a tomboy, to the extent of being fonder of boys' games than girls', and of being no mean hand with oar or paddle, bat or racket. But still she was very much of a girl at heart, was Harry, although she wouldn't have thanked you for saying so.

At the present moment, in spite of the cool white waist and skirt which she wore, she looked far from comfortable. Her low tan shoes were covered with the dust—for Silver Cove was a full mile distant, and there had been no rain for over a fortnight—her face was very red and her hair, usually decently well-behaved, had lost most of its waviness, and was straggling around her flushed face and around her neck in straight, damp strands. She had been hurrying as she had crossed the athletic field, and had turned the corner of the gymnasium, but at sight of the three boys coming to meet her her pace slackened and an expression of disappointment came into her face.

"Oh, I'm too late!" she cried. "Did we win the race?"

"No," answered Roy. "Billy Warren had a sunstroke after he'd rowed half a mile, and Hammond won by just a length."

Harry sank on to a seat under a tree, her face eloquent of sorrow, while the three boys told her the particulars. Finally her face cleared.

"I ran almost half the way," she said, "and I was never so hot in my life. But," she added, philosophically, "I'm glad now I was too late. I'm glad I didn't see Hammond win!"

CHAPTER III

GRADUATION AND GOOD NEWS

By Monday afternoon Dick's fears regarding the result of the English examination proved groundless, perhaps because he had heroically resisted Chub's invitation to go fishing Saturday afternoon and had spent most of that period with his head close above his books and his lips moving continuously. There was only one more day of work, and Dick was heartily glad of it. He didn't like studying, and frankly said so. His mother had died when he was fourteen, and his schooling, decidedly intermittent at best, ceased abruptly while he and his father dwelt in hotels at home and abroad as the latter's business demanded. Dick's recent years had been spent in the West, and when, in January last, his father had suggested another trip abroad, Dick had rebelled, professing a preference for school. That he now owed allegiance to Ferry Hill rather than to Hammond was due to a chance meeting on the ice with Harry, who had so cleverly proclaimed the merits of Ferry Hill that Dick, already domiciled at the rival academy awaiting the beginning of the new term, had coolly repacked his trunk and transferred it and himself across the river. For awhile the others had called him "the Brand from the Burning," but the name was much too long for everyday use, and now he was just Dick —save when Chub or Roy elaborated and called him Dickums —one of the most popular fellows at Ferry Hill School, and the most promising candidate in sight for the school leadership in the autumn.

At three o'clock on Tuesday the last examination was over,

and at a few minutes past that hour Dick, Roy, Chub, and Harry, the three former in a blissful state of relief, feeling as boys do feel when the last book has been flung aside for the summer, sat in the shade of the Cottage porch.

"If Cobb gives me a C in German," said Chub hopefully, "I'm all right."

"Well, I guess I got through," said Dick proudly, "but it was hard work."

"Shucks!" scoffed Chub. "Just you wait until next year!"

"Now don't scare him to death," Roy protested. "If you don't look out he won't show up in the fall at all. How are you getting on, Harry?"

"Me? Oh, I'm all right, I guess. My last exam's to-morrow; botany. Now you needn't laugh," she added indignantly. "Botany's awfully hard."

"What's the sense of it?" asked Chub. "What good is it going to do you to know whether a leaf's lanceolate or—or composite?"

"Don't display your ignorance, Chub," laughed Roy.

"What good are lots of things they teach us?" Harry demanded. "Like—like music and drawing?"

"Come now, Harry, music's all right," Roy protested. "As for drawing—"

"It's perfect nonsense! Why, I couldn't draw one of those wooden cubes and make it look square if I was to try a whole year!"

"But you ought to like music, Harry," said Chub. "You

know you have a charming voice, a natural—er—contralto, isn't it?"

Harry made a face at him.

"I can sing just as well as you can, Smarty, anyhow!"

"I hope so," said Dick. "Chub sings like a coyote in distress!"

"There speaks envy," murmured Chub sadly. "I have a very melodious voice, and the beauty of it is that I can sing bass or tenor or—what's the other thing I sing, Roy?"

"Discord," answered his chum unkindly.

"That is not so," responded Chub indignantly. "To show you what a fine voice I have I will now sing for you that charming little ditty entitled—"

"Not much you won't!" declared Dick threateningly. "If you try to sing we'll thrash you. Look here, how about that letter? Have you heard from your folks yet?"

"No, do you think I correspond by wireless?" answered Chub. "I can't possibly hear before Thursday morning. It doesn't matter, anyhow, I keep telling you. Dad won't hear of such a thing."

"How would it do if we all wrote to him?" asked Dick, anxiously. Chub smiled grimly.

"You'd better not if you don't want to get a scorcher of a letter in reply. My dad's a good sort, all right, but he doesn't let any one else run his business for him. I have inherited that quality of—er—firmness." Roy and Dick howled impolitely.

"What are you all talking about?" asked Harry anxiously.

“You’ve gone and got a secret, and I don’t think it’s very nice of you!”

“Why, it isn’t really a secret,” answered Roy, hurriedly. “If there hadn’t been so much going on we’d have told you about it. We three are trying to get our folks to let us camp out for a month or so on Fox Island after school closes; that is, if your father will let us, and I guess he will.”

“Then you won’t go home yet?” cried Harry, delightedly.

“Not if we get permission. It all depends on Chub—”

“On Chub’s father you mean,” growled that youth.

“Because I’m pretty sure of my folks,” continued Roy; “and Dick says his father won’t mind if he stays a month longer.”

“That will be fine,” said Harry; but a moment later her face fell prodigiously. “Only it won’t do me any good,” she added, sorrowfully, “because I’ll be visiting Aunt Harriet most of the time.”

“That’s too bad,” said Roy. “Can’t you fix it to go later?”

Harry shook her head. “No, she goes to the seashore in August, you see. I think it’s just too mean for anything; and I know you will just have lovely times. I—I hope papa won’t let you do it!”

“Well!” ejaculated Chub. “Of all dogs in the manger that I ever met, Harry, you take the prize!”

“Well, I just do,” muttered Harry, rebelliously; “and I’m going to tell him not to!”

Chub and Dick viewed her anxiously, but Roy only smiled.

“We’re not afraid of that, Harry,” he said.

She looked at him a moment frowningly, then sighed and smiled as she said plaintively:

“Well, I don’t care, Roy Porter, I think it’s awfully mean! Maybe I won’t ever see you and Chub again, and just when I might be with you I have to go away. And I don’t have any fun at Aunt Harriet’s, anyway; it’s too stupid for anything!”

“Well, I wouldn’t worry yet,” said Roy, “because, maybe it will all fall through. You heard what Chub said about getting permission, and, of course, if he can’t stay we won’t; it wouldn’t be any fun for just two fellows.”

“I guess you could find some one else,” said Chub.

“I guess we’re not going to try,” said Dick.

“Of course not,” Roy agreed. “If you can’t make it we’ll call it off; but we will hope for the best, eh?”

“It won’t do you any good,” muttered Chub. “It’s me for that old Water Gap place.”

“And me for Aunt Harriet Beverly’s,” sighed Harry. And then, struck by a radiant idea, she added breathlessly: “Maybe I could run away and come back here and live with you on the island!”

The boys laughed.

“When do you have to go to Aunty’s?” asked Chub.

“I don’t know exactly,” Harry replied. “She hasn’t said anything about it yet, but usually I go the first of July and stay two or three weeks; once I had to stay a month—papa and mama went to the mountains.”

“Well, we couldn’t go into camp until about the first,” said Chub; “and then, if you only stayed two weeks with Aunty, you could be here a whole fortnight before we left.”

Harry brightened perceptibly. “That’s so,” she cried. “I’ll ask mama if I’ll have to stay more than two weeks. Wouldn’t that be lovely? We could have the dandiest times, couldn’t we?”

“I don’t believe your mother would let you stay on the island at night, though,” said Roy.

“Well, but I could go over real early in the morning and have breakfast with you, and stay all day. I could do the cooking for you! I can cook real well. I can make doughnuts and vanilla cookies and cheese-straws and—”

“Can you fry eggs?” asked Chub anxiously.

“Of course, stupid! Any one can do that!”

“All right, Harry, consider yourself engaged. There’s nothing like a few eggs to begin a hard day’s work on.”

“I want mine scrambled,” said Dick. “Can you do that, Harry?”

“Yes; you just put some milk with the eggs and stir them all up nice and messy with a silver knife,” replied Harry.

“You’ll have to bring your own knife,” laughed Roy. “We’ll use tin ones, I guess. As for me, though, I have to have my eggs in an omelet, Harry. How are you at omelets?”

Harry looked troubled, failing to see the smile which quivered around the corners of Roy’s mouth.

“I—I’m afraid I can’t make an omelet, Roy,” she said

dejectedly. “You see, they always get burned on the bottom; and then I never can flop them over. You know they have to be flopped over?” Roy nodded sympathetically.

“I always flop them before I cook them,” said Chub sententiously.

“How can you?” asked Harry, indignantly. “I never heard of anything so—so—”

“Why, you—er—you seize the egg between the thumb and first finger,” answered Chub, frowning intensely as though striving to recollect the process. “Then you slowly exert sufficient pressure to choke it to death. When nicely choked —”

Just here Dick pushed him off the steps.

“Isn’t he the silliest thing?” asked Harry. And then, returning to the subject of omelets: “But I could get mama to show me how, Roy.”

“What I want to know is,” said Chub as he crawled back up the steps, “is where all the eggs are coming from. I can eat three myself when I’m in camp, and you know what an appetite Dickums has!”

“We’ll hire a hen,” suggested Roy.

“We have lots of eggs,” said Harry. “I’ll bring some over every morning.”

“And a few doughnuts,” begged Chub. “That’s the ideal breakfast: three or four fried eggs, and half a dozen doughnuts, and a cup of coffee. Um-m! Gee, fellows, I wish my dad would say yes!”

“Maybe he will. Let’s throw our thought on him,” said Roy.

“You’d better not let him catch you at it,” said Chub with a grin. “Say, there goes Billy Warren. Let’s call him over and get him to show us his sunstroke.”

“Thomas Eaton, you’re too foolish for anything, to-day!” declared Harry, severely. “And it’s mean of you to make fun of Billy. He feels terribly bad about losing the race.”

“I’m not making fun of him,” denied Chub, indignantly. “The idea! Only if I had a sunstroke I’d be proud to show it around! I’d be pleased purple if fellows would ask me—”

“I’ll bet a dollar that’s what’s the matter with you,” laughed Dick. “It’s affected your brain.”

“Pretty smart sun if it found Chub’s brain,” added Roy.

“Enjoy yourselves,” said Chub, cheerfully. “Get into the game, Harry; find your little hammer! Here, there’s a monotony about this conversation that wearies me. I’m going out in the canoe. Anybody want to come along?”

“Me!” cried Harry, jumping up.

“You’d better not,” counseled Roy. “He will make you do all the work, Harry.”

“Pay no attention to him,” said Chub to Harry, confidentially. “I hate to say it about a friend, Harry, but he’s never been the same since he made that two-bagger the other day. It’s affected his brain. Let us leave them to their own foolish devices.”

He and Harry went off together along the path toward the Grove, and Roy and Dick watched them in smiling silence

until they had disappeared through the hedge gate. Then,

"I wonder if his father will turn him down," said Dick.

"I'm afraid so," answered Roy as he arose, "but we will know all about it by Thursday. There's time for a couple of sets of tennis before supper. Want to play? I'll give you fifteen."

Dick agreed, and they walked over to the dormitory to get their rackets.

Wednesday and Thursday were given over to the ceremonies of graduation. Wednesday was Class-Day, and Thursday Graduate's Day. The school had taken on festal attire. John the gardener and general factotum had been busy for a week past raking the walks, clipping the hedges and trimming the borders until when the first influx of guests began on Wednesday morning the grounds were looking their best. The gymnasium was draped inside with flags and bunting and decorated outside with Japanese lanterns. School Hall became suddenly a bower of palms and other things in pots or tubs which looked like palms but were really something quite different with far more unpronounceable names. On Wednesday morning there was the Tennis Tournament, won by Chase of the Second Middle Class. In the afternoon the corner-stone of the new dormitory was laid with appropriate ceremonies, and there was a spread under the trees. In the evening the Silver Cove Band, much augmented for the occasion, gave a concert in front of the gymnasium.

The graduation exercises took place the next morning in School Hall before a flatteringly attentive and applausive audience. There was an oration by Augustus Prince Pryor on "Opportunity and the Man"; there was an essay by Edgar

Whitcomb entitled “The Exploration of the Northwest”; there was a declamation by William Truscott Warren called “Napoleon the Man”; there was a thesis by Howard C. Glidden on “Science and Progress”; there was a narration by Thomas H. Eaton entitled “The Pilgrims,” and an oration on “Destiny” by Roy Porter. Then came the awarding of diplomas to the graduates, in number a round dozen, and the audience dispersed in search of dinner. Both Roy and Chub had graduated with honors, and if, on that one day, they held their heads a little bit higher than usual and looked a little bit more dignified, why, surely, they may be excused. Dick pretended to be much impressed, and always saluted whenever he met them. This went on until just before supper, when Chub’s patience became exhausted and he forgot his dignity and chased Dick twice around School Hall, finally capturing his quarry in a corner and administering punishment. In the evening there was a grand ball in the gymnasium to which came many Silver Cove folks and at which Harry, in a pink muslin party dress, danced to her heart’s content. And the next day came the exodus.

But Thursday morning’s mail had brought Chub his letter and the tenor of it had pleased him even more than it had surprised him; and that is saying much; for Mr. Eaton had written that the plan suggested met with his unqualified approval, and intimated broadly that it must have originated with some one other than Chub because of its reasonableness.

“Sounds like a knock,” said Roy as he read the letter.

“Oh, he always has his hammer handy,” laughed Chub. “But I don’t care; he’s given permission, and that’s what I wanted. Say, won’t it be great? Let’s find Dick and tell him.”

So they did, and Dick was overjoyed. Roy had already heard from home, and his mother had agreed, although less enthusiastically than Chub's father, to his remaining at Ferry Hill for the month of camp life. As for Dick, well, Dick merely took permission for granted, for it would be all of two weeks before a reply could reach him from London. When the letter finally did come it was all that he had wished. In substance it told him to please himself, adding that it was quite within the possibilities that the writer would return home for a short visit about the middle of the summer, in which case it wouldn't really be worth Dick's while to cross to England now.

So when, Friday morning, bright and early, Chub and Roy piled into the carriage with their suit cases, Dick said good-by and watched them disappear in the direction of Silver Cove and the railroad station with perfect equanimity; for four or five days at the most would see them both back again. Naturally enough, though, Dick found existence strangely quiet at first. By Friday evening the last boy had departed homeward, and an uncanny stillness held the campus.

At Mrs. Emery's invitation Dick moved his belongings over to the guest-room at the Cottage, for the dormitories were to be given over on the morrow to the regular summer cleaning, and then subsequently closed until fall. Harry, too, was somewhat depressed, and she and Dick made the most of each other's society. There were walks and little trips on the river and a good deal of tennis, a game which Dick was rapidly learning. Harry was an excellent player, and by the time Roy and Chub returned Dick, under her tuition, had vastly improved his game.

“In the evening there was a grand ball”

Living at the Cottage was very pleasant. Now that school was over with Doctor Emery doffed his immaculate black clothes and appeared in faded negligée shirts and patched knickerbockers. At the table he was quite often the more

flippant and irresponsible of the four, and Mrs. Emery frequently remonstrated laughingly, telling him that Dick would report his actions, and that when autumn came he would find his authority departed. Whereupon the Doctor swore Dick to secrecy, and Harry naïvely remarked that she never could see why any one was afraid of her father, anyhow. One day there was a notable event on the tennis-court when Harry played against her father and Dick, and won two sets out of three. When nothing better offered Dick and Harry got into a boat or a canoe and went over to Fox Island and picked out the site for the camp. By the time that Roy and Chub got back they had speculatively pitched that camp on almost every foot of the island.

But the most exciting event that occurred was the receipt of an apologetic letter from Harry's Aunt Harriet Beverly. It seemed that Aunt Harriet had decided almost at a moment's notice to go abroad with a party of friends, and they were to sail on the tenth of July. Under the circumstances, she explained, it would be necessary for Harry to postpone her visit until late in the summer. She hoped that the dear child would not be very greatly disappointed. The dear child waved the letter over her head and howled with glee.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she cried. "Isn't it perfectly dandy? Now I can go to camp with you. It's just like things that happen in books. Mama, I may, mayn't I?"

"Goodness, child!" exclaimed her mother. "You may what? What's all this noise about?"

"Camp out with Roy and Chub and Dick on the island! I may, mayn't I? You know you said—"

"Well, I'm surely not going to let you sleep on the island,

my dear, if that's what you mean. You'd catch your death of cold."

"Not to speak of the likelihood of being devoured alive by bears," added the Doctor as he joined them on the porch.

"Bears!" scoffed Harry. "I don't suppose there's even a rabbit on the island! And, mama dear, folks never catch cold in camps."

"Well, I think it will do, Harry, if you go over and visit the boys in the daytime. Besides, maybe they had rather be alone, my dear."

"But they wouldn't! Would you, Dick?"

"No," answered Dick promptly. "We'd like Harry to join us if you will let her, Mrs. Emery."

"And I'm going to cook for them—sometimes!" exclaimed Harry, eagerly, "and you're going to teach me how to make an omelet, mama, because Roy has to have omelet for his breakfast. And I'm going to mend their clothing for them, too. I—I don't believe they could do without me." And Harry gazed anxiously from Dick to her mother. Dick asserted stoutly that it would be simply impossible and Mrs. Emery consented to Harry's joining the campers by day. After that it was all arranged very quickly by Harry. One of the boys was to row over every morning to the landing, very, very early, and get her, since she was not allowed to go in a boat by herself, and she was to take over doughnuts and cookies, and—and a great many things!

The Doctor had readily consented to the use of one of the school tents and such things as they needed, so when, late one afternoon, Roy and Chub arrived triumphant from the ordeal of

preliminary examinations at college, everything was in readiness for the occupation of the island.

CHAPTER IV
CAMP TOROHADIK

Fox Island lies on the Ferry Hill side of the river some two hundred yards from shore and about a quarter of a mile above the school landing. It is fairly high, contains very nearly two acres, and is beautifully wooded. It is about one third as wide as it is long, and the shores, the inner shore especially, are full of tiny coves and promontories. There are two excellent beaches of white sand and nice round pebbles. Inner Beach, because of its more gradual slope, being the favorite bathing place. At the up-stream end of the beach a great granite boulder, worn round and smooth by water and weather, juts into the river, and forms an excellent place on which to lie in the sun and dry off without the aid of towels.

Back of the Inner Beach the trees and underbrush begin, climbing the side of Mount Emery, the tiniest heap of rocks and earth ever dignified with the name of mountain, and hurrying down the other side to riot across the island to where Outer Beach stretches from The Grapes to School Point. At the lower end of the island the underbrush has been cleared away and a grove of birches and maples makes a capital camp site. It was here that the boys decided to pitch their tent. They embarked bright and early the morning after the return of Roy and Chub, the tent and accompanying paraphernalia stowed away in a rowboat which was trailed behind Chub's crimson canoe. Harry was not with them. Fired with enthusiasm, she was up at the Cottage making a batch of doughnuts. Harry and the doughnuts and a cold luncheon were to be brought over to

the camp later on.

It was a bright morning with a crisp, cool breeze out of the northeast. The sun was still low over the hill behind them as they paddled slowly up the stream toward the island. The trees along the shore threw green shadows far out on to the bosom of the sparkling river. It was rather hard paddling with that clumsy rowboat tagging along astern, and presently Roy turned to Dick, who, as usual, was enacting the rôle of freight in the middle of the craft.

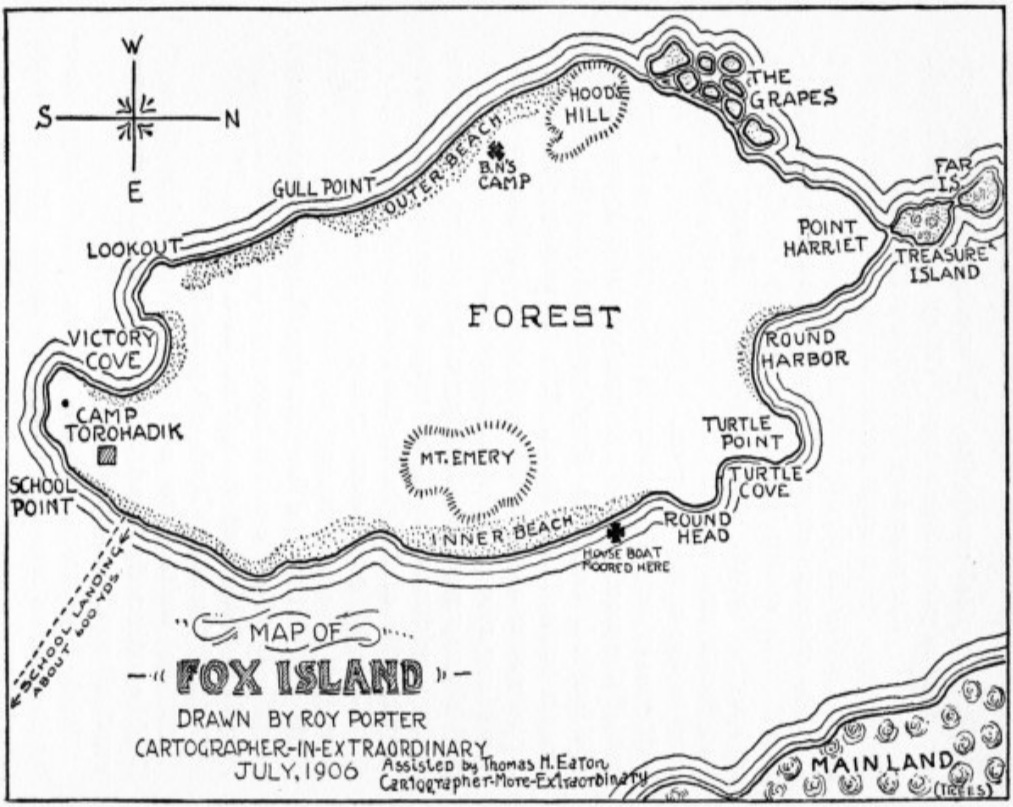
“Thought you were going to have a gasolene launch,” he said, jeeringly.

“I am. It would be just the thing this morning, wouldn’t it? We could have put all this truck right into it and been at the island in a minute.”

“Huh!” puffed Chub, skeptically.

“I’ve written to a fellow who makes them,” Dick continued, “and he’s got just the thing we want all ready to put the engine in.”

“Get him to leave the engine out,” suggested Chub, “then we won’t have so much trouble with the thing.”



MAP OF FOX ISLAND
DRAWN BY ROY PORTER
CARTOGRAPHER-IN-EXTRAORDINARY
JULY, 1906

“It’s a sixteen-footer,” continued Dick unheeding, “and has a two-horse-power motor, and only costs a hundred and sixty dollars.”

“Phew!” breathed Roy. “That’s a whole lot, isn’t it?”

“Not for a launch like that,” protested Dick.

“No,” said Chub, judicially, “not for a launch. It would be a good deal for a piece of pie or a hard-boiled egg, but—”

“Oh, you shut up,” interrupted Dick good-naturedly.

“No sooner said than stung,” murmured Chub, flicking a shower of water with his paddle on to Dick’s back and bringing a howl from that youth.

“Are you going to get it?” asked Roy.

“He did get it,” Chub laughed.

“Yes, I think so. I thought I’d wait and talk it over with you fellows. Maybe we ought to have a larger boat; sixteen feet isn’t very long—”

“It’ll be all we want to row,” said Chub.

“We won’t have to row it,” answered Dick warmly. “It’s a Saxon launch, and they’re as good as any made.”

“How fast will it go?” Chub inquired, interestedly. “I mean when it does go?”

“It’s capable of eight miles an hour.”

“Humph! I’m capable of lots of things I don’t do.”

“Yes, and you try to do lots of things you aren’t capable of,” responded Dick, “and judging motor-boats is one of them.”

“Whereupon,” murmured Chub, “our hero bent manfully at his oar.”

“How long will it take to get it?” pursued Roy.

“About six days the man said,” answered Dick. “If you fellows think it’s all right I’ll send for it to-day.”

“I don’t see why it shouldn’t be all right. Do you, Chub?”

“Well, it’s nice to be able to go fast, you know, and I suppose that a boat with eighteen feet can go faster than one with only sixteen. If you could afford it, Dick, it would be nice

to get a centipede boat that could do about a mile a minute."

"Oh, cut it out," laughed Roy, "and head her in toward the point, Chub. Funny how much easier she paddles now."

"We're out of the current, probably," answered Chub. "Shall we paddle around the point to the cove or—"

But at that instant Roy set up a howl of laughter, pointing speechlessly down the stream. Dick and Chub turned. Four or five hundred yards away, drifting gaily away from them, was the rowboat containing the tent. Chub looked hurriedly behind him.

"The rope slipped," he muttered.

"Didn't you tie it?" asked Dick.

"No, I sat on it. Turn her back, Roy; we'll have to get the old thing."

"You're a nice one," laughed Roy. "Why didn't you hold the rope in your teeth?"

"Oh, he'd have to keep his mouth shut," Dick scoffed, "and you know plaguey well he couldn't do that."

"Say, suppose you take a paddle and do some of the work," suggested Chub, fretfully. "I'd like to know what we're hauling you around for, anyway, you—you lump of dead weight! Let's throw him overboard and lighten the ship, Roy."

"Save your breath for paddling," Dick advised cheerfully. "It's a quarter of a mile to the boat and a quarter mile back. Don't worry about me; I'm very comfortable," and Dick proceeded to find an easier position, rocking the canoe perilously in the process.

“Sit still, you idiot,” said Chub, “or I’ll duck you again. Do you want to have us in the water?”

“Now, if I had my motor-boat—” Dick commenced.

“Oh, blow you and your old motor-boat,” spluttered Chub. “You’ve got to learn to paddle, that’s what you’ve got to do!”

The runaway boat was soon captured, but it was some time before they had reached the island again, and during the return trip both Chub and Roy saved their breath for their work. They were both pretty well tuckered by the time they had regained the end of Inner Beach. Just when the canoe was floating into shallow water, Dick, who for several minutes past had been smiling inscrutably at Roy’s back, observed casually:

“Of course what we ought to have done—but it’s too late now.”

“What are you mumbling about?” asked Chub crossly.

“Nothing; that is, I was going to say that if you had put me in the rowboat I could have taken the oars and it wouldn’t have been so hard on you fellows.”

Chub paused with paddle suspended and viewed Dick disgustedly. Then,

“Well, why didn’t you think of it before, you lazy loafer?” he demanded.

“Oh, I did think of it,” answered Dick calmly, hunching his shoulders in expectation of a shower of water, “but as I am only a passenger I didn’t think I had any right to make suggestions.”

“Gee!” muttered Chub. But before he could bring his paddle

into play Dick had thrown himself out of the canoe into a foot of water and was plunging up the beach out of danger.

"Got your feet good and wet," taunted Chub.

"I like them that way," laughed Dick from a safe distance. "If I had that motor-boat I could have saved you fellows—"

"If you mention that fool motor-boat again to-day," cried Chub wildly, "I'll—I'll—"

But the threat was never finished, for a canoe with its bow grounded on the beach and its stern afloat is something you can't take liberties with. Chub, balancing himself in the stern, forgot this fact for a moment, and when he remembered it he was sitting in the water and Roy and Dick were howling gleefully. Strange to say, this misadventure restored Chub's good-nature, and, after sitting for a minute up to his waist in the water and laughing at his predicament, he jumped up dripping, and hauled the canoe up the beach. They unloaded the rowboat, depositing tent and poles and supplies on the sand, and then considered the matter of a site for the camp.

They had landed on Inner Beach where School Point curves toward the middle of the river. Above the beach there was a fringe of scrub-pines and a few low bushes, but beyond these all underbrush had been cleared away so that there was a full quarter of an acre of grass-carpeted ground interspersed with well-grown maples and birches. There were plenty of signs of former occupancy; here and there benches had been built between a couple of neighborly trees; some wooden pegs driven into the trunk above one of these benches showed where during the spring camping the towels had been hung. Paths crossed and recrossed the clearing, many of them converging at the beach.

"'Most any place here is all right," said Chub.

"When we look for a camp site out our way," observed Dick, "we think first about water."

"Well, I guess we won't suffer for that with the river so near," said Chub dryly.

"I'd forgotten the river!" murmured Dick, looking foolish.

In the end they decided on a spot some ten yards back from the beach at Victory Cove. This, being well out on the point, Roy argued, would be cool and at the same time accessible from both sides. The sun would reach the tent for awhile in the afternoon, but not when it was hot enough to matter. The trees were well thinned out on both sides so that they had a clear view of the river to right and left. It was a good deal like camping out in one's own back yard, said Roy, for there, just across the inner channel, was the float and the boat-house, and, further up on the hill, the familiar forms of the school buildings. Over their heads the branches of the trees almost met, and, as Chub pointed out, in case of a heavy rainstorm they would have a second roof above them. There were a few pines scattered near by toward the rising ground inland, and their resinous fragrance mingled with the aroma of damp earth and dewy foliage.

They brought the tent and poles up and, under the direction of Dick, who was quite in his element now, soon had them erected. Dick showed them how to drive the pegs in a line with the guy-ropes instead of at an angle, so that the straining of the tent in a wind would not loosen them. The tent was not a new one, as several patches proved, but it was made of good heavy duck and was quite tight. It was a wall tent, twelve by eight feet in size, and there was a shelter curtain which could be

raised over the doorway. Chub called it the porch roof. Then they had brought a third piece of canvas which could be stretched over the little sheet-iron stove on rainy days. Dick, who had volunteered to do the cooking, selected a site for the "kitchen," and, while the others went off for pine branches for the beds, he set up the stove. After the boughs were placed in the tent and the blankets spread over them they scooped out a trench around the outside of the tent to drain off the water in case of a heavy rain. Then the boys separated in search of firewood, Roy looking for dead branches in the "forest" and Chub and Dick going to the upper end of the island. Chub took the canoe and Dick the rowboat, and by the time they had met, after having paddled along opposite shores, each had accumulated a respectable quantity of driftwood. Much of it was too wet to burn, and so when they got back to camp they spread it out in the sun. Roy had meanwhile made several trips into the woods and a good-sized heap of dry branches lay beside the stove.

"Now what?" asked Dick, surveying the scene with satisfaction and wiping the perspiration from his face. Chub looked speculatively at the flagpole which stands at the end of School Point.

"We ought to have a flag," he said. "Why didn't we bring along the school flag?"

"Because this isn't the school camp," answered Roy. "It's a private affair. We must have a flag of our own."

"With the name of the camp on it," said Dick. "By the way, what is the name of the camp?"

"Well, I've been thinking of that," answered Chub, gravely, seating himself on a root which had apparently shaped itself

for the purpose, “and I’ve got it all settled. It’s a nice camp, and it ought to have a nice name, a name that stands for—er—respectability and renown. So I suggest that we call it Camp Thomas H. Eaton.”

“What I’ve always admired in you,” said Dick, sarcastically, “is your modesty, Chub.”

“Yes, it is one of my many excellent qualities,” Chub replied sweetly.

“Who’s got a piece of paper?” Roy demanded. No one had, so he pulled a strip of bark from a birch-tree. “I’ve got an idea,” he said. “You fellows wait a minute.” He seated himself cross-legged and began to write on the bark, scowling intently. Chub viewed him apprehensively.

“Do you think it’s over-study?” he asked Dick in a hoarse whisper, “or merely the sun?”

“Crazed by the heat,” responded Dick, sadly.

“Isn’t it a sad case?” continued Chub. “Such a promising youth as he was! He was always promising—and never doing it. And so young, too!”

“Say, dry up a minute, you fellows,” Roy begged.

“He may get over it, though,” observed Dick, thoughtfully. But Chub shook his head.

“I’m afraid not,” he said. “Just look at his eyes; see that baleful glare, Dick? That’s what tells the story, the baleful glare; when you develop the baleful glare you are quite incurable. And see his lips work. He’s muttering to himself. That’s a frightfully bad sign, Dick. Pretty soon he will gibber, and when—”

“‘What is the name of the camp?’”

“Dry up, Chub,” commanded Roy. “Now listen. Let’s get a name the way the soap and biscuit people do.”

“A romantic idea,” murmured Chub, politely.

“I mean by using the initials or first two letters.”

“What first two letters?” asked Dick.

“Of our names, of course. You can’t make anything out of the initials, because they’re all consonants, but—”

“We could make believe it was a Russian name,” said Chub helpfully.

“By using the first two letters,” continued Roy, “you get Torodi. How’s that?”

“It’s even worse than we feared!” said Chub to Dick sotto voce.

“Oh, cut it out,” exclaimed Roy, testily. “Talk sense.”

“Well, it sounds rather—er—interesting, don’t you think, Dick?”

“Oh, it’s great,” Dick answered. “What’s it mean?”

“It doesn’t mean anything, you silly chump!” Roy answered warmly. “It’s just a name; T-o, for Tom; r-o, for Roy; d-i, for Dick.”

“Sort of a shorthand effect,” said Chub, thoughtfully. “But why not put it the other way, and call it Rotodi? I think Rotodi is much more musical to the ear.”

“Lend me your pencil,” said Dick. “I’ve got a better one.”

“Let him have it, Roy,” Chub said. “In the end you’ll all come back to my suggestion; you can’t beat Camp Thomas H. Eaton if you spoil all the bark on the tree. Hand him a new piece of bark Roy; humor him; let him have his way.”

“Say, can’t you stop talking for a minute?” demanded Dick.

Chub grinned and accepted the suggestion. In a minute Dick

said triumphantly:

"I've got it! Camp Sopœa!"

"So—what?" asked Chub.

"How do you get that?" inquired Roy.

"First two letters of our last names," answered Dick, proudly.

"Sounds like Camp Sapolio," Chub objected, "and if you're going in for that sort of thing I think Camp Pearline would be much prettier."

"Oh, well, you try it, then," said Dick, tossing the pencil to Chub.

"I knew you'd have to come to me in the end," said Chub. "Now let me see."

"No funny business," warned Roy. Chub shook his head. At that moment the silence, which had been disturbed only by the puffing of a distant steamer, was suddenly rudely shattered by a discordant sound that was like something between the finished efforts of a fish peddler and the wail of a bereaved cow.

"Tell Dick to stop snoring," said Chub without looking up from his task.

"What the dickens is that?" marvelled Roy, as the sound again reached them, apparently from some distance down the river.

"Blamed if I know!" said Dick.

"It's a cow," said Chub. "She's in great pain."

“A cow!” jeered Dick.

“Certainly. Cows eat too much nice green grass at this time of year and have the tummy ache. I know. We used to own one.”

“What, a tummy ache?” asked Roy. But Chub was busy again and made no answer. Presently he looked up with a smile of satisfaction.

“I’ve beat you at your own game, Roy,” he said. “The name is Camp Torohadik, with the accent, you will kindly observe, on the penultimate syllable.”

“How do you spell it?” questioned Roy suspiciously. And, when Chub had responded, “Where do you get your ‘h,a’?” he asked.

“I will explain. I put myself first—”

“That’s your modesty,” said Dick.

“Because I was here first. Then Roy came next and then that sneering youth over there. That made ‘Torodi,’ which is just what Roy had. But by adding another letter of Dick’s name, out of compliment, and because of the fact that the camp was his idea, I get ‘Torodik,’ which is a better sounding word than ‘Torodi.’ But still, it is not yet perfect. At this point genius gets in its work. I introduce the letters h,a, and the thing is complete.”

“Yes, but where do you get your old ‘h,a’?” demanded Roy.

“From the first name of the fourth member of the party,” replied Chub triumphantly.

“The fourth member?” puzzled Roy.

“Harry, of course,” said Dick. “And what does it make, Chub?”

“Torohadik, an Indian word meaning ‘four friends,’” responded the inventor affably.

“That’s not so bad,” laughed Roy. “It really does sound like an Indian word, doesn’t it, Dick?”

“Sure. It’s all right. Camp Torohadik it is. We’ll get Harry to make us a flag out of a piece of white cloth, and we’ll paint the name on it. Only I don’t know how—”

“There’s Chub’s cow again,” interrupted Roy as the wail once more broke the silence. “I wish you’d give her some Jamaica ginger or something, Chub.”

“I’m going to see what that is,” said Dick, scrambling to his feet. “Sounds like a horn to me.”

“Horn!” cried Chub. “That’s just what it is, I’ll bet. It’s Harry at the landing. She said she’d blow a tin horn when she was ready to—”

“Yes, there she is,” said Dick, “on the landing, with a basket. I’d forgotten all about the horn part of it. I’ll go over for her in the rowboat. You fellows are more tired than I am.”

“All right,” Chub agreed with a laugh, “but the current’s pretty strong coming back, and you’ll have to *row hard, Dick*!”

Dick groaned as he made toward the beach, leaving Roy to administer well-deserved punishment.

CHAPTER V
A BATCH OF DOUGHNUTS

"Of course this isn't real camping," said Dick as he munched his fifth sandwich.

"It's a mighty good lunch, though," answered Chub. "And I can't wait to get to those crullers—I mean doughnuts. What's the difference, anyway, Roy?"

"A cruller is a doughnut with the hole left out."

"Get out! What we call crullers are built just like these, with a hole in the middle."

"Some folks call them fried-cakes," offered Dick.

"Well, it doesn't matter what they're called," said Chub, cheerfully; "they look fine and Harry has made lots of them. And, say, fellows, look at the sugar on them! Let's hurry and reach the dessert."

Dick had brought Harry and her lunch basket across to the island and now they were seated on the grass in front of the tent with the contents of the basket spread before them. There were two kinds of sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, bananas and doughnuts. There was also clear, cold water from the river served from a tin coffee-pot for want of anything more suitable and drunk from tin cups. Strange to say, the enthusiasm over the doughnuts brought no response from Harry. In fact, as the meal progressed and the time for the dessert drew near, she exhibited well-defined symptoms of uneasiness, and when,

finally, Chub, unable to hold off any longer, seized the first doughnut and bit into it, she forgot the sandwich she was struggling with and watched him anxiously.

“Um-m!” said Chub rapturously. Then he repeated the remark, but with a note of doubt. Then he shot a puzzled look at Harry, who dropped her eyes quickly and devoured her sandwich so hurriedly that she choked and had to be slapped on the back by Dick. During this diversion Chub glanced frowningly at the doughnut in his hand, dropped it surreptitiously into his pocket and took a banana. When Harry looked again the doughnut had disappeared and her face expressed relief. Then Dick reached for one.

“How are Harry’s doughnuts, Chub?” he asked.

“Great!” said Chub with extraordinary, even suspicious, enthusiasm.

“Well, they certainly look fine,” replied Dick, setting his teeth into one.

“They surely do,” agreed Roy, following his example. “Aren’t you going to have one, Harry?”

“Please,” said Harry, her hand stretched toward the plate and her gaze on Dick.

Dick was munching his first mouthful somewhat gingerly and viewing the doughnut with surprise. There was a moment of silence. Then,

“I say, Harry,” blurted Dick, “what the dickens did you put into these things?”

“Why?” she faltered.

“Don’t they taste sort of funny?” he asked. “How’s yours, Roy?”

“All right,” replied Roy, eating doggedly, his eyes fixed on space as though he were trying to concentrate all efforts on the task. Dick laid his doughnut aside and picked up another.

“Maybe that one isn’t a fair sample,” he said hopefully. “I thought it tasted of—of—I don’t know just what.”

But he appeared to derive small pleasure from his second one and with a sigh of disappointment he laid it down on his knee with a fine simulation of carelessness and took a banana. Then:

“Hello,” he said, “aren’t you eating any doughnuts, Chub?”

“Me? Oh, yes, I had one,” answered Chub. “Fine, aren’t they?”

“Great,” answered Dick warmly.

“Toss me a banana, will you, Dick?” This from Roy, who, having caused the last of his doughnut to disappear, was still swallowing convulsively. “I ate so many sandwiches,” he added, in an apologetic tone, “that I can’t do justice to the doughnuts. Doughnuts are awfully filling things, aren’t they?”

“They certainly are,” agreed Dick and Chub together.

“These will be fine for supper,” continued Dick.

“Yes,” answered Roy, but with less enthusiasm.

“Or breakfast,” suggested Chub. “I’m awfully fond of doughnuts for breakfast. With lots of coffee,” he added as an afterthought.

Harry, who had listened to the remarks with a puckered brow and downcast eyes, struggling heroically with her own doughnut meanwhile, suddenly dropped her face into her hands and there was an audible sob.

"Hello!" cried Chub. "What's the matter, Harry?"

There was no reply save more sobs. The three boys gazed from Harry's heaving shoulders and bent head to each other's faces and then back again in dismay.

"It's the doughnuts," whispered Dick in a flash of comprehension. Then in loud, cheerful tones, "Have another doughnut, Roy?" he asked. "I'm going to."

"Sure," said Roy. "Have one, Chub?"

"You bet! I just didn't want to eat them all now for fear there wouldn't be any left for breakfast; but I dare say there'll be enough. Good, aren't they?"

"Don't think I ever tasted better," said Dick.

"Swell!" said Roy.

"They're not! They're perfectly horrid!" Harry's tearful eyes were gazing at them tragically. "It—it's the almond!"

"The—the what?" asked Roy.

"The almond flav-flavoring," faltered Harry. "I thought it would be nice to put some flavoring in—and I got too—too much, and they're nasty!"

"Nothing of the sort!" cried Chub, deftly tossing a half-devoured doughnut over his head and reaching for another. "They're not bad at all, are they, fellows?"

“I should say not!” exclaimed Dick. “I guess it was the flavoring I tasted that time. You see, I didn’t know they were flavored, Harry. If I’d known it, I’d have—er—understood.”

“I put in too much,” sniffed Harry, dabbing her eyes with a diminutive handkerchief. “I didn’t know how much to use and so I put in four tablespoonfuls. They’re just as bitter and horrid as they can be!”

“Oh, well, don’t you care, Harry,” Roy comforted. “You’ll know better next time.”

“There isn’t going to be any—next time,” answered Harry, dolefully. “I’m never going to make any more.”

But this elicited such a torrent of protestation, and it sounded so genuine, that Harry was comforted, and in the end relented.

“Maybe they’d be better just plain,” she said, “without any flavoring at all.”

“Well, we could try them that way next time,” said Chub, “and see. I suppose the trouble with almond is that it’s pretty strong. Now, vanilla or—or wintergreen—”

This produced a howl of derisive laughter in which even Harry joined. Chub pretended that his feelings were wounded and in another minute or two the doughnut incident was quite forgotten and Harry was eating a banana very cheerfully. The only untoward incident to threaten the serenity occurred when Chub absent-mindedly whisked his handkerchief from his pocket and at the same time whisked forth a half-eaten doughnut which flew across into Harry’s lap. For a moment her gloom returned, and Dick and Roy silently threatened Chub with dire punishment; but Chub saved the situation in a

measure by rare presence of mind.

"Here," he said calmly, "that's mine." And when it was returned to him he ate it unflinchingly, nay, even with every mark of enjoyment, allowing carelessly that possibly there was a little too much flavor to it but that he thought one could get very fond of almond after a time. But to go a little ahead of our story, when supper was eaten the doughnuts, through some oversight, were not placed on the menu, and every one tactfully forebore to remark upon the omission.

They had made out a list of groceries and supplies the evening before which Mrs. Emery was to hand to the groceryman from Silver Cove when he came for her order in the morning. And so in the middle of the afternoon they went over in the rowboat to get the things.

They made Dick row both ways because, as Chub put it, "he had imposed upon his superiors in the morning." Dick made a great fuss about the labor but in reality enjoyed rowing hugely.

They found their supplies awaiting them at the Cottage—two big baskets of them. They had managed to get quite a little excitement the evening before out of ordering. They had all made suggestions, Dick's imagination refusing to go farther than bacon, potatoes, and coffee; Roy holding forth for what might be called staples, fresh meat, flour, sugar, salt, pepper, and lard, and Chub's fancy roaming blissfully amid such delicacies as guava jelly, fancy biscuits, and pickles. As for Harry, her suggestions, like Chub's, ran to "trimmings," such as nuts and raisins, chocolate, patent preparations which by the addition of boiling water magically turned into highly-colored puddings, and dried fruit. (Dried fruit, she explained, was awfully nice when you were hungry between meals.) But Mrs.

Emery's counsel usually prevailed, and so when it was finished the list didn't contain many unnecessary articles. They stopped at the Cottage long enough for Dick to write his letter to the boat-builder ordering the launch. As he signed his name to the check which was to accompany it he grinned.

"Can't go to London now, anyway," he said; "haven't enough money left."

"Oh, it doesn't cost much by steerage," observed Chub.

Then they carried the baskets down to the boat and across to the island. Here Harry took command and directed the arrangement of the supplies in the packing-case in the tent. Butter and lard, they decided, would not keep hard there, so Chub built what he called a "larder" on the edge of the water. He dug away the sand until he had a small hole. At the bottom of this he placed a flat stone. Then he built up around with pieces of box cover driven into the sand. The butter firkin and lard tin were placed on the bottom and the water, passing in between the pieces of wood, came half-way up them, keeping them cold. A nice square piece of wood, selected from the pile which was drying on the beach, was placed over the top and a stone was rested on it to keep it from blowing off. Chub was very proud of his "larder" and straightway insisted that each member of the party should stop his or her labors and admire it. Each member good-naturedly did so.

By this time the sun was getting down and Dick started a fire in the stove and prepared to cook the evening meal. As it did not grow dark until quite late Harry had received permission to remain on the island for supper. Roy and Chub piled wood together for the camp-fire, and Harry, having stowed away the last of the groceries to her liking, furnished

Dick with some slight assistance and much advice. He accepted both thankfully and paid no heed to the latter; for Harry's way of cooking was not Dick's. She was not too insistent with her advice; possibly with the doughnut fiasco still in mind she thought it behooved her to be humble. As a camp cook, Dick proved himself an unqualified success from the start. Even Harry acknowledged that he was a wonder. He possessed the knack of doing several things at once and not losing his head, and the easy, unflustered manner in which he boiled potatoes, made tea, and fried steak at one and the same moment was a source of wonderment to the others, who, washed and ready for supper, sat around and almost forgot their hunger in admiration.

Now when you have been busy out of doors all day long, steak sizzling in butter, potatoes steaming through burst jackets, thick slices of snowy bread, and tea glowing like amber when it is poured from the pot in the late sunlight, are just about the finest things ever fashioned. If the steak was a little bit overdone no one realized it, and if condensed milk wasn't quite up to the fresh article it was too paltry a fact to mention. From where they sat, within, for Dick, easy reaching distance of the stove, they looked out upon the placid water of the river, hued like molten gold under the last rays of the setting sun, across to the green-black shadows of the tree-lined shore. High up above the slope of verdure a window in School Hall caught the radiance and shot it back, glowing ruddily. When for a moment, which was not frequently, the conversation paused there was only the leap of a small fish from the stream, the twittering of a bird, the distant screech of a locomotive, or the lazy creak of a boom as some small boat crept by the island, to mar the mellow stillness of the sunset

hour.

But you may be sure the fish and the bird, the engine and the boat, had scant opportunity to make themselves heard at Camp Torohadik, for every one was in the best of spirits and there was so much to talk about that it required all of one's politeness to keep from interrupting. The school year just closed was a never-failing subject, for there were dozens of incidents to be recalled. And there were plans to lay, marvelous plans for excursions and explorations. After every one had eaten as much as possible, and when there was no longer any excuse for remaining about the "table," they cleaned up, washing the tin pans and plates in the water of the cove where an accommodating stone jutted out from the sand.

The sunlight lingered and lingered on the tops of the hills in the west and then the twilight filled the valley with soft shadows and toned the bosom of the river to shades of steely gray. And so it was almost eight o'clock before there was any valid excuse for lighting the camp-fire. A tiny breeze sprang up out of the east and fanned the flames into leaping forms of orange and ruby. Gradually the conversation died away, and finally Harry yawned frankly and sleepily. Chub and Roy paddled her across the darkening water to the landing, pausing now and then and letting the canoe drift while they gazed back at the point, where Dick's shadow, monstrous and grotesque, moved across the side of the tent as he mended the fire. They went part way up the path with Harry, bade her good night, and scampered back to the landing and the canoe. As they glided softly into the shadow of the island Dick's voice challenged them.

“Chub and Roy paddled her across the darkening water”

“Who goes there?”

“Friends,” answered Chub.

“Advance, friends, and give the countersign.”

“What the dickens is the countersign?” whispered Chub.

“You may search me,” replied Roy with a yawn.

“Torohadik,” ventured Chub.

“Wrong,” answered Dick, sternly.

“Liberty,” said Roy.

“Freedom,” said Chub.

“Wrong,” replied Dick.

“Oh, go to thunder,” grumbled Chub, paddling for the beach. “I don’t know what it is.”

“Doughnuts!” laughed Dick, pulling the canoe up. “Any one ought to know that.”

“Well, it isn’t anything you could easily forget,” answered Chub, ruefully. “Weren’t they fierce?”

“They certainly were,” answered Roy as he jumped ashore. “And,” he added determinedly, “that reminds me of a duty to humanity.” He disappeared into the tent and when he emerged again he bore something in one hand. An instant later there was a series of light splashes. Chub took his cap off.

“*Requiescat in pace*,” he murmured.

CHAPTER VI
EXPLORATION

"Get up, you lazy beggar!" cried Roy, snatching off the gray woolen blanket and disclosing Chub, in a pair of blue pajamas, sprawled, face down, on his bed.

"Eh?" muttered Chub sleepily.

"Get up! Harry's over on the landing blowing that tin tooter of hers for all she's worth. It's after seven o'clock. You're a great camper, you are!"

Chub turned over dazedly on his elbow and blinked at his chum. Then his eyes wandered to the other two empty beds.

"Where's Dick?" he asked.

"Getting breakfast. He's been up half an hour. And we've been yelling at you at the top of our lungs, and all we could get out of you was 'Ye-e-s!'"

"Get out," answered Chub, indignantly, sitting up on his lowly couch, "I haven't opened my mouth!"

"Haven't you? You had it open most of the night, for one thing. To-night we're going to make you sleep outdoors, probably on the other end of the island. Get some clothes on and we'll go over and fetch Harry."

Chub shook his head anxiously.

"It occurs to me," he said, "that that girl is going to annoy me with her strenuousness. This is no time to be making such

noises as that. Think of the poor little birdies trying to sleep in their downy nests."

"Well, you get a move out of your downy nest," laughed Roy. "If you don't I'll call Dick and we'll pull you out."

"Think I'm afraid of you brutes?" asked Chub, scathingly. "I'd have you understand, Mr. Porter, that I am not to be coerced. I am a free-born citizen of this glorious Republic, and as such I have rights which cannot—"

"Oh, Dick!" shouted Roy. Chub gave a bound off his bed and was standing in the middle of the tent in a twinkling.

"I dare you to pull me out!" he said with immense dignity. Then, "How's the water?" he asked.

"Cold," replied Roy. "Besides, you haven't got time for a bath. If you want to bathe before breakfast you must get up at a decent time. Get a move on now."

Roy went out, leaving Chub indignantly searching for a pair of stockings which he plainly remembered having taken off last night but which at the present moment were not to be seen.

"Decent time!" he muttered. "What's a vacation for if you can't lie in bed when you're sleepy? I've a good mind to go back again." He looked speculatively at his disordered bed, and then peeped through the tent door. What he saw decided him.

"Bacon and eggs," he murmured appreciatively. "Where are my trousers? A fellow doesn't have to have socks to eat breakfast in." But the trousers revealed the missing stockings, and as he proceeded to dress leisurely he warbled loudly for the benefit of the others:

“The lark came up to meet the sun
And carol forth its lay;
The farmer’s boy took down his gun
And at him blazed away.

“The busy bee arose at five
And hummed the meadows o’er;
The farmer’s wife went to his hive
And robbed him of his store.

“The little ant rose early too,
His labors to begin;
The greedy sparrow that way flew
And took his antship in.

“O birds and bees and ants, be wise;
In proverbs take no stock;
Like me, refuse from bed to rise
Till half past eight o’clock.”

“If you’re not out here in two minutes,” called Dick, “we’re going to duck you.”

“Brutes!” answered Chub. “Who’s got my necktie?”

The inquiry elicited no response and he was compelled to solve the mystery unaided. The missing article was finally discovered dangling from the pocket of his shirt. The tent was filled with a subdued yellow light, for the sun was shining brightly from a clear, blue sky, and here and there a low-hanging branch was silhouetted against the canvas. Through the opening a cool, moist breeze blew in, tempting the dawdler into the morning world. But what tempted him still more was

the fragrant odor that came from Dick's pan and the accompanying eloquent sizzling sound. Chub was out before the two minutes had expired. The bacon and eggs were frying merrily, the coffee-pot was exhaling a fragrant aroma through its spout, and life was wonderfully well worth living. Chub balanced himself precariously on the jutting stone and performed a somewhat sketchy toilet. Then he and Roy tumbled into the canoe and shot it out across the green-shadowed water.

Harry had given up her horn in disgust and was sitting on the landing, a picture of patience. As they drew near a fox terrier rustled out of the trees and ran toward them wagging a wisp of a tail in hilarious greeting.

"I brought Snip along," explained Harry. "He loves to run around on the island, and I'm not afraid of his getting lost because, of course, he can't get off. Methuselah wanted to come too, but I didn't see how I could bring him."

"It's just as well," said Roy. "He might get seasick crossing over."

"Do you think parrots can get seasick?" asked Harry curiously as she took her place in the canoe.

"Well, we wouldn't want to risk it," answered Roy evasively. "Isn't it a swell morning?"

"Beautiful. I've been up nearly two hours. I hope you've got something nice for breakfast."

"You bet we have," said Chub. "Bacon and eggs, all sputtering together in a pan like a happy family. Gee, I'm hungry enough to eat this paddle. Talk about being up a long time, Harry! Why, I've been up ever since—"

“Ten minutes ago,” finished Roy. “Snip, if you lean any farther out you’ll find a watery grave.”

“Snip can swim beautifully,” said Harry indignantly. “Can’t you, darling?” Darling intimated by a quick dab of his tongue at her chin that swimming was one of the easiest things he did.

“Huh!” said Chub. “Snip swims like Sid Welch; makes an awful lot of fuss but doesn’t get anywhere. Why, when Sid gets into the water there’s foam for a mile up and down the river; looks like a regular flotilla of excursion steamers had been along. As for Sid, he grunts and thrashes his arms and legs around and stays just where he started.”

“I think Snip swims very well for a small dog,” said Harry with hauteur.

“Talking about swimming,” observed Roy, “who’s going in this forenoon? Did you bring your bathing-suit, Harry?”

“I guess I’ll wait until to-morrow,” answered Harry. “Then I can get into my bathing-suit at the house and put on a mackintosh and you can row me over.”

“For that matter,” said Roy, “we might just as well go in from the float. The swimming’s just as good there as it is on the island.” But Harry raised instant protest.

“No, you mustn’t,” she declared. “That wouldn’t be fair. You must make believe that the island is away off from everywhere and that it takes days and days to get to the camp.”

“Of course,” laughed Roy. “Let me see, to-day’s Friday; we ought to get breakfast about Sunday, eh?”

“Dick will have it all eaten by then,” said Chub sadly.

“Oh, we’ve already been two days on the trip,” answered Harry merrily. “We’ll be there in a few minutes now.”

“Hooray!” Chub shouted. “Land ho!”

“Where away?” asked Roy.

“Two points off the bow paddle,” answered Chub. “And, say, I can smell that bacon!”

A moment later they were aground on Inner Beach and Roy helped Harry out on to the sand. At the stove Dick was busily transferring slices of crisp bacon and golden-brown eggs on to the tin plates.

“Good morning, Harry,” he shouted. “You’re just in time. Have a fried egg?”

“No,” answered Chub, “she isn’t hungry. She says I can have hers.”

“Oh, you fibber!” cried Harry. “I didn’t say anything of the kind, Dick! I’m so hungry—”

“That’s all right,” Dick replied. “No one ever believes Chub. Here you are, now; get busy. Pass your cups if you want coffee. Say, Roy, get the sugar, will you? I forgot it.”

“Oh, don’t we have the best things to eat!” sighed Harry presently.

“We sure do,” answered Roy. “Is there another egg there, Dickums?”

“Yes, there’s two each. Pass your plate.”

“I don’t want a second one,” Harry announced, “so some one can have it.”

“Thanks,” said Roy. “Much obliged, Harry.” Chub, who had opened his mouth, shut it again and looked disgustedly at Roy. He was silent a moment, while the others watched him amusedly, then:

“I know a good English conundrum about a lobster,” he announced gravely.

“All right,” said Dick. “Out with it; get it off your mind.”

“Why is Roy like a lobster?”

“Why *is* he a lobster, you mean, don’t you?”

“No, that’s beyond explaining. I mean why is he like a lobster?”

“Is there any known answer?” scoffed Roy, “or is it like most of your conundrums?”

“There’s a very excellent answer,” replied Chub with dignity, as he stole Dick’s slice of bread undetected. “The answer is: because he is selfish.”

“Selfish? I don’t see—” began Dick.

“Oh, shell-fish!” cried Harry. “Don’t you see? Selfish—shell-fish. That’s it, isn’t it, Chub?”

“Yes, that’s it; good, isn’t it?”

“About the poorest I ever heard,” said Roy. “Shell-fish!”

“It’s an English conundrum,” answered Chub, calmly.

“It sounds like one,” Dick agreed.

“Yes, if you drop the h it’s all right!”

“O-oh!” cried the others in chorus. Chub bowed modestly.

“I’d like another egg, please,” he said.

“Well, you don’t deserve it,” said Roy. “But I’ll give you Harry’s.”

“I’ll compromise on half.”

“Here, I’ll cook another,” said Dick, but Chub and Roy decided that half an egg would be all they could eat with comfort.

After breakfast it was decided that they were to walk around the island, or, in the words of Harry, explore their domain.

“I tell you what we ought to do,” said Roy. “We ought to make a map of it, showing all the bays and peninsulas and—and—”

“Rivers,” suggested Chub. “Who’s going to do it?”

“I will,” Roy answered. “Where can I get a piece of paper?”

“There’s a tablet in my suit case that I brought along to write letters on,” said Dick. “Will that do?”

“Have to,” Roy replied. “Can I find it?”

“Sure. Pull things out until you reach it. It’s there somewhere. Where’s Snip got to, Harry?”

“Oh, he’s around somewhere,” Chub answered. “I heard him barking like anything awhile ago. Probably he’s caught a bear.”

“Yes, a Teddy bear,” said Dick. “Here, Snip! Here, Snip!”

“I hope it’s a white one,” laughed Harry; “I like them better than the brown ones, don’t you?”

“Yes, the cinnamon gets up my nose,” Chub assured them.

“Here he comes, with his tongue hanging out so far that he’s stepping on it! What did you find, Snipper-Snapper?”

“That’s not his name, Chub Eaton,” Harry remonstrated. “His name’s Darlingest Snip.”

“Well, come on, Darlingest Snip,” said Chub as Roy joined them; “but you must behave yourself and not kill any more bears. If you do you’ll be arrested for violation of the game laws of Fox Island.”

They set off along Inner Beach, pausing every minute or so while Roy made marks on the tablet.

“Of course,” he explained, apologetically, “this will be only a rough map, you know.” Chub sniffed but forebore to make any comment.

At Round Head, the big rock at the farther end of the beach, they sat down in the sunlight for awhile and allowed Roy to puzzle over his map. Then they followed the little well-worn path which skirts the shore under the trees past Turtle Cove, Turtle Point, and Round Harbor. This brought them to the upper end of the island where it terminates in a rocky point that breasts the water like the prow of a battle-ship. Roy originated the simile, and Chub remarked that it wasn’t the bow of a ship but the stern, and that the two little islets lying beyond were the battle-ship’s tenders in tow.

“We’re getting quite—quite poetical,” said Dick. “What’s the name of this point, Roy?”

Roy shook his head and looked questioningly at Chub.

“Don’t believe it has any name,” said the latter. “We’ve always called it just ‘the other end,’ or something like that.”

“Oh, let’s name it!” cried Harry.

“Point Torohadik,” Roy suggested.

“Point Harriet,” Chub corrected. Harry clapped her hands.

“Couldn’t we call it that?” she asked eagerly.

“That’s its name henceforth,” replied Chub solemnly. “And we ought really to change the names of those islands there to Snip and Methuselah!”

“I’m afraid we can’t do that,” laughed Roy. “They’ve been called Treasure Island and Far Island for years.”

“I tell you, though,” cried Chub. “The Grapes haven’t been named. There are eight of them. We’ll name those!”

They hurried past the point to where a cluster of tiny islets, the largest scarcely bigger than a barn door, lay just off the shore. A few of them held turf and bushes, but most were just barren lumps of rock and sand.

“Now,” said Chub, “the largest we will name Snip Island, the next largest Methuselah, the next Spot, the next—”

“Lady Gray!” prompted Harry.

“Lady Gray. Then comes—are there any more cats or kittens, Harry?”

“There’s Joe,” said Harry, somewhat reproachfully.

“Oh, yes, of course. Well, that’s Joe Island over there, the three-cornered one. Now what?”

“Well, there are the black rabbits,” Harry suggested.

“Just the thing!” said Roy. “There are three of them and there are just three islands left. I name thee—”

“Say, who’s officiating at this christening, anyhow?” asked Chub. “You run away and play, Mr. Porter. Now, the next island to Joe is Pete, the next Repeat, and the last one Threepete.”

“Referred to in the geographies as the Rabbit Group,” added Dick. “And now, if the ceremony is completed, we will move on to the next exhibit.”

They ran up the little slope of Hood’s Hill, where the three boys had awaited the boat-race, and then, like a celebrated army, ran down again. That brought them to Outer Beach, and they followed the edge of the water to Gull Point and from there on to Lookout, a small promontory dividing Outer Beach proper from the smaller crescent of sand known as Victory Cove. Then they were home again.

“Let’s see your old map,” said Chub, and when it was exhibited he laughed uproariously.

“Call that a map!” he shouted. “Why, say, Roy, that’s the diagram of a nightmare! Come and look, Dick.”

“You wait until I fix it up,” answered Roy, unruffled, thrusting it in his pocket to Dick’s disappointment. “It’s got to be drawn over again with ink.”

“Huh!” scoffed Chub. “The ink will turn pale when it sees that!”

They threw themselves down on the ground in the shade of the whispering birches, and Snip, who had wandered afield some moments before, came trotting into sight, his tongue hanging out, and subsided, very warm and happy, at Harry’s feet.

“He’s been at it again,” said Chub regretfully.

“At what?” Harry demanded.

“Killing bears. We won’t have any left on the island if you don’t stop him, Harry.”

“You’re very silly,” said Harry.

“Oh, very well,” was the response. “I’m not going to stay here and be insulted. Me for the water.” With a glance of contempt our hero turned upon his heel and strode haughtily away.

Chub tried turning on his heel, but as there was a root in the way he made rather a failure of it. But he had better success with the rest of the performance, for the look of haughtiness which he assumed sent the others into howls of laughter. Dick and Roy followed him into the tent and Harry and Snip wandered away along Inner Beach in search of blueberries. Presently there was a chorus of yells that sent the hair along the middle of Snip’s back pointing upward like the quills of the fretful porcupine and the three boys came tearing along the beach in their bathing-suits. As they came abreast of Harry and Snip Chub shouted:

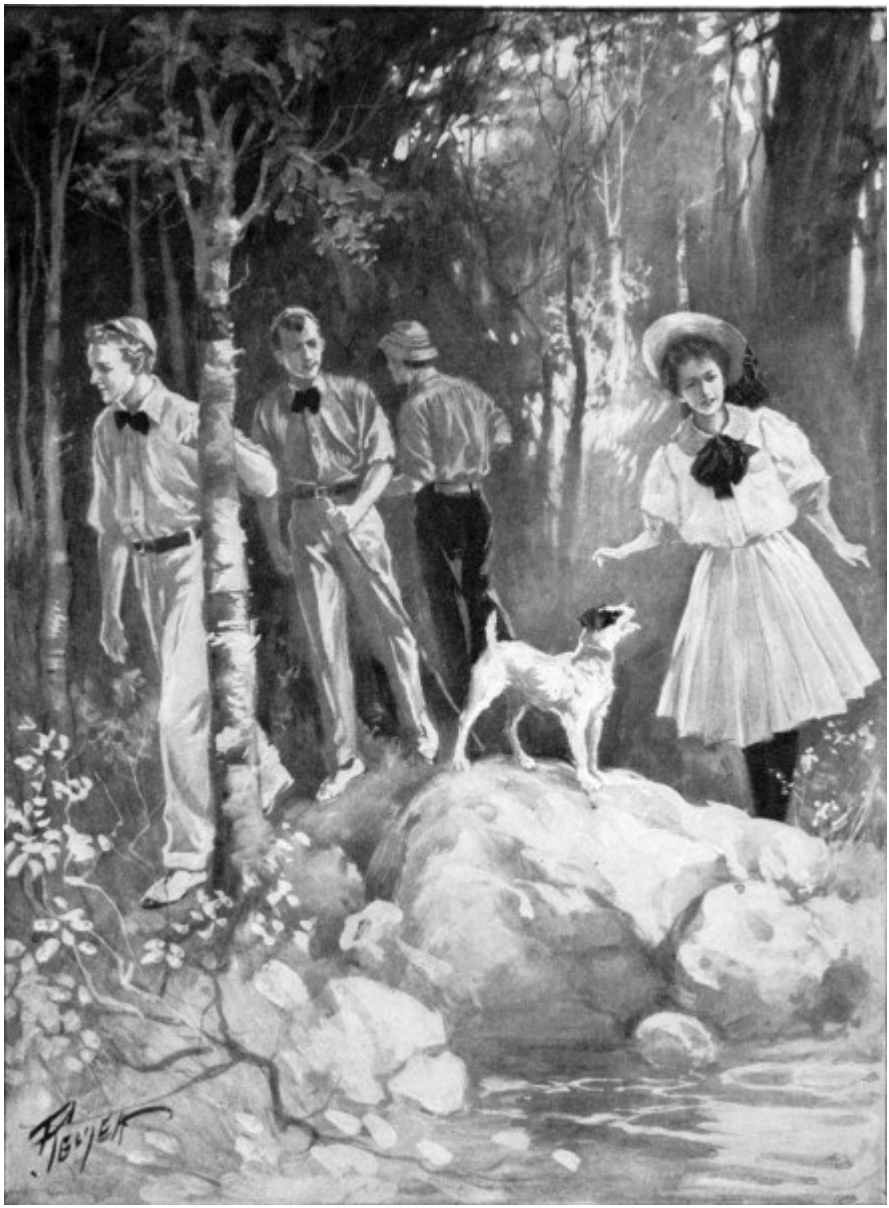
“Last one in is a fool!”

There was a mighty thrashing of the water as the trio floundered through the first few yards and then three splashes almost simultaneous followed. In a moment they were all up, laughing and gasping, and calling to Harry to settle the question of who the fool was.

“Why,” said Harry, “you all went in at the same time, so you’re all three fools!”

“No sooner said than stung,” cried Chub. “Harry, if you’ll come nearer I’ll tell you a secret.”

“Yes, and throw water on me,” answered Harry shrewdly. “No thanks; I’m very comfortable where I am.”



“They followed the edge of the water”

“I hate a suspicious person,” Chub grumbled. “That’s what I like about Dick. He’s never suspicious.” Whereupon Chub dived quickly and grabbed the unsuspicious one by the ankle and for a minute the water boiled as the two struggled together. At length Chub broke away and fled to the beach, and presently they were all out of the water and sunning themselves on the sloping surface of Round Head. Harry and Snip joined them, Snip hitting upon the enjoyable pastime of licking the boys’ faces as soon as they lay down and closed their eyes against the sunlight. This innocent diversion proved to be Snip’s undoing, for while he was operating on Dick, that youth, unable to stand the tickling sensation any longer, arose suddenly and toppled the luckless Snip over the edge of the rock into the water.

“Oh, he will drown!” wailed Harry.

But Snip came up coughing and choking and struck out bravely for the beach, and his anxious mistress reached him just in time to get well spattered as he emerged from the water and shook himself.

“I thought you said he could swim beautifully,” said Chub.

“Well, didn’t he?”

“Yes, but you were scared he’d drown. If you knew he could swim—”

“Of course I knew he could swim, but—but supposing a shark got him!” And she was quite incredulous when they assured her that there were no sharks that far up the Hudson. “You don’t know anything about it,” she said. “A shark could swim up here if he wanted to.”

“Oh, well, the only shark Snip need be afraid of is a dog-

shark," said Chub. "And they keep those muzzled."

Presently, inaction beginning to pall on them, they started diving from the rock, Dick, who knew little about diving, cheerfully striving to duplicate every stunt shown by Roy and Chub and coming many a cropper in consequence. Then they had a foot-race up the beach which Chub won handily, and a broad-jumping contest which went to Roy.

"What time do we have dinner?" asked Chub, as he climbed back to the rock, panting.

"Any time; whenever we're ready for it," answered Roy.

"Well, I'm ready right now," Chub assured him. "What time is it, do you suppose?"

"About a quarter of twelve," replied Dick after a scrutiny of the sun and the shadows. "Let's mosey back and get dressed. There are potatoes to get ready."

"O-o-oh!" howled Chub.

"What's the matter?" asked Harry anxiously.

"I hurt my wrist when I was jumping," answered Chub.

"Badly? Did you sprain it?"

"Well, I don't think it's actually sprained," answered Chub cautiously, "but it's too badly hurt to allow me to hold a potato-knife."

"Oh!" said Harry indignantly, as the others laughed. "I thought you meant it."

"For that," said Roy, "we'll make him peel them all, eh, Dick?"

“Every last one,” replied Dick sternly. There was no answer from Chub for a moment. Then he observed casually, apparently addressing his remarks to Snip:

“I was reading somewhere the other day that the most healthful way in which to eat potatoes was with the bark on.”

“Bark!” ridiculed Harry.

“We had them that way last night,” said Dick. “To-day they’re to be peeled; and you’re going to peel them. So come along.”

“I wonder,” muttered Chub as he arose and followed the others along the beach, “why it is I always have to do most of the work. I suppose I’m too good-natured and obliging. Woe is me!”

Ten minutes later he was sitting cross-legged on the rock in the cove with a pan of potatoes beside him, peeling and whistling contentedly.

“How many have you got?” asked Dick, coming down for the butter.

“Plenty,” answered Chub cheerfully. “Let’s see, there’s one for you and one for Harry and a little one for Roy and a tiny one for Snip and four for me.”

“Two or three more will be enough,” said Dick. “But, for goodness sake, Chub, which are the potatoes and which are the peelings?”

“You run away,” answered Chub aggrievedly. “Those peelings are mere wafers. I’m celebrated for peeling potatoes.”

“Humph!” Dick grunted as he turned away.

“Humph yourself!” answered Chub, throwing a peeling at him. “Chub,” he continued, talking to himself, “this is a very ungrateful world. But you must make the best of it. Do your duty, Chub, and all will be well. Whereupon our hero, brushing aside the unmanly tears, applied himself with renewed vigor to his degrading task.” And Chub, working the potato-knife slowly, took up his whistling again.

CHAPTER VII

"W. N." PAYS A VISIT

"I'm not grumbling," denied Chub. "I'm only—only stating my position."

They had been on Fox Island just one week; had bathed, canoed up and down the river, explored the country on each side of them to some extent, had eaten three generous meals every day, and had slept nine hours every night; and now Chub had given the first expression of dissatisfaction. They had finished dinner and were still sitting about the scanty remains of the feast. Harry was not present, to-day being one of the two days in the week when piano practice kept her an unwilling prisoner at the Cottage. Yesterday it had rained from morning until night, keeping them close to camp, and to-day, although the rain had ceased after breakfast, the clouds hung low, and there was an uncomfortable rawness in the east wind. The square of canvas over the stove flapped dismally, and the camp fire smoldered smokily, as though it were depressed by the cheerlessness of the leaden sky and the gray river.

"What do you expect in camp?" asked Roy, almost irritably, tilting back on the soap-box which had served him for a dining chair. "A parade in the morning, circus in the afternoon, and theater in the evening?"

"Maybe he'd rather have a garden-party this afternoon and a concert to-night," suggested Dick, sarcastically.

"Now, look here," answered Chub, warmly, "you fellows

needn't jump on me. I only said that life was growing dull, and it is, and you know it is—only you're afraid to say so."

"Who's jumping on you?" asked Dick.

"You, you old lobster; and Roy, too. I'm bored to death, if you want to know; and I don't care who hears it. I say let's *do* something. We've stuck around the camp here for two days and played cards till I can't tell a king from a four-spot. I want excitement!" And in proof of the assertion Chub rolled over backward off his box and flourished his legs in air. The others laughed and good nature returned to Camp Torohadik.

"Well, what is there to do?" asked Dick. "You suggest something and we'll do it. If the launch was only here—"

"You and your launch!" jeered Chub. "It was going to be here in six days, and it's eight now. I don't believe you bought it."

"It may be at the Cove now," answered Dick. "Suppose we go down and see?"

"Oh, there's no fun paddling around in this sort of weather," said Roy. "We'll go up to the Cottage and telephone. Then if it is there we can go down in the canoe and get it and we won't have to paddle home."

"Won't we?" asked Chub, ironically. "How do you propose to get the launch up here?"

"We'll get you to push it," answered Dick. "Well, let's go over and telephone, then. That'll take Chub's mind from his troubles."

"And, say," added Chub, "while we're there, let's have a couple of sets of tennis. Harry and I will play you two."

“Harry won’t be through practising until three or half past,” answered Roy. “Besides, it doesn’t seem quite fair, somehow, to play tennis when you’re camping out.”

“Fair be blowed!” said Chub. “If it will keep me from growing dippy, it’s all right, isn’t it?”

They agreed that it was, and after the dinner things were cleared up they tumbled into the canoe and paddled over to the landing. As they neared the Cottage the dismal strains of the piano, suffering an agony of scales and five-finger exercises, reached them.

“Poor Harry!” sighed Roy. “She’s worse off than we are.”

They stole up to the window and rapped on the pane, and when Harry looked startledly up she was confronted with a row of three grinning faces whose owners applauded silently with their hands.

She flew across to the window and threw it open.

“What is it?” she demanded eagerly.

“Nothing. We came up to telephone to the Cove to see if the launch has come. How much longer have you to torture that piano?”

“About—” Harry looked doubtfully at the little gilt clock on the mantel—“about half an hour—or twenty minutes.”

“Make it fifteen,” said Chub, “and come on out and play tennis. Dick and Roy against you and me. A cinch!”

“I can’t,” faltered Harry. “I have to practice two hours, you know. Mama’s away. If she were here I might skimp a little, but I don’t like to cheat when she’s gone.”

“That’s a noble sentiment,” said Dick. “Go ahead and do your worst, Harry; we’ll wait for you.”

“We’ll get our rackets and go over to the court,” said Roy.

“You’ll have to put the net up,” said Harry. “But don’t you go and begin to play till I come. Promise!”

“We promise!” answered the three in unison. Then they went around to the door, and as Harry closed the window, laughing, she heard them stampeding into the hall.

The launch had not arrived, the freight agent at the steamboat wharf informed them. There followed a council and Dick returned to the telephone and sent a message to be forwarded by wire to the boat-builder.

“When he gets that I bet he’ll sit up and take notice,” growled Dick.

“He will be scared to death,” agreed Chub. “I didn’t know you could be so stern and masterful, Dickums. It becomes you, though, ’deed it does, Dickums!”

Half an hour later they were all four engaged in mighty combat on the tennis-court. Chub forgot his boredom and, with Harry at his side, played splendid tennis. But the first set went to the opponents, none the less, six games to four. They changed courts and the contest was renewed. This time Chub performed so well that the first two games went to them before the others had found themselves. Then, at two games to one, Harry, encouraged by their success, won on her serve, and they had a lead of three; and, although Dick and Roy fought doggedly and brought the score up to 3—5, Chub and Harry went out brilliantly on the next game. At that moment, as though in applause, the sun burst through the bank of clouds in

the west and lighted the damp world with a soft, golden glow.

"Come on, Harry!" cried Chub. "That set made even the sun sit up! Let's take the next one now."

But Roy was on his mettle and made his service tell every time, which is equivalent to saying that he had things his own way. But it was no walkover at that, and when the quartet threw themselves down on the bench under the apple-tree the score was 6—4.

"If you'd serve like a gentleman," grumbled Chub, good-naturedly, "we might have a show. But I'd like to know how any fellow can be expected to take those fool twisters of yours that never leave the ground after they 'light!"

"When Roy came here two years ago," said Harry reminiscently, "he couldn't play hardly at all. Could you, Roy? Why, I used to beat him all the time!"

"That's so," answered Roy. "Harry taught me the game."

"I didn't teach you that serve," said Harry. "I wish I could do it."

"Well, I've tried to show you," Roy laughed.

"Wish I could play as well as Harry," remarked Dick disconsolately.

"Oh, you can, Dick, and you know it!" cried Harry.

"Indeed I can't!"

"Well, there's only one way to settle it," said Chub. "You two get up and have it out."

"Are you too tired?" asked Dick. Harry assured him that she

wasn’t a bit tired, and they took their places. Roy and Chub made a very appreciative “gallery,” applauding everything, even mis-strokes. In the end Dick proved his assertion by getting himself beaten seven games to five, and the four, stopping at the Cottage for Harry to get her coat, raced down to the landing and paddled across to camp in the highest of spirits. The camp-fire had gone out in their absence, but Dick soon had it going again. And then the stove was lighted and he set about getting supper, Harry, as usual, volunteering to assist and becoming wildly enthusiastic over the frying of the potatoes, so enthusiastic that she allowed them to burn under her nose. It mustn’t be imagined from this, however, that her culinary efforts always ended in disaster, for there had been several batches of doughnuts—unflavored—which had turned out excellently, and even now the party was finishing a recent baking of vanilla cookies. Doughnuts and cookies, however, were prepared at the Cottage; when it came to camp cookery Harry wasn’t an unqualified success; perhaps there was too much to distract her attention.

Chub declared that he preferred his potatoes well browned and the others said that it didn’t matter a bit. Harry, who had been suddenly plunged into deepest woe by the calamity, recovered her spirits sufficiently to suggest tentatively that perhaps it was better to have them too well done than not done enough. Dick and Roy were about to agree heartily to this sentiment when a shout from Chub who had been sent to the “larder” for the butter interrupted them.

“Somebody’s swiped almost half the butter,” he called, “and left a piece of poetry.”

“Swiped the butter!” exclaimed Dick.

“Left a piece of poultry!” cried Roy.

“Yes,” answered Chub as he came up, a plate of butter in one hand and a very dirty slip of paper in the other, “helped himself to about half a pound of it, and left this in the tub.” And he fluttered the paper.

“What is it?” asked Harry, as they crowded around him.

“Poetry, verse,” answered Chub, “and the craziest stuff you ever read.”

“Oh, I thought you said poultry,” said Roy. “What does it say?”

“Thanks for your hospitality
Which I accept, as you can see.
When I possess what you have not
Pray help yourself to what I’ve got.

“W. N.”

“Well, what do you think of that?” gasped Roy when Chub had finished reading. “Of all the cheeky beggars!”

“Let’s see it,” said Dick. He took the paper and looked it over carefully. It appeared to be the half of a page from a pocket note-book. It was traversed by pale blue lines and the lower corners were curled as though from much handling. The writing was small and the letters well formed.

“Do you reckon it’s a joke?” asked Chub.

“Who could have done it?” inquired Roy. “We don’t know any one around here, now that school is closed.”

“Wait a bit,” exclaimed Dick. “Here’s something on the

other side; it's been rubbed out, but I can see the words 'set' and 'Billings,' and there are some figures, I think."

"'Seth Billings,'" pondered Roy. "It isn't 'Seth Billings,' is it?"

"No, I don't think so; I can't see any h. Here, you see what you can make of it."

Roy took the paper and scrutinized it closely, but was unable to decipher any more than Dick.

"Well, 'Seth Billings' wants to keep away from this camp in future," said Chub, "or he will get his head punched."

"I don't think his name can be Seth Billings," said Harry, "because he signed that verse 'N. W.'"

"'W. N.,'" Chub corrected. "Not that it matters, though. He was probably going by in a boat and saw the camp and just naturally snooped around and helped himself to—say, do you suppose he's taken anything else?"

There was a concerted movement toward the tent and a rapid inventory of their property. Nothing was missing, however; or so, at least, it seemed until Dick raised the cover of the tin bread-box. Then:

"Bread, too," he said dryly; "and here's another sonnet in the bottom of the box. Listen to this:

"What's the good o' butter
When it can't be spread?
Hence I am your debtor
For half a loaf of bread.

"W. N."

Chub burst into a laugh and the others joined him.

“He’s a joker, he is!” he gasped. “As far as I’m concerned he’s welcome. But I wouldn’t want him to visit us every day; we’d be bankrupt in a week!”

“But who is he?” puzzled Roy. “Any one know a ‘W. N.’?”

They all thought hard but without solving the riddle.

“Oh, he’s probably a tramp or—or something like that,” said Roy.

“Tramps don’t usually pay for what they take with verses,” Chub objected; “and his rhymes aren’t bad, you know, all except ‘butter,’ and ‘debtor’; that’s poetic license with a vengeance.”

“Well, we’ll call him the Licensed Poet,” said Dick, “and have our supper. We ought to be thankful that he didn’t take more than he did. There were two whole loaves of bread there besides the half loaf; it was decent of him to take the half.”

“For that matter,” observed Roy, “it was decent of him, I suppose, not to swipe the tent and the cook stove. After this we won’t dare to leave the camp alone.”

“Supper! Supper!” cried Chub. “We can talk about it just as well while we’re eating. Come on, Harry; take the head of the table, please.”

“No, I’m not going to sit at the head,” Harry declared. “There’s a horrid old root there. I’m going to sit here, right by the preserve.”

Of course there was just one all-absorbing topic of conversation, and that was “W. N.,” “Seth Billings,” or “The

Licensed Poet," as he was variously called. Harry advanced a theory to account for the difference between the initials signed to the verses and the name on the reverse of the paper which found instant favor. The theory was that there had been two visitors, that "W. N." had written the verses, and that "Seth Billings" had supplied the leaf out of his note-book. That explanation was very plausible, and, while it didn't begin to explain all they wanted to know, it brought a measure of relief.

As the twilight fell Harry became fidgety and evinced a disposition to start abruptly at slight noises and to glance continually over her shoulder toward the edge of the woods, and long before her accustomed hour for leaving she decided that she would return to the Cottage, pleading that the tennis had made her very tired and sleepy. Chub grinned skeptically but said nothing, and he and Roy took Harry home, accompanying her all the way up the hill and only turning back when the lights of the Cottage were in sight across the campus.

"Shall we fasten the tent-flap?" asked Roy when they had undressed under the swinging lantern and were ready to dispense with its feeble radiance.

"What's the use?" yawned Chub. "If Seth Billings wants to steal us I guess he will do it anyhow."

"I'd like to see what he'd write after he'd stolen you and had a good look at you," said Roy as he blew out the lantern. For once Chub made no retort, for he was already fast asleep.

They awoke the next morning to find the sky swept clear of clouds and the sunlight burnishing the green leaves. There was a dip in the blue waters of the cove and a race back to the tent where three tingling bodies were rubbed dry and invested with clothing. Then Dick, who could dress or undress while Roy or

Chub were getting ready to do it, went whistling out to start the fire. In a moment the whistling ceased abruptly and there was silence. Then the tent flap was pushed back and Dick appeared in the opening holding forth a square of birch bark on which lay four good-sized fish.

"Pickerel!" exclaimed Roy. "Where'd you get them?"

"Found them on top of the stove."

"Seth Billings, I'll bet!" cried Chub. "Was there any poetry?"

"Not a line," answered Dick. "If Seth left them, we're very much obliged to him, but I'd just like to catch a glimpse of him; he's too plaguey mysterious for comfort."

"I tell you!" said Roy. "He's camping out here on the island! What'll you bet he isn't?"

"I'll bet he is!" answered Chub. "Let's go and look for him!"

"All right. But it was careless of him not to write a poem this time," said Dick.

"Are you sure there wasn't one?" Chub asked. "Did you look around? It might have blown off."

"Yes, I looked. What I like best about these fish is that they're already cleaned. All I've got to do is to slide them into the frying-pan."

Roy and Chub followed him out and watched while the pickerel were transferred from the birch bark to the pan. Dick tossed the bark aside and Chub rescued it out of curiosity.

"It made a pretty good platter," he said. Then, "Here it is!"

he cried delightedly.

"What?" asked the others in a breath.

"The verse! He wrote it on the other side of the bark! Listen!

"Fish, so the scientists agree,
As food for brain do serve.
So help yourself, but as for me,
I take them for my nerve!

"W. N."

CHAPTER VIII
A GUEST AT CAMP

"For his nerve!" gasped Dick.

Then they all howled with laughter until Dick leaped to the stove to rescue the coffee which was bubbling out of the spout.

"Think of his needing anything for his nerve!" said Chub. "Isn't he the dizzy joker? I guess he's squared himself now for the butter and the bread, eh?"

"I suppose so," answered Roy, "but he had no business stealing our things."

"Oh, well, he's paid us back."

"Just the same he had no right to—"

But just at that moment there came an imperative tooting from the Ferry Hill landing, and Roy and Chub shoved the canoe into the water and paddled over for Harry and Snip. Harry was wildly excited as soon as she had learned of "W. N.'s" latest vagary, and insisted that they should at once set out on a hunt for him. The boys, however, were unanimously in favor of eating breakfast first, and Harry was forced to submit to the delay. The fish were delicious; even Snip agreed to that; and before the repast was ended the four were feeling very kindly toward the Licensed Poet.

"I tell you what we'll do," said Chub. "We'll get Snip to trail Seth Billings to his lair."

“How?” demanded Harry.

“Let him smell the piece of birch bark,” answered Chub promptly. “Here, Snip! Come, smell! Good dog! Find him, sir, find him!”

Snip sniffed at the bark in a really interested manner, and Chub was quite encouraged until Roy remarked that what Snip smelled was the fish. Snip next evinced a strong inclination to chew up the bark, and, foiled in this, he wagged his tail cordially, just to prove that there was no ill-feeling, and sat down. Chub shook his head.

“He doesn’t understand,” he said. “He will never make a man-hunter.”

As though pained at this observation, Snip got up and ambled down to the river for a drink, and Chub turned to the others triumphantly.

“There!” he cried. “How’s that for intelligence? He smelled the fish and went right down to the river where they came from! Talk about your bloodhounds!”

“Come on,” laughed Dick. “We’ll be our own bloodhounds.”

“What are we going to say to him if we find him?” asked Roy as they set off, Snip far in the lead, along Inner Beach.

“Thank him for the fish,” suggested Chub.

“Tell him to keep out of our camp,” said Dick.

“I don’t think I’d say it just that way,” remonstrated Harry cautiously. “You see, Dick, he’s a poet, and poets are very easily offended; they’re so—so sensitive, you know.”

“Seems to me you know a lot about them!” said Roy.

“I’ve read,” answered Harry oracularly.

“Well, I’ll bet you anything this poet isn’t very sensitive,” scoffed Chub. “Any fellow who will swipe your butter can’t be suffering much that way!”

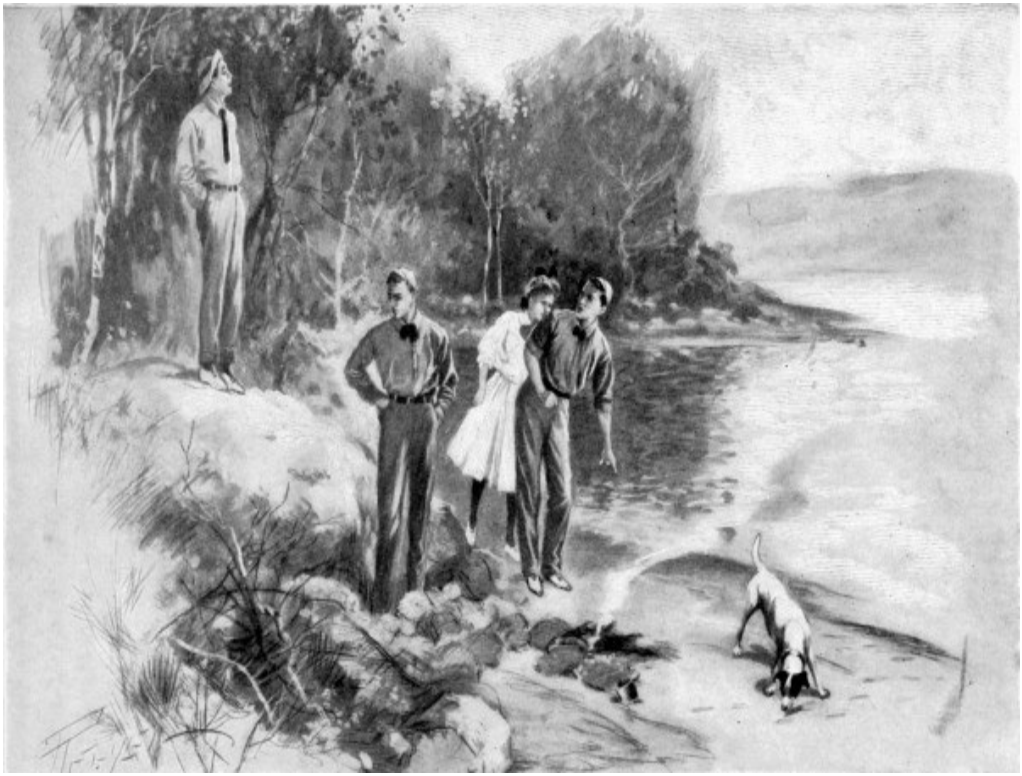
“I don’t believe we ought to accuse him of swiping anything, either,” said Harry. “Swiping is a very—very ordinary word, Chub.”

“Gee!” exclaimed Chub. “You must want us to thank him for stealing our grub and invite him to dinner!”

“I think it would be very nice to invite him to dinner. I’ve never met a real poet.”

“Well, if we do,” said Dick grimly, “I’m for hiding the solid silver.”

They reached Point Harriet without finding trace of the quarry, although whenever Snip barked in the woods Chub insisted that the poet was treed. They turned homeward and passed the Grapes and Hood’s Hill. Then, as they scrambled down to Outer Beach, Roy gave a shout. At their feet lay the still smoldering remains of a small fire. The sand between the fire and the edge of the water was trampled, and marks showed where a boat of some sort had been pulled partly out of the water. But there was no one in sight.



“At their feet lay the still smoldering remains of a small fire”

“He’s gone,” said Harry disappointedly.

“Yes,” answered Dick. “He spent the night here, I guess, although there isn’t any sign of a tent or anything. Perhaps he slept in his boat.”

“Well,” said Roy, “we won’t have to hide the grub when we leave camp. That’s one comfort.”

“Maybe he will come back.” Harry spoke at once questioningly and hopefully.

“Guess not,” answered Dick. “I suppose he has gone on down the river.”

“Maybe he didn’t like our butter,” suggested Chub. “I’ve thought sometimes myself that it wasn’t all it should be. He

can't have been gone very long, though, fellows; look at the fire."

"Well," said Roy, "he's gone, and that's enough for us."

They went on finally along the beach and so back to camp. They had planned a trip to the hills after huckleberries. Harry knew a place where there were just millions of them, she declared; and so as soon as camp was cleaned up they set out for the west shore at a point a mile or so above Coleville, armed with an empty lard-pail, two tin cans which had once held preserved peaches, and a pint measure. It was a long walk, made more so by the fact that Harry had forgotten just how to reach the spot, and it was well on toward eleven before they began picking. But Harry's startling tales of the fruitfulness of the locality proved in no wise exaggerated.

"Thunder!" exclaimed Chub, as he pushed back his cap and wiped the perspiration from his forehead, "there's just slathers of 'em!"

And there was. By one o'clock their pails were filled to overflowing and Dick's cap had been called into service. So they started homeward, very warm and hungry. Only one incident marred the return. Dick in a moment of forgetfulness, finding the sun uncomfortably warm on his head, thoughtlessly attempted to put his cap on, and half a pint of berries was lost. They still had fully five quarts, however, and, as Chub pointed out, philosophically, there was no use in crying over spilled berries. They reached the island again at a little after two and found a note pinned to the front of the tent.

"Very sorry," it read, "to be out when you called. Come again. W. N."

“He’s back!” cried Harry.

“Wonder why he didn’t write it in poetry,” said Chub.

“Wonder what he swiped,” growled Roy.

“By Jove!” exclaimed Dick. “That’s so. I guess we’d better look around.”

“I think it’s horrid of you to be so suspicious,” said Harry. “I just know he didn’t take a thing!”

And as far as they could find out Harry was right.

“As soon as we’ve had dinner,” said Dick, “we’ll go around there and see him. How would it do to take some berries along? We’ve got heaps more than we need.”

“Bully!” said Chub.

“And let’s ask him to supper,” added Harry. The boys laughed.

“Harry’s fallen in love with the Licensed Poet!” cried Chub.

“I haven’t!” denied Harry warmly. “But I do think it would be nice to ask him to supper.”

“Maybe he didn’t bring his dress-clothes,” said Roy.

“I guess we’d better have a look at him first,” said Dick. “Then if we want to ask him we can. Only there isn’t very much in the pantry just now; I guess bacon or ham and some fried potatoes will be about all we can set before his poetship.”

“There’s plenty of preserve and jelly,” said Harry, hopefully; “and there’s huckleberries, too, and fancy crackers. I do wish I’d made some doughnuts to-day.”

Dick had been very busy meanwhile, and already a slice of

steak was sizzling on the dry skillet. A quarter of an hour later they were very eagerly assuaging their hunger: three famished boys, one famished girl, and a famished dog.

It took some time to get enough to eat to-day, and so it was well into the middle of the afternoon before the procession set out for the farther end of Outer Beach, bearing a quart of huckleberries as an offering to the Licensed Poet. But once more they were doomed to disappointment, for the poet was again away from home. A new fire had been built since the morning and some egg-shells at the edge of the bushes showed that the poet had not wanted for food. I think Harry resented the sight of those egg-shells as being unromantic and opposed to her notion of poets, who, according to her reading, always starved in garrets. Roy pretended to be relieved at finding "W. N." away, but in reality he was quite as curious as any one, and just as anxious to see the mysterious person.

"We can't invite him to supper," said Harry sorrowfully.

"Let's leave him a note and put it on the berries," said Chub.

After some discussion this plan was agreed to. Dick supplied a scrap of paper from the back of an envelop and Chub had a pencil at the end of his watch chain.

"I suppose this ought to be in rhyme," said Chub, "but it's beyond me."

"Oh, never mind that," said Roy. "We can't all be poets."

"Well, how will this do? 'The pleasure of W. N.'s company is cordially requested at Camp Torohadik this evening at six thirty for supper. R.S.V.P.' Is that all right?"

"Dandy!" cried Harry.

“Fine,” said Dick and Roy in unison. “Only,” added Roy, “I’d leave off the ‘R.S.V.P.’ part of it. We don’t want him coming around this afternoon while we’re away.”

“That’s so,” laughed Chub, cancelling the letters, “the tent’s only pegged down.”

“If he’d wanted to steal anything he could have done it when he left that note,” said Harry indignantly.

“Please be careful how you speak of Harry’s poet,” begged Dick, “or we won’t get any more doughnuts and cookies.”

They placed the can of berries with the note on top of it beside the smoldering ashes and, calling Snip, who was trying very hard to eat an egg-shell, they returned to camp. Later Roy and Chub went canoeing down the river while Dick and Harry and Snip rowed over to the landing in the skiff and went up to the Cottage to see if there was any news of the launch. They found word from the freight agent that the boat had arrived and was awaiting the consignee at the wharf at Silver Cove. It was too late to go after it to-day, so, after Harry had begged for and received half a loaf of cake from her mother, they returned to the landing and set forth in search of Chub and Roy to tell them the news. The canoe was finally descried half a mile above Fox Island and Dick rowed toward it. That its occupants had not been entirely upon pleasure bent was evident from the pile of wood which lay in the middle of the craft. Firewood was getting low at Camp Torohadik and the cargo would be welcome. When within hailing distance Dick shouted his news:

“Fellows, the launch is here!”

Chub looked around him and searched the horizon.

“Where?” he shouted back.

“Down at the Cove,” answered Dick. “We’ll go down the first thing in the morning and bring it up. What do you say?”

“Sure,” answered Roy. “I suppose it’s too late to go this evening?”

“Yes, I guess so. Besides, we’ve got company coming to supper, you know, and I’ll have to get busy pretty soon. Mrs. Emery gave us a whole half a cake.”

“That’s rank partiality,” grumbled Chub as the two boats drew together. “Here we’ve been camping out for over a week and not a bit of cake have I seen. And now, just because the Licensed Poet is going to take supper with us, Harry brings a whole half loaf! Gee! Wish I was a poet!”

“You always have cake when there’s company,” answered Harry.

“Wish I was company, then,” said Chub. “I tell you what, fellows; I’ll go off and camp by myself at the other end of the island and then you can invite me to take dinner and supper with you and feed me cake. Chocolate cake, for choice,” he added reflectively.

The two boats drifted down to the island and presently were side by side on Inner Beach. In the intervals of assisting Dick with the task of preparing the evening meal, the others played quoits with horse-shoes which had been left from spring camping. At six Harry stopped playing and seated herself with dignity on a log near the tent, smoothing her skirt and retying her hair-ribbons. Chub wondered whether they ought to dress for their guest.

“About all I could do,” he reflected, “would be to change my necktie and put on another shirt. But as the shirt would be just like this one, he wouldn’t know that I’d changed. In fact, as he has never seen me at all, he wouldn’t know whether this one was the one I’d been wearing right along or one that I’d put on in his honor; and so if I changed this one for another one he wouldn’t know which one—”

“That’ll do for you,” interrupted Roy. “Seeing that you’ve got only two shirts on the island you do an awful lot of talking about them. I’m not going to change anything. If Seth Billings doesn’t like what I wear he can get off our island.”

Harry’s gaze wandered frequently toward the path from Outer Beach as half past six drew near; and so did that of the boys; but the half hour came and passed and no guest arrived.

“He’s awfully fashionable,” grumbled Chub.

“Maybe he didn’t come back,” said Roy.

“Perhaps he didn’t find the note,” Dick suggested. “Perhaps one of those bears which Chub’s always talking about ate the huckleberries and the note too.”

“Most likely he’s dropped his collar stud under the bureau and can’t find it,” said Chub. “I vote we sit down and eat.”

But Harry begged for another ten minutes and the boys agreed to wait. But at last they were forced to begin the meal without the guest of honor. It was plain that Harry was greatly disappointed, but I can’t truthfully say that the absence of the Licensed Poet interfered with the appetites of any of the others. And a very nice supper it was, too, for Dick had gone to extra pains, while Harry had ransacked the packing-case cupboard and had set out everything which she thought might tempt the

palate of a starving poet.

They had been eating several minutes when Snip, who since the return to camp had been appearing and disappearing as he pleased, treeing mythical bears and barking himself hoarse over the scent of a squirrel, trotted out of the woods with his tongue hanging and crawled into Harry's lap.

"You must wait awhile, Snip," said Harry, "for your supper. I guess you're a pretty hungry little dog, aren't you?"

"I should think he would be," said Chub, "the way he's been —say, what's that on his neck?"

It proved to be a piece of twisted paper tied about the middle and attached to Snip's collar.

"Hold him still," said Chub, "and I'll get it off."

The others had gathered around and, in spite of Snip's struggles—he laboring under the delusion that Chub wanted to play with him—the paper was untied and unfolded amid the breathless interest of the group.

"It's 'W. N.' again!" cried Chub. "Poetry, too! Listen, fellows!

"A man with his clothes on the line
With friends is unable to dine;
So he shivers and frets
And sends his regrets
By messenger No. K 9."

"But—but how did he manage to get hold of Snip?" marveled Dick. They all talked at once for a minute and great excitement reigned at Camp Torohadik. Finally Harry's voice

triumphed above the babel.

“I think it’s perfectly wonderful!” she exclaimed. “Snip will never go near strangers. It just shows that he must be a beautiful character!”

“Who?” asked Dick. “The dog?”

“No, the poet,” replied Harry, earnestly. “Couldn’t we lend him some clothes, Roy?”

“Yes, if we knew his size. But we don’t. He may be as big as all outdoors or as small as Chub.”

“We might offer to do it, anyway,” said Chub, ignoring the insult. “I’ve got a shirt he can take, and a sweater—”

“And he can have my duck trousers,” said Dick. “We might take them over to him and tell him we’d be glad to have him come, no matter if he wasn’t dressed quite conventionally.”

“Who’ll go?” asked Chub.

“Tie the things on to Snip and let him take them,” Roy said.

“I don’t mind going,” Dick volunteered. “Get your shirt and sweater, Chub, and I’ll find those trousers. I dare say he has shoes and stockings. It’s a jolly good lark, anyhow, isn’t it?”

“It’s downright exciting,” answered Chub. “I’m all of a tremble. Want me to go along?”

“Oh, no, Chub,” said Harry, earnestly. “You mustn’t! It might embarrass him if so many went. Let Dick go alone. Tell him we don’t mind what he wears, Dick; that we will feel—feel much honored—and pleased—”

“Tell him we’ll send the carriage for him in a quarter of an

hour," interrupted Roy unkindly. "You'd better take Snip along to show you the way."

Perhaps Snip understood what Roy said. At all events, he jumped up at once and bounded over to where Dick was bundling the garments under his arm, wagging his tail and barking hysterically.

"Snip, too, has fallen victim to the charms of the Unknown One," said Chub. "Tell Seth that I've got a necktie he can have if he's fussy, and that if he wants me to, I'll go over and tie it for him."

"All right; but you'd better put the supper back on the stove so it won't be all cold if he does come. I'll be right back and let you know." Dick, with Snip running excitedly ahead, moved toward the path leading to Lookout and Outer Beach.

"Be sure and tell him, Dick, that we don't mind what he wears," called Harry. "Tell him we're none of us dressed up, and that—"

"Dear young lady, say no more!"

Harry gave a little shriek, the boys turned quickly around and Snip barked valiantly. Behind them, standing in the mellow glow of the setting sun, bowing with one hand on his heart, stood as strange a looking figure as had ever met their sight.

CHAPTER IX
THE LICENSED POET

The group about the camp stared in open-mouthed amazement, while Snip barked hysterically and the stranger having completed his bow, returned their regard with merry, twinkling eyes.

He was rather small in stature and slight of build, with a round, much freckled face, an extremely stubbed nose, a wide mouth, a pair of intensely blue eyes and, crowning all, a thin crop of the most violently red hair that you can conceive of, red hair of that peculiar shade which usually wins for the possessor the nickname of “Carrots.” In age he appeared to be somewhere—almost anywhere, in fact—between thirty and thirty-five years.

But it was neither face nor figure which excited the wonder and amusement of the campers, but the attire. To begin at the ground and work upward, there was, first of all, a pair of low tan shoes; then came a pair of black stockings; then, strange to relate, a pair of voluminous white trousers which hung about the wearer like the folds of a deflated balloon and reached down one leg almost to the ankle and on the other scarcely below the knee. They were decorated in the queerest way, too! For on one leg was a disk of red, while on the other was a black star. Above the trousers was what seemed to be a brief space of red flannel, and surmounting this was a light blue Zouave jacket, much faded and stained, trimmed with a deal of tarnished silver braid and many silver buttons. Above this was

a high collar and a black dress-tie, and as a finishing touch to the incongruous apparel he held in his hand a high silk hat upon which the level rays of the sun scintillated dazzlingly. Roy was the first one to find his voice.

"H-how do you do?" he stammered. But Dick's amazement got the better of his manners, and—

"Who the dickens are you?" he blurted.

The stranger's broad, smiling mouth drew itself into lines of decorum and, with the silk hat held at his breast, he advanced toward them with measured and dignified tread. At three yards' distance he stopped, drew himself up with his right knee bent until only the toe touched the ground, thrust his left hand into a pocket of his huge trousers and pulled them out for almost a yard on that side, stretched the silk hat straight before him, crown down, at arm's length, threw back his head, and—

"Lady and gentlemen!" he announced grandiloquently. "I have the honor to introduce to your attention the world-famed Signor Billinuni, late of the Royal Hippodrome, Vienna!"

Harry gasped, Snip redoubled his barking and the others stared in amazed and admiring awe. There was a moment of silence, save for the frantic voice of the indomitable Snip. Then—

“‘I have the honor to introduce to your attention the world-famed Signor Billinuni’”

“It’s Seth Billings!” cried Chub.

“It’s ‘W. N.’!” murmured Roy.

“It’s the Poet!” exclaimed Harry.

“More familiarly known,” laughed the man, abandoning his pose and extravagant manner, “as Billy Noon, at your service.”

“Oh!” cried Harry, scrambling somewhat confusedly to her feet. “You—you’ve come to supper, haven’t you? Won’t you —won’t you be seated?”

“After you, my dear young lady,” answered Mr. Noon gallantly.

“We thought you weren’t coming,” said Chub. “We were just sending Dick over on a relief expedition with some clothes. What happened? Did you get wet?”

The guest had laid aside his tall silk hat and seated himself on the ground at Harry’s side. At Chub’s question his smiling face instantly took on an expression of thoughtful gravity.

“Have you ever,” he asked Chub, “been immersed in the Hudson River with your clothes on?”

Chub assured him that he never had, feeling rather apologetic about it. Mr. Noon sighed.

“Then you don’t know what it is to be thoroughly wet. I was so wet that after I had removed my apparel I was obliged to go in bathing to get dry.”

Harry gasped and looked puzzledly at Mr. Noon’s sober countenance until Chub and Dick and Roy burst out laughing. Then Mr. Noon laughed also, and Snip, who had been nosing nearer and nearer, took courage to sniff at the newcomer, and, recognizing an acquaintance, to strive frantically to lick his face.

“Hello, ‘K 9,’” said the guest of honor, patting Snip, “did you deliver that note I gave you?”

“Yes, he did,” answered Harry. “And we were so surprised, because Snip doesn’t like strangers usually.”

“I never have any trouble making friends with dogs,” said Mr. Noon. “And that’s a lucky thing for me, because in my present pursuit I meet all kinds of dogs, and if I didn’t get on with them pretty well I wouldn’t do much business.”

“Oh, are you a dog doc—I mean a veterinary surgeon?” asked Harry interestedly. But the other shook his head.

“I have been a good many things,” he said, “but I haven’t tried that yet. It’s a good idea, though,” he added thoughtfully, “a very good idea. I’ll keep it in mind.”

Dick, assisted by Roy, had been transferring the delayed supper back on to the “table,” and now all was in readiness for a new start. Mr. Noon sniffed the aroma of ham and potatoes and tea with frank appreciation. Then he sighed comfortably.

“Well, I’m glad I decided to waive the conventions and accept your kind invitation,” he remarked as he accepted his helping. “You see, as soon as I sent that note I regretted it. I said to myself: ‘Billy, you’ve made a mistake. You’ve missed a good meal because of over-sensitiveness. These kind friends don’t care what sort of clothes you wear. Forget your pride.’ So I overhauled my wardrobe and found—these.” He looked down at the blue jacket and the flowing white pantaloons and sighed. “They are all I have left to remind me of my former glory. Faded but dear to my heart,” he murmured sadly.

Harry looked very sympathetic.

“Well, it’s a mighty nobby coat,” said Chub cheerfully, between mouthfuls. “Were you in the army?”

Mr. Noon shook his head and chuckled.

"No," he answered. "These garments were worn by me when I traveled with Northcott's Great United Shows. I was Signor Billinuni, the celebrated European Clown. That explains the pantaloons. The coat I wore in the parades. I played the trombone in the band." He sighed again. "Those were indeed glorious days!"

"A circus clown!" cried Chub. "Say, that's bully. I've always wanted to meet a real clown!" And the others murmured assent; all save Harry, whose face fell.

"I thought you were a poet," she faltered.

Mr. Noon turned to her and smiled apologetically.

"I have been a great many things," he said, "but I can't truthfully claim the poet's mantle. I own to a certain ability in the felicitous rhyming of words, but nothing more, nothing more." He waved his fork on which a slice of fried potato was impaled and smiled modestly about the circle.

"But I think your verses are perfectly lovely!" cried Harry.

"You are too kind," he murmured with a bow. "Which reminds me that I owe an apology, never rightly expressed, for the liberty I took with your commissariat." They all looked rather blank; all except Dick. "I had arrived on this island but an hour before and the problem of supper was occupying a great deal of thought. To be frank, I had in my pantry a little coffee, a fried egg left over from dinner and—and a can of mushrooms, I may better say *the* can of mushrooms."

"Mushrooms!" repeated Roy curiously.

"Yes. You see, I happen to be inordinately fond of

mushrooms. In an extravagant moment I purchased a can of them; they cost me sixty cents. Naturally, they can only be opened on some occasion of special importance, an occasion which has not yet transpired. So, to all practical purposes, the can of mushrooms was non-existent. Well, considering the problem confronting me, I took a walk about my new domain and stumbled on your camp. It was empty. 'Providence,' thought I, 'has befriended me. I will investigate.' I assure you, young gentlemen—and young lady—that I took no liberties beyond what you know of. Said I, 'I will take of their plenty, paying as I can, now in a verse and later, maybe, in something more practical.' So I took half a loaf of bread and perhaps half a pound of butter, the whole valued at about eighteen cents, let us say. In return I left two verses worth, at market rates, about two dollars. My conscience was at rest and my stomach at peace."

"Why," exclaimed Harry, "then we owe you a dollar and seventy-two cents!"

"Eighty-two," corrected Roy. But the Licensed Poet raised his left hand, which at that moment happened not to be busy, in a gesture of disavowal.

"The market price, dear young lady," he said, "is not my price. My price for the verses was about eighteen cents."

"Oh!" murmured Harry, a little mystified.

"Thanks for the fish," said Dick. "They were fine."

"You are very welcome. I was so fortunate as to catch eight that morning."

"Here on the island?" asked Chub interestedly.

“No, some distance up the river, near where a small stream enters.”

“I know the place,” said Chub eagerly. “We must try it some time, fellows.”

“Then you have a boat,” said Roy.

“Yes,” answered the Poet. “The *Minerva*. She is neither large nor beautiful, but she does very well. I bought her for four dollars and a half, throwing in a set of dentist’s instruments. The instruments originally cost nearly twenty dollars, but they were no longer in their first bloom.”

“Are you a dentist, too?” asked Harry, shrinking a little away from him.

“I was a dentist for a brief space,” was the reply. “But I never had any heart for the profession. I am by nature, though I say it myself, very gentle. If I had my way there’d be no pain in the world. Naturally, extracting teeth was not an agreeable task; I believe that in most cases I suffered more agony than the patient. Would it be a breach of manners to ask for another small piece of the ham?”

“No, indeed,” declared Dick, replenishing the guest’s plate. Although he had been talking almost constantly since sitting down, the Poet had managed to do full justice to the viands. Harry was at first pained to observe that his table manners did not match his speech; he relied rather too much on his knife, for one thing, while there was also a marked tendency to fill the mouth somewhat too full and to talk while it was in that condition. But presently Harry recollected that the poets of whom she had read had all been notably eccentric and, in some cases, even more disregardful of the social niceties than Mr.

Noon.

"Are you going to be here long?" asked Roy when the visitor's wants had been attended to.

"I hardly know," was the reply. "It is a convenient spot and very attractive and peaceful. I love peace and Nature. I have led rather a busy life heretofore, and now to sleep under the trees when I want to, to lie on my back in the sunlight, to watch the water ripple past the boat—these are delights for which my soul has long yearned."

Harry breathed a sigh of ecstasy and forgot then and there that the Poet had ever been a dentist.

"Then you're just camping out?" asked Dick curiously.

Mr. Noon waved a slice of bread airily and smiled gently across the twilight water.

"I am combining business with pleasure, sir. After the day's work is over I am the owner of the yacht *Minerva*, taking a pleasure cruise down the Hudson River. During the day I am an agent for the enlightenment of mankind and more especially for Billings' 'Wonders of the Deep.'"

"You're a book agent!" exclaimed Dick.

Mr. Noon bowed.

"Right the first time! Although I prefer the word canvasser. I am selling sets of Billings' great work, I may say his masterpiece—"

"Seth Billings!" cried Chub.

"On the contrary, I believe his given name is Horace," replied Mr. Noon. Whereupon they explained about the words

found on the back of the slip of paper and their interpretation of them. Mr. Noon found this interesting and amusing, but not enough so to divert his attention from the supper. Harry pressed preserves and cake on him and he politely helped himself generously.

"It must be hard work," said Roy. "Selling books, I mean."

"All work is hard if you make it so," was the reply. "In the same way the hardest work may be easy if you enjoy it. I enjoy selling books. To be a successful book agent one must be a general. Every engagement requires special study. The prospective customer is the enemy to be surrounded and captured. Your ammunition is address, tact, patience, the ability to read character and the power of presenting your wares attractively." Mr. Noon took a third helping of preserve and cake and warmed to his subject. "To sell a set of books to some one who wants them is nothing; it brings no warmth to the heart. To sell a set of books to some one who needs them but doesn't want to buy them is worth while but still lacks the highest artistic touch. But to sell those books to a person who doesn't need them, doesn't want them and will never use them —that is an accomplishment!"

"I should think so!" muttered Roy admiringly.

"Yes," resumed Mr. Noon, smiling reminiscently, "yes. One of the most artistic sales I ever made was of a set of Brainard's 'Animal Kingdom'; six volumes, half morocco, profusely illustrated by the world's foremost artists. I sold that set to a gentleman who had been blind for twenty years."

Harry gave a gasp.

"Why, what did he want with them?" she asked.

“He wanted to possess them,” was the reply. “I pictured those books to him so graphically, so attractively, that he found he couldn’t be happy without them.”

“But he couldn’t read them, nor see the pictures,” objected Dick.

“And that,” replied Mr. Noon gravely, “was an advantage, for the ‘Animal Kingdom’ is a miserable set of books; I handled it less than three months. If he had read them he’d have been disappointed. As it was he imagined what he liked.”

“But that doesn’t seem to me to be quite—quite fair,” said Roy. “It was a good deal like—like cheating.”

“Roy!” murmured Harry distressedly. But Mr. Noon only smiled gently as he gazed over the empty plates.

“I may have been guilty,” he replied, “of slight exaggeration, but the gentleman was quite able to afford the books and the possession of them made him happier than he had been before. We should always keep in mind the Final Good.”

Roy looked perplexed but not convinced.

“Only this afternoon,” continued Mr. Noon, leaning comfortably back on one elbow, “I made a creditable sale and at the same time met a most agreeable gentleman. This afternoon was one of the bright spots in the life of a canvasser. I waited on a Doctor Emery who keeps the school over there, and—”

“Why, that’s my father!” cried Harry.

“Yes, so I learned,” replied Mr. Noon easily. “In fact, I introduced you, my dear young lady, as an entering wedge, so

to speak. I mentioned that we were, in a manner, spending our vacations at the same resort—”

“But you’d never seen me!”

“Pardon me, but I had seen you several times. One morning I passed you on the river in my boat. Once or twice I have seen you here at this camp when I have been out looking for wood or communing with Nature.”

“Oh,” said Harry. “And did you sell papa a set of—of—”

“Billings, yes. He preferred the buckram binding. We had a very pleasant chat, besides. A most interesting gentleman, I found him.”

The Licensed Poet arose. It was almost dark.

“And now,” he said, “having spent a busy day after an early arising I find that mind and body yearn for repose. You will pardon me if I take my departure early? I have enjoyed your hospitality greatly, appreciating both the kindness which prompted its offer and the excellent repast provided. I only regret that I am unable to return it. Some day I shall hope to do so, but at present I am so situated that—”

“That’s all right,” interrupted Chub. “We were mighty glad to have you, and we’ve enjoyed meeting you. If you’re round here for awhile I hope you’ll come again.”

“Thank you,” responded the Poet earnestly. “And perhaps, although I cannot entertain you at my board, you will call some time and view my humble abode.”

“Sure,” said Dick. “We’ll come around some time, maybe to-morrow.”

“I hope you will. Good night, and again thanks. Good night, my dear young lady.” The Licensed Poet bowed low to Harry, his ridiculous white pantaloons looming large in the half darkness.

“Good night,” said Harry.

“Good night,” echoed the others. The Licensed Poet turned toward the woods, exposing as he did so the startling design of a donkey’s head on the back of his trousers. He waved his hat, set it jauntily over one ear and moved away, becoming instantly lost in the gloom of the trees.

“Please!” cried Harry. “Mr. Noon!”

“At your service, my dear young lady,” came the reply from the darkness.

“Won’t you—would you mind—couldn’t you compose a—a verse before you go?” she asked breathlessly. There was a moment’s silence. Then the Poet’s voice came back to them from a little distance:

“Thanks, all, for this pleasant occasion,
And pardon my leaving so soon.
That you’ll spend a delightful vacation
Is the wish of your friend, Billy Noon.”

CHAPTER X

ADVENTURES WITH A LAUNCH

The next morning they went down to Silver Cove in the canoe to bring back the launch. Harry didn't accompany them, much as she wished to do so, because the canoe held only three safely and they didn't want to take the rowboat. They promised to stop at the landing on the way back and pick her up.

The launch was awaiting them in the freight-shed and they spent a busy half hour getting it out of its crate and into the water. For the latter task they enlisted the services of two employees of the wharf. When she was finally afloat she proved to be a very pretty little boat. She was sixteen feet long and four feet five inches broad, open the entire length save for a little triangle of deck at the bow and a corresponding space at the stern. She was painted green below and black above the water-line, and buff inside. The engine, of two horse-power, was placed well toward the stern, and in front of it was a cross seat with cushions covered with something that wasn't leather but that looked rather like it if you didn't get too near. Other seats ran forward on each side to the bow and were similarly attired. There was a neat brass steering-wheel, brass flag-sockets, brass cleats and a round disk of brass let into the forward deck which puzzled them all until investigation proved it to be the inlet to the gasolene tank.

"That's so," muttered Dick, "we've got to have gasolene, haven't we?"

“Well,” Chub answered, “you might get along with tomato catsup or witch hazel, but gasolene launches seem to take to gasolene better than to anything else.”

“You run away,” said Dick. “Only thing is, I don’t know how much the stuff costs or where you buy it. I’ve only got about three dollars with me.”

But inquiry solved the matter for them. Gasolene could be bought at the next wharf above and the cost of it was only about twenty cents a gallon. Roy stuck his head through the little door under the forward decking and reported that the tank, according to his belief, would hold only some ten gallons. Dick sighed with relief. One of the freight-handlers took a great interest in them and their boat and proved invaluable, producing a rope with which to tie the boat up to the wharf, giving them the address of a man who could make flags and poles to occupy the fascinating sockets and lending practical assistance when, presently, they started to get the engine to running.

I desire to say right now that some one ought to apologize for the behavior of Thomas H. Eaton during that trying period, and as Thomas H. Eaton has failed to apologize himself I’ll do it for him. Chub sat well out of the way on the “near-leather” cushion in the bow and just simply bubbled over with advice and observations. The engine consisted of a mysterious vermilion-enameled cylinder about fourteen inches high flanked on one side by a strange contrivance of brass called, according to the card of directions which hung from it, a carbureter and which looked like a small soup-bowl adorned with valves and springs. In front of the cylinder was a heavy iron wheel which appeared to operate a piston and a shaft.

From the back of the engine a brass rod slanted away until it disappeared under the flooring. On top of the cylinder there was a contrivance of steel and porcelain which screwed into a hole, and from this an insulated wire ran to a set of dry-cells tucked under one of the seats.

Well, it was all very confusing and mystifying, and unfortunately their friend the freight-handler knew nothing about gas-engines. The card of instructions contained a great deal of printed matter and several diagrams, but after Dick and Roy had read it carefully over the only things they were certain about were that it was necessary to fill the tank with gasolene, lubricate all bearings with cylinder-oil or grease and turn the fly-wheel to the right. So Dick went off in search of gasolene and presently returned struggling with a five-gallon can of it. This they poured into the tank. There was a small can of cylinder-oil and one of graphite in the tool drawer, and, while Roy read the directions, Dick poured oil or smeared grease. When that operation was completed Dick looked as though he had been an engineer all his life. Roy said he ought to have some cotton waste to wipe his hands on and the freight-handler again proved a friend in need, producing a bunch of the desired article as if by magic.

Then Roy read the directions for starting the engine again, while Dick turned valves and fussed with things generally and Chub approved or disapproved as he thought proper.

"'Close switch,'" read Roy. "Have you done that?"

"Yes, long ago. What next?"

"'Open relief cock, j.'"

"Yes, open the relief cock, jay," echoed Chub.

“All right. Now what?”

“‘Flood carbureter by depressing m.’”

“What’s ‘m’?” growled Dick. Roy consulted the diagram.

“Hanged if I know,” he muttered finally. “There doesn’t seem to be any ‘m’ here.”

“Go on to the next letter,” suggested Chub.

“Oh, here it is. It’s that little thing on top of it there. No, the little jigger; that’s it.”

“The stuff’s coming out on top,” said Dick doubtfully.

“Better stop then; I suppose it’s flooded. Now let’s see. ‘Flood’—you’ve done that. ‘Turn wheel over to right until engine starts. Then close relief cock, open oil-cup and regulate carbureter as directed.’”

“Well, let’s try it,” said Dick. “Where’s that handle thing?”

“Behind you on the floor.”

“If you start without unhitching,” said Chub, “you’ll tow the wharf off; yank it right out by the roots and tow it away; and maybe we’ll all be arrested for stealing a wharf.”

“You dry up, will you? Maybe, though, we’d better do that, Roy.”

But the freight-handler returned at that moment and solved that difficulty by untying the rope and holding it. Then Dick inserted the handle in the rim of the wheel and turned it over. There was a mild click and a little puff from the relief cock, but the launch didn’t dart off toward the dim distance.

“Huh!” said Dick. “What’s the matter with it?”

“Try it again,” said Roy. Dick tried it again. Then he tried it several times. Then he said “Huh!” once more, got a new hold and turned until he had a crick between his shoulders and was as red in the face as a lobster. Roy studied the directions.

“That’s funny,” he murmured.

“What I like about these motor launches,” observed Chub to the world at large, “is the ease of manipulation. You pour a little gasolene into a tank, open a cock, turn a handle and—zip, you’re off! Simple! There’s nothing simpler!”

“Say, if you don’t shut up,” said Dick, turning a red, scowling countenance upon him, “we’ll put you out of here. And that goes!”

Chub subsided for a moment, smiling cheerfully. Dick bent over the wheel again. After another full minute of labor, he stopped, wiped the perspiration from his forehead and sat down on the seat.

“Let me try,” said Roy. He took his turn. Over went the wheel with a click, there was a soft sigh through the relief cock and nothing more exciting transpired. Now and then they studied the directions anew and examined everything all over again. Once in awhile the carbureter came in for another flooding. After Roy the freight-handler had his go at the wheel. He turned and turned, proving superior to exhaustion, and would doubtless be turning yet if Dick hadn’t forced him away from the wheel.

“Must be something wrong,” said Dick wrathfully. Roy silently agreed. Chub looked wise.

“Have you drowned the carbureter lately?” he asked. No one paid any attention to him.

“It must be the battery,” said Dick helplessly. “Maybe we’re not getting any spark. The directions said there should be a spark. Now let’s see.” He studied the situation in silence for a moment. Then, “I know,” he said. “I’ll bet something’s wrong with the wiring. What time is it?”

“Quarter to eleven, nearly,” Roy answered.

“Then supposing I go up to the village and find some one who understands electricity.”

“Well,” said Roy doubtfully. “But suppose the trouble isn’t with the battery or the wires? Wouldn’t it be better to find some one who knows about gasolene engines?”

Dick agreed that it would and they consulted the freight-handler. He thought a long while and finally said that there was a man named Hodgson who had “one of them boats.” But it also transpired that Mr. Hodgson was extremely uncertain as to his habits and the freight-handler couldn’t suggest a place where they would be likely to find him.

“Well, there’s no use looking all over the town for him,” said Dick disgustedly. “I’ll try her once more. Flood that thing, will you?”

“One good turn deserves another,” murmured Chub. Roy flooded the carbureter for the twentieth time, remarking pessimistically that pretty soon they’d have to buy more gasolene, and Roy “turned her over” again. This time there was a real business-like sound from somewhere inside the engine and a puff of vapor came through the relief cock.

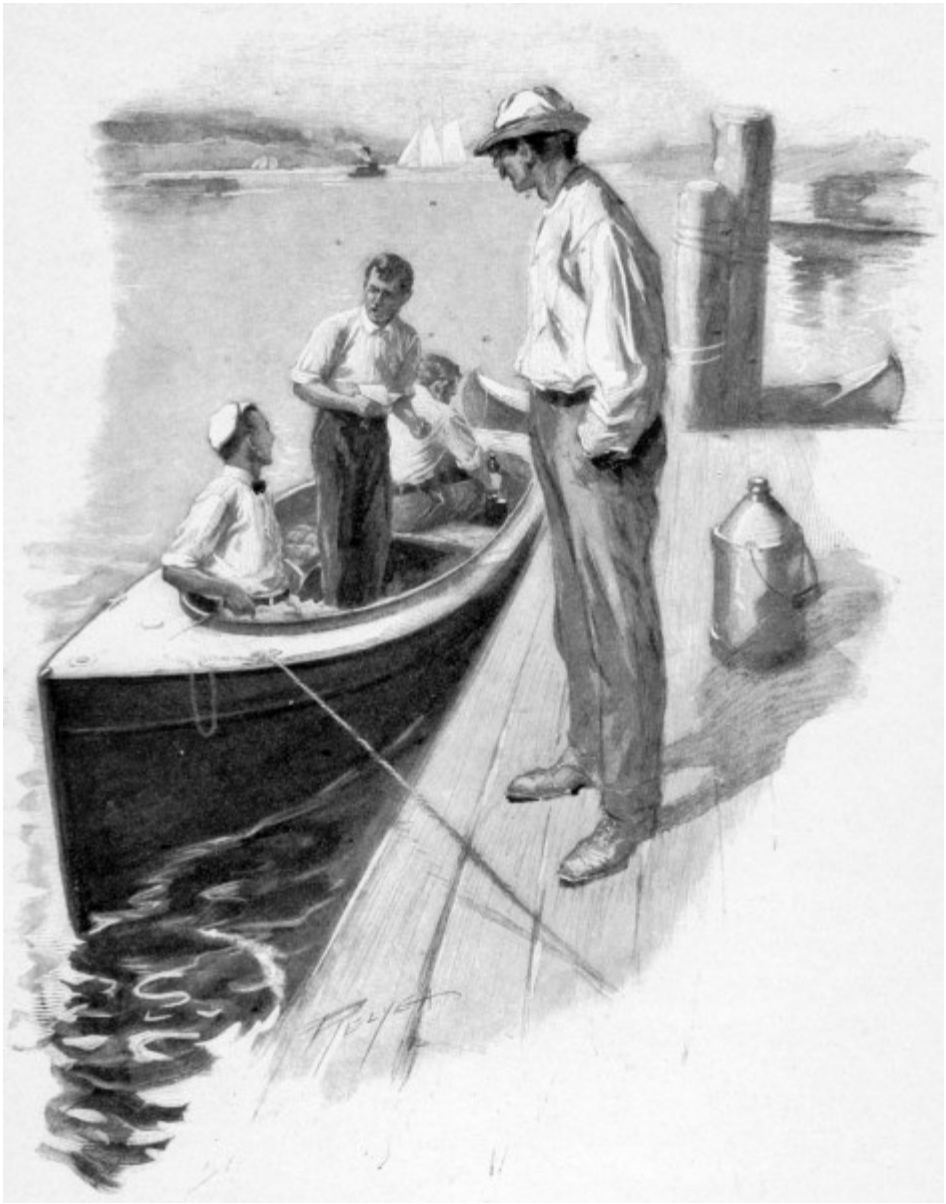
“Did you hear that?” cried Dick.

“Yes,” answered Roy hopefully. “It sounded almost as

though it was going to start. Try it again."

"When is a fly-wheel not a fly-wheel?" asked Chub. "Answer: when it doesn't fly around. Good."

Dick bent over the wheel again and turned, but the engine, as though quite satisfied with its brief sign of life, refused to evince any further interest in proceedings. Dick turned again and again, getting redder and redder, hotter and hotter, madder and madder.



“‘When is a fly-wheel not a fly-wheel?’”

“Oh, hang the fool thing!” he exclaimed disgustedly, standing erect to ease his aching back. “I’m going to ship it back and get my money.” He looked wrathfully at Roy, who maintained a noncommittal silence. Then he stared

aggressively at Chub. But Chub was gazing off down the river and humming “My Father’s the Engineer.” Then he challenged the freight-handler. But that obliging man kept a discreet silence, looking the while properly sympathetic, even shaking his head once. Dick grunted and turned his regard to the stubborn engine. But he got no satisfaction there. So, giving it a contemptuous kick and chipping off half an inch of beautiful bright red enamel, he subsided on the seat and studied the blisters on his hands.

“I’ll try it again,” suggested Roy not over eagerly.

“What’s the use?” growled Dick. “You’ll only break your back.”

“Let me have a whack at it,” said Chub cheerfully, getting up. “I have an irresistible way with engines, Dick.”

“You!” snorted Dick. “All you can do is to lie around and make a fool of yourself. You’re about as much help as a—a—”

“Book of directions,” said Chub cheerfully. “Where’s the handle? Thank you.” Inserting the handle in the rim of the wheel, our hero, with a superhuman effort, spun—

Puff! Puff! Puff!

“It’s going!” yelled Roy.

“What’ll I do with the rope?” shouted the man on the wharf, holding on to it for dear life.

“*Let go!*” cried Dick, jumping for the wheel. He reached it just in time to turn the bow away from a spile, and with a grazing bump the launch swung into the stream, pulling the canoe after it.

“Good-by!” called the freight-handler. They waved to him as the boat’s bow turned up-stream.

“*Puff, puff, puff!*” went the engine.

“*Chug, chug, chug!*” went the exhaust at the side.

“Doesn’t she go great?” cried Dick turning to the others.

“Fine,” answered Roy with proper enthusiasm.

“When you understand her,” remarked Chub haughtily.

“Get out,” said Roy. “No wonder she started after the way we’d worked with her!”

Chub looked grieved.

“Of all the unappreciative guys I ever knew,” he said sadly, “you’re the worst! Dick doesn’t talk that way. Dick realizes that if it hadn’t been for me you’d be at the wharf yet. Dick is decently grateful and—”

“What the dickens did you do any more than we did?” demanded Dick. “You turned the wheel and she just happened to start.”

“Happened!” murmured Chub, smiling pityingly. “Very well, think that way if you want to. It doesn’t hurt me. Ingratitude only shows—”

“Look out!” yelled Roy. Dick worked quickly and narrowly avoided running down a rowboat containing two men. As they went by they were forced to listen to a number of uncomplimentary remarks. But Dick didn’t mind. The launch was running, and that’s all he cared about. To be sure, she wasn’t making very great speed, but Dick explained that by assuring Roy and Chub that she hadn’t got warmed up yet.

“Well, you can’t say that of me,” answered Roy with a laugh. “I’m warm enough, all right.”

“I’ll bet I could paddle faster than this,” said Chub.

“I’ll bet you couldn’t,” answered Dick indignantly. “She’s going a good six miles an hour.”

“If you don’t mind what you say,” supplemented Chub with an exasperating grin.

“It is too! I’ll bet you anything you like!”

“Six miles an hour?”

“Six miles, an hour!”

“Oh, say, Dick, be good! Don’t talk so fancy! You know well enough that if an able-bodied mud-scow came along it would make this boat look as if it were standing still.”

“You don’t dare to bet on it, though,” taunted Dick.

“But there’s no way to prove it,” said Chub, “unless we use Roy for a log and tow him astern.”

“I’ll prove it all right,” Dick persisted. “We’ll start at the big bridge and go up the river to Slicer’s Landing; that’s six miles and a quarter, and if we don’t do it in an hour I’ll—I’ll lose my bet.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” answered Chub affably, “but what I’m saying is that she isn’t making any six miles an hour now. I don’t know what she might do to-morrow. Why, you might grease her hull, or get Roy to swim under water and tow her. Besides, I wouldn’t bet with a Westerner, anyway; he’s too tricky.”

“You always try to turn everything into a joke,” Dick growled. “When you say we’re not making six miles you don’t know what you’re talking about. Does he, Roy?”

“Don’t ask me,” said Roy. “I don’t know anything about it. I would like to suggest, however, that you turn the boat a bit so as to avoid running into that point. Thank you, Dickums; I feel more comfortable.”

“It’s a mighty poor launch that won’t make six miles,” muttered Dick as he swung the boat’s head farther toward the middle of the river.

“Dick, you’re stubborn to-day,” sighed Chub. “I refuse to argue with you any longer. I will only remark in closing that this here boat is not making any six miles per.”

“And I say she is,” answered Dick warmly. “If she isn’t I’ll __”

The chugging of the engine stopped, there was an expiring wheeze from somewhere and the launch rocked silently and lazily on the water.

CHAPTER XI

THE LAUNCH IS CHRISTENED

Dick turned to Roy in dismay. Chub, stifling a chuckle, looked over toward the nearest shore.

"If she was going six miles," he said, "things on shore would move by a heap faster. I don't believe she's doing better than four."

"She's stopped, you blamed lunatic!" cried Dick wildly. Chub stared in surprise.

"Stopped, has she? Why, I hadn't noticed it! How can you tell?"

"Cut it out, Chub," said Roy. Dick glared at him a moment and then turned with dark and somber looks toward the engine.

"Where's the handle?" he asked.

"You put it in the drawer," answered Roy.

Their troubles began again. Dick turned and Roy turned and Chub turned, and all the time the launch, having gradually swung her nose down-stream was floating gently back toward Silver Cove. They had accomplished fully three fourths of the distance between the Cove and Fox Island when the engine stopped, but it seemed now that they would soon have the trip to make over again. It was very hot with scarcely any breeze rippling the water, and it was well on toward dinner-time. Chub yielded the wheel to Dick and sat down to get his breath and wipe the perspiration from his face.

“Where’s the directions?” asked Roy.

Search failed to reveal them.

“It’s just as well,” grunted Dick. “They don’t tell you anything anyhow. Turn the rudder, Roy, and keep her off that sand-bank.”

“I tell you what we can do,” said Chub as Dick stopped to rest. “Roy and I can get in the canoe and tow her and you can stay in here and steer.”

“It’ll be an all day’s job,” said Roy dispiritedly. “Why not tow her to that landing over there and leave her until we can get some one to fix her up right?”

“You fellows get in the canoe and go on to the island,” said Dick. “I’m going to stay here and make her go. She went once and she can do it again; and she’s got to,” he added doggedly.

“Don’t give up the ship,” cried Chub cheerfully. “We’ll stand by you, Captain. Let me have another go at her.” He seized the handle and was slipping it into the wheel when there was a hail from near by and they looked across the water to where a small cat-boat was bobbing slowly toward them. The boat contained a man in the stern, but who he was they couldn’t make out because of the noonday glare on the surface of the water.

“Hello!” called Dick.

“Anything wrong?” was the query.

“Engine’s gone back on us,” answered Dick. At that moment the sail swung over and threw the occupant of the cat-boat into shadow.

“It’s the Licensed Poet,” marveled Roy.

“Billy Noon, as big as life,” added Chub.

“I’ll see what I can do for you if you want me to,” said the skipper of the sailing craft. “I’ll be there pretty soon. It’s slow going in this breeze.”

The boys sat down, nothing loth, and waited for the launch and sail-boat to draw together.

“What did he tell us he gave for that boat?” asked Roy.

“Four dollars, I think, and a set of dentist’s tools,” Dick replied.

“Well, he got stuck! Look at it!”

At some time, probably a good many years before, the *Minerva* had been new and trim. To-day she was a veritable apology for a boat. Some twenty feet long, she was blunt of nose, wide of beam, almost guiltless of paint. The cockpit was only large enough to hold one man and allow the tiller to swing, the rest of the deck space being occupied by a cabin. One port had been closed with a piece of tin through which a length of stove-pipe and an elbow projected. The mast had apparently not been scraped for years and the single sail was gray with age and patched from boom to gaff. Once the hull had been white and the cabin green, but time and the weather had subdued all to a neutral hue that matched the old sail and the weather-stained mast. Closer acquaintance revealed the fact that most of her seams had opened and that she was about as near falling apart as anything could be that still held together.

The *Minerva* dipped slowly and clumsily along, pushing the sparkling wavelets away from her blunt nose, and presently

Billy Noon swung her head into the wind and brought her alongside the launch. He looked quite different to-day. He wore a suit of gray clothes which, if a little shabby, were very neat and clean, a figured shirt, turn-down collar and blue tie and a straw hat which had apparently seen more than one summer and undergone more than one cleansing at home.

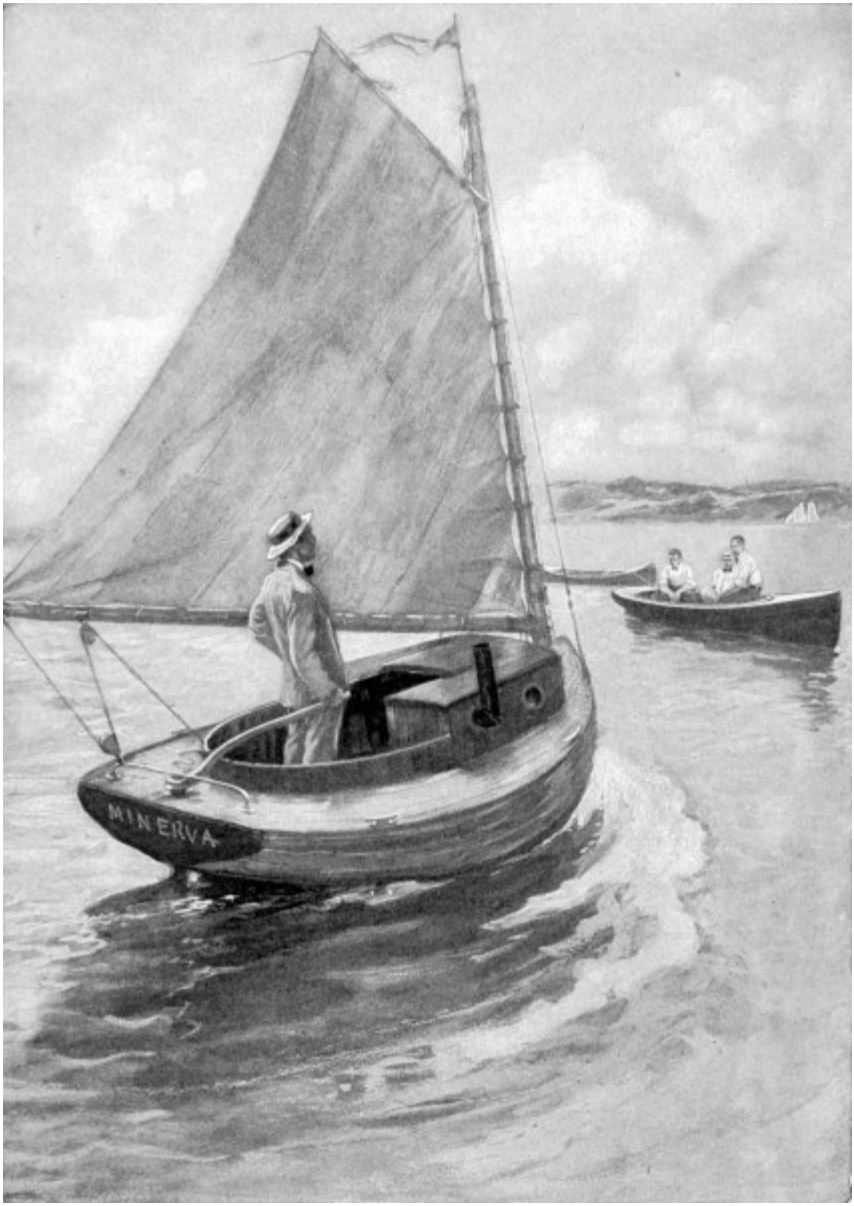
Also he had dropped his extravagant manner and phraseology. This morning he was just a freckled-faced, red-haired, good-natured chap with an alert manner and a pair of blue eyes that twinkled cleverly and that seemed to take in the situation at one glance. Lowering his sail and making fast the painter of the cat-boat, Billy climbed aboard the launch and threw off his coat. Then he rolled up his shirt-sleeves, revealing a pair of very muscular brown arms.

“Had her going, did you?” he asked.

“Yes,” said Dick, “she ran all the way from Silver Cove and went finely; made six miles an hour easily.” He threw a defiant glance at Chub.

“To be exact,” amended that youth solemnly, “six miles and one eighth by the patent log.”

“Well, let’s see,” said Billy Noon. “I guess there’s nothing very wrong.” He picked up the handle, fitted it to the fly-wheel and turned her over several times without results. Then he tested the battery, an operation which the boys watched with interest, and got a good spark.



“‘What did he tell us he gave for that boat?’”

“Nothing wrong there,” he mused.

“Have you ever run a launch?” asked Roy curiously.

“No, but I operated a gas-engine once for about six months and got pretty well acquainted,” answered Billy. “That was in a

pottery." He looked over the engine for a moment in silence, his sharp eyes twinkling from one part to another. "Let's see how the gasolene is coming. Maybe—hello!"

"What?" asked Dick.

"Why, your cock under the carbureter has worked open and all your gasolene is running into the well. No wonder! Got a monkey-wrench?"

"No, we haven't," answered Dick.

"Well, the handle will do. All it needs is just a tap to tighten it. There! Didn't you try to flood your carbureter?"

"No," answered Dick a trifle sheepishly. "We forgot it the last time."

"If you had you'd have seen where the trouble was, because she wouldn't have flooded. Now let's see."

One turn and the engine started. Billy retarded the spark until he saw that the *Minerva* was following all right, and then pushed the lever in. The launch gathered speed and in a moment was cutting through the water in a way that brought an admiring ejaculation from even Chub. But Billy wasn't satisfied.

"That carbureter isn't regulated very well," he said. So he went at that, Dick watching, and screwed and screwed until he had it to suit him. "That's better," he said. He wiped his hands on the piece of waste and looked over the boat. "A nice little launch," he said. "And a good engine. You're getting fully two and a half horse-power out of it, I guess."

"How fast do you think she is going?" asked Dick eagerly.

Billy studied a moment. Then:

"About seven miles," he answered. "You ought to make nine with the current and no tow."

Dick looked triumphantly at Chub. For once Chub had nothing to say. Presently Dick observed:

"What I don't understand is why she wouldn't start at the wharf. We flooded the carbureter dozens of times then."

"Maybe that was the trouble," was the reply. "Your engine was stiff and cold and you got too much gasolene into it. That's just as bad as getting none at all. You've got to have the proper mixture of air and gasolene, you know. After you'd turned her over awhile you worked the gasolene out and she started. It's a good plan to have a small oil-can with some gasolene in it. Then if she doesn't start with three or four turns you can open your relief-cock and squirt a few drops into the cylinder. That'll start her all right."

For the next few minutes Dick took a short course in gas-engine operating and by the time he had asked all the questions he wanted to they were approaching the Ferry Hill landing and a disconsolate figure in the shade of the boat-house.

"There's Harry," said Chub. "I'll bet she's mad!"

But she wasn't; only grieved and reproachful until they told their troubles to her, and after that vastly interested and sympathetic. Harry, having just become a passenger, was by no means ready to end the cruise, demanding that the launch should go up the river for a way. The boys, however, being for the moment firm believers in punctuality as regarded meals, compromised on a voyage around the island. So they went up along the inner channel, swung around Far Island, which, as

every experienced mariner knows, lies nor'-nor'-west of Point Harriet, and, navigating skilfully past the dangerous shoals which lie around The Grapes, stopped off Hood's Hill while Billy Noon returned to the *Minerva* and, with the aid of a broken oar, reached the beach. The boys were properly grateful for his help, Dick thanking him profusely.

"That's all right," said Billy, as he pulled the nose of the *Minerva* onto the beach and carried the painter up to the nearest tree. "Glad I happened along. Any time you want any help you yell for me."

"Thanks," answered Dick. "And—and come and see us."

"Yes, you must be neighborly," added Harry. Billy nodded and waved his hand, and Dick, with a bit of a swagger, took up the handle and turned the wheel. The engine answered at once and the launch chugged off toward the lower end of the island.

"Isn't he splendid?" asked Harry admiringly.

"Who do you mean?" asked Chub. "Dick?"

"No, Mr. Noon, of course."

"Well, he was certainly Johnny-on-the-Spot to-day," Chub replied. "He ought to be called the Licensed Engineer instead of the Licensed Poet. Say, Roy, do you believe all the yarns he tells?"

"About what?" asked Roy, drowning Harry's indignant ejaculation.

"Why, about being a circus clown and playing in the band and being a dentist and running an engine in a pottery and—and all that. What do they want with an engine in a pottery, anyhow?"

“Well, I was never in a pottery, but I don’t see why they wouldn’t need an engine. As for the other things, why, you saw those pants of his; and if any one but a clown would wear them I miss my guess, Chub!”

“That’s so, but he can’t be more than thirty or so.”

“Bet you he’s nearer thirty-five,” said Dick from the wheel.

“Anyhow, he must have spent a pretty busy life if he’s been all the things he says he has!”

“Papa says he’s the—the—I think he said the ‘smoothest’—book agent he ever met,” said Harry eagerly. “I told him about his being a clown and a poet, and I recited the verses he made up, and papa said they were very good verses for a clown.”

“Oh, he’s all right,” said Chub. “I haven’t anything against him, only I do think he’s had a rather eventful life, so to speak. He seems a pretty decent chap, though.”

By this time the launch had passed Lookout, having practically completed the circuit of the island, and Dick turned off the switch and stopped the engine. The launch floated softly into the smooth water of Victory Cove and Dick turned its nose to the beach. Then, with a little grating sound the bow slid up on the sand and Roy, painter in hand, jumped ashore.

“That rope belongs to the fellow at the wharf, by the way,” said Dick. “I must take it back to him. I’ll have to get some rope of my own. And I need some tools, and an oil-can, and an anchor and lots of things!”

“How about an engineer?” asked Chub slyly. Dick looked hurt and made no reply, and when they were out on the beach Chub threw an arm over his shoulder and playfully squeezed

his neck.

"Don't be a chump, Dickums," he said. "I was only fooling. You got the hang of it finely."

Dick looked mollified.

"It takes a while to learn," he said, "but I bet I'll be able to run that boat to the Queen's taste in a week."

"Of course you will," answered Chub heartily. Then they set about getting dinner. Chub declared that he could taste gasolene in everything, but Dick was able to prove that he had washed his hands well before beginning the cooking and so Chub's assertion was received with contempt. From where they sat they could see the launch. Dick had shoved her off after making the painter fast to a tree and now she was floating motionless on the mirror-like surface of the cove. Dick's glances sought her frequently during dinner, and presently he said:

"I wish they had painted her white instead of black."

"It would have been much prettier," agreed Harry.

"We could paint her ourselves," said Chub. "It wouldn't be much of a job."

"That's so. I'll get some paint the next time we go to the Cove and we'll do it. We'd have to haul her out, though, I suppose."

"No, we wouldn't," answered Roy. "I've seen them paint boats in the water. You get a weight, like a big rock or something, and put it on one side of the boat and that raises the other side out of the water. You only have to paint to the water-line, you know. Then when you've done one side you

change the weight over and do the other side. It's easy."

"All but getting the weight out there," said Chub.

"We can find a big stone and put it in the rowboat and take it out to the launch," said Dick.

"Yes, we could do that all right," agreed Chub. "By the way, Dickums, what are you going to call her? I've thought of a dandy name!"

"I dare say," answered Roy sarcastically. "The 'Thomas Eaton,' I'll bet."

"You wrong me," said Chub. "Besides, I wouldn't allow my name to be associated with such a badly-behaved boat as that."

"I think she behaves beautifully!" exclaimed Harry.

"You saw her at her best," said Chub. "She acted all right after the Engineer-Poet got at her."

"What's the name, Chub?" Dick asked.

"'The Old Harry,'" answered Chub. "That's the way she behaved."

"That's not so bad," laughed Roy. Harry looked doubtful.

"I don't think I'd like that," she said finally. "People might think it was named after me."

"Yes," said Dick, apparently pleased to find an objection to the name. "Besides, I had about decided on a name myself."

"What is it?" asked Chub.

"Well—have you noticed the sound she makes when she's going?"

“No,” replied Chub, “she was going such a short time that I didn’t have a chance.”

“She says ‘*puff, puff, puff!*’ like that,” said Roy.

“No, she doesn’t,” answered Dick. “I thought that was it at first, but what she really says is ‘*pup, pup, pup, pup, pup, pup!*’ So I’m going to call her the ‘Pup.’”

“That’s all right,” said Chub admiringly. And Roy agreed. But Harry objected.

“I think it’s a perfectly horrid name,” she declared. “You’re just fooling, aren’t you, Dick?”

“Not a bit of it,” answered Dick stoutly. “I think it’s a fine name.” And in the end, despite Harry’s negative vote, the name was formally adopted.

“We’ll have a christening,” suggested Roy. “And Harry can be sponsor—if that’s what you call it—and break a bottle of—of something over her bow.”

“It’ll have to be tomato catsup, I guess,” laughed Dick. “That’s about all we’ve got.”

“I refuse to have the catsup wasted,” said Chub. “Besides, it would be terribly messy. We’ll find an empty bottle and fill it with water. They christen lots of boats with water nowadays.”

So after dinner the ceremony took place. They rowed out to the launch in the skiff, Harry tightly clasping a bottle of river water. They had found the bottle on the beach. The lettering on one side proclaimed the fact that it had at one time been filled with “Brainard’s Lucky Discovery for Coughs and Colds.” When they had all climbed aboard the launch Chub had an idea.

“Look here,” he exclaimed, “we’re not doing this right. She ought to be christened with gasolene!”

“Of course!” cried the others in chorus. So the water was poured out and the bottle was held under the carbureter and filled with gasolene. Then Roy and Dick and Chub grouped themselves as imposingly as possible on the small space of deck at the bow, maintaining their precarious positions by holding onto each other, and Harry re-embarked in the rowboat, working it around to the bow of the launch.

“The band will now play,” said Chub. “*Tum*, tumty, tum; *Tum*, tumty, tum; *Tum*—”

“That’s the wedding march, you idiot,” laughed Roy. So Chub struck up “Hail, Columbia” instead.

“Now,” he said, “we will listen to an address by the Honorable Roy Porter. Hear! Hear!” And he clapped his hands so strenuously that he very nearly precipitated the entire company into the water. The Honorable Roy Porter not being inclined to fulfil his portion of the program, Commodore Dickums Somes was called upon.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” began Dick. “We are met here on a memorable occasion, one which—which will long live in the —in the—”

“Memories of those present,” prompted Chub.

“We are about to christen the pride of these waters, a boat which will in future—in future—”

“Hear! Hear!” shouted Chub appreciatively.

“In future make for itself,” continued Dick, encouraged by the applause, “a name which will become famous from—from

Poughkeepsie to Albany,—aye, from Long Island Sound to Lake George! We are about to place another star in the galaxy which—which has for generations upheld the supremacy of the American nation at home and abroad, by land and by sea, in peace and in war!"

The applause was almost deafening, largely due to the fact that Roy had one arm around Dick's shoulders and was clapping his hands within three inches of his nose. On the other side Chub shouted "Bravo!" into his ear, while at his feet, so to speak, Harry had let go of the launch that she might have both hands to applaud with and was now squirming undignifiedly across the gunwale trying to reach it again. Dick warmed to his work. He threw back his head with a noble gesture and tried to thrust his right hand into the bosom of his negligée shirt. [Chub called them "neglected" shirts.] But as this would have seriously upset his audience he was forcibly restrained.

"Upon these beautiful, tranquil waters, upon the bosom of this historic river this graceful boat will add the—the finishing touch to Nature's work. Breasting the curling waves, tossed by the singing winds—"

"Hooray!" yelled Chub. "Hip, hip, hooray!"

"Singing winds—"

"Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!" Roy vociferated.

"Winds, this lovely creation of the hands of—"

"Somes! Somes! Somes! Speech! Speech!" cried Chub, and Harry, having rescued herself, joined the hilarity. Dick gave it up and with a low bow to the mythical multitude which lined the shore of Victory Cove, he joined Roy in the singing of "The Star Spangled Banner." Of course Chub and Harry lent

what assistance they could, and for several minutes discord reigned supreme. Then, having gained the attention of the audience, Chub announced:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have the honor to present to you the Honorable Thomas H. Eaton, Secretary of the Navy. Hooray! Eaton! Eaton!" Chub bowed. "Ladies and gentlemen, citizens of Camp Torohadik: It gives me great pleasure to be with you to-day. I have traveled a long distance and feel that I am amply repaid. I thank you for your invitation, for the honor you have done me and for the evidences of your good-will. This is indeed a suspicious—I should say auspicious occasion. Never before, possibly, since the founding of our glorious Republic has so much intelligence, so much worth, so much beauty been met together as I see before me. Ladies and gentlemen, we are wonderfully privileged. Generations hence posterity will look back with reverential awe upon this—this grand occasion!"

"Oh, that's beautiful, Chub!" cried Harry. Chub faltered.

"Er—er—and so I thank you, ladies and gentlemen, from the bottom of my heart for the honor which you have seen fit to confer upon me. I thank you, I thank you." Chub bowed to three points of the compass and the launch rocked uncomfortably. "And now, ladies and gentlemen, according to time-honored precedent, a bottle of—er—of gasolene will be broken over the bow and the boat will be named. I take pleasure in introducing to you Miss Harriet Emery."

Harry climbed unsteadily to her feet in the rowboat and bowed to the applause. Then she raised the bottle of gasolene and brought it down smartly against the bow of the boat.

"I name you *Pup*," she cried.

There was a tinkling of glass, a series of shrill barks from Chub and the ceremony was at an end.

CHAPTER XII

CHUB SCENTS A MYSTERY

After the dinner things had been cleared up there was naturally but one thing to do, and that was to go out in the *Pup*. So they did it. The engine showed some unwillingness to start, but relented presently and they were off. They had no boats in tow this time and were, besides, going with the current, and the way the *Pup* slid along brought joy to Dick's heart.

"Isn't she a great little *Pup*?" he asked, beamingly. And they all agreed that she was, even Chub.

"The *Pup*," observed the latter impressively, "is a fine bark."

They had an exciting time in the village while Dick made his purchases and ordered his flags. Chub was full of suggestions and wanted Dick to buy all sorts of things, from a pocket compass to a pair of davits by which to sling the canoe on to the launch and use it for a tender. Dick got a gallon of white paint, warranted to dry hard in twelve hours, and four brushes, Harry having expressed a determination to aid in the work of turning the black *Pup* into a white one. When they were ready to leave the wharf Dick produced his small oil-can filled with gasolene and set it beside him while he prepared to turn the fly-wheel over. Whether it was the sight of that can I can't say, but it's a fact that the engine started at the first turn. They ran up the river in the late afternoon sunlight, a little wind which had risen since noon kicking the water into tiny white-caps which caught the rays and turned to gold and copper. The

breeze rumpled their hair and tingled their cheeks, and to what Chub called “the merry barking of the *Pup*” they sailed home past the shadowed shore and dropped anchor (it was a folding one and weighed seven pounds) in Victory Cove.

“That was a dandy sail!” exclaimed Harry, her cheeks ruddy under their tan. And they all agreed with her and vied with each other in saying nice things about the *Pup*. And Dick beamed and beamed, and everything was lovely. They had purchased provisions in the village, and supper that evening was in the nature of a banquet, there being a large steak, Saratoga chips, big rolls, still warm from the baker’s oven, cucumbers (there wasn’t any vinegar, but no one seemed to care), and a blueberry pie. And there were present appetites to do justice to the banquet.

Afterward, just as Roy had lighted the camp-fire, which, to tell the truth was necessary to distract the attention of the mosquitos, there was a hail and Billy Noon appeared. He joined the group and listened interestedly to Dick’s account of the afternoon’s experience with the launch.

“You won’t have much trouble with her now, I guess,” he said. “Gas-engines are kind of queer things, but there’s generally a reason for it when they don’t act right. The only trouble is in discovering the reason. There’s a reason for everything if you can only find it.”

“Have you composed any poetry lately?” asked Harry when the conversation had wandered away from launches and gas-engines. Billy shook his head.

“No, my dear young lady,” he answered.

“There’s been no time for building rhyme,

For I’ve been very busy.
My daily work I must not shirk
For—for—”

“For if you do, you’ll get dizzy,” suggested Chub.

“Thank you,” laughed Billy. “‘Busy’ ’s a bad word to rhyme to. I ought to have known better than to use it.”

“Did—did it just come natural for you to make poetry?” asked Harry. “Or did you have to learn?”

“I guess it came natural,” was the reply.

“I wish I could do it,” Harry said wistfully. “But I can’t. I’ve tried and tried. I never can think of any rhymes. Do you think I could learn, Mr. Noon?”

“I dare say you could,” answered Billy. “I never did much of it until I joined the Great Indian Chief Medicine Company. Then I sort of worked it up.”

“Did you write advertisements?” asked Chub.

“No. You see, we traveled around from one place to another in a couple of big wagons selling this medicine. It was fine medicine, too, if you believed the wrappers and the boss. It cured anything, from warts to laziness, and cost a dollar a bottle, or six bottles for five dollars with your horoscope thrown in. There were five of us with the outfit, and we dressed like Indians and talked five languages, including North of Ireland. I was Wallapoola, the great Choctaw Poet, and my part was to stand under the gasolene torch at the end of the wagon and make rhymes on the names of the folks in the audience. That pleased them, generally, and they’d plank down their dollar and go away happy with a bottle of Great Indian.

Some of the rhymes were pretty bad, especially at first, and now and then I'd just simply get floored like I was awhile ago. It was easy enough as long as they gave us names like Smith and Jones and White and Brown, but one night a big, lanky farmer pushed his way to the front and told Doc—Doc was the boss, you know—that he'd buy six bottles if I'd make a rhyme for his name. I scented trouble right away and tried to tip Doc the wink, but he wasn't worried a bit. He just laughed and said there wasn't a word in the English language I couldn't find a rhyme for. And then he asked the farmer what his name was.

"'Humphrey,' says the farmer.

“‘Did it just come natural for you to make poetry?’”

“Doc laughed scornfully. ‘I thought it was something difficult,’ he says. ‘But that’s an easy one for the Choctaw Poet, that is. Why, gentlemen, I assure you—’ But I was humping up and down on my toes the way I did when courting

the Muse and saying ‘Ugh! Ugh!’ which was all the Indian I knew for ‘Nothing doing!’ And the Doc got on to the fact that I wasn’t over pleased with the job. So says he, ‘While the Poet is polishing up his pome we’ll have some music from the orchestra.’ Well, the orchestra, which was a banjo, guitar, and accordion, gave them some rag-time and I kept on dancing around on my toes and doing a lot of hard thinking. I wanted to throw up my job pretty bad right then, I tell you. But Doc was scowling hard at me and the big, lanky farmer was grinning up like a catfish. The orchestra got through and I was trying to make Doc see that I wanted more time for contemplation when the rhyme came to me. It wasn’t much of a one, but it had to do. So I stopped dancing and looked scornful at the farmer. And says I:

“‘At a dollar a bottle it’s cheap, you know,
But you are in luck, Mr. Humphrey;
It’s six for five to you, and so
You see you are getting some free.’”

“That was fine!” cried Chub above the laughter. “Did he buy the medicine?”

“He had to,” answered Billy. “He claimed that the rhyme ought to have been one word, but Doc quoted authorities to him so fast he couldn’t answer. You couldn’t very often feaze the Doc. Besides, we had the crowd with us. So Mr. Humphrey gave up his five dollars and went off growling with six bottles of Great Indian. I don’t know how much good it did him; anyhow, it couldn’t do him any harm, I guess, for it was mostly licorice and water. We had a big sale that evening.”

“Was that before you joined the circus?” asked Chub with

elaborate carelessness, nudging Roy.

"Yes, several years," answered Billy. "I wasn't with the Great Indian Medicine Company more'n six weeks."

"Why did you leave?" asked Roy. "Did you run out of rhymes?"

"No," answered Billy reminiscently, "but I got my man and —I mean I found another job that I liked better. After that," he continued hurriedly, "I found a chap out in Big Bow, Iowa, that was going out of the dentist business and I bought him out, stock, good-will, and all. The stock was a set of tools, a broken-down wagon, and a flea-bitten gray horse about sixteen years old. I traveled around for awhile, but the fellow only gave me three lessons and so I wasn't up to much except pulling. Filling was beyond me. Folks weren't particular out there in the country towns, though, and as it was cheaper to have a tooth out at twenty-five cents than to have it filled at five dollars—you see, I had to make the price steep so's they wouldn't want it done—they generally had it out. But there wasn't much money in dentistry, and I sold the horse and wagon in Keokuk and came East."

"Then what did you do?" asked Chub.

"Oh, I tried my hand at several things after that. Nothing particular, though."

Billy didn't seem to want to continue the subject and so Chub, with a wink at Roy, desisted. Dick asked Billy how he was getting on with his canvassing.

"Pretty well," was the answer. "I had a long tramp this afternoon for nothing, though. I went about three miles up the river to a place called Hutchins and then walked about eight

miles. Ever been over in that part of the world?”

The boys said that they hadn’t.

“Well, it’s a forsaken country; I only found about six houses all the way, and didn’t sell a thing. Do you get around much on shore?”

Roy explained that they had prospected the country around Ferry Hill pretty well for several miles in each direction, and Billy asked a good many questions about it; whether it was thickly settled, whether the folks were well-off or poor, whether they had ever come across any camps or huts. They answered his questions as best they could, wondering somewhat at the character of them, and finally their guest bade them good night and took his departure. There was silence for a minute or two around the camp-fire after he had gone. Then Chub spoke.

“Say, what do you think of him?” he asked.

“Blessed if I know,” answered Roy. “According to his story he has been a little of everything at some time or other. And what do you suppose he wanted to know so much about the country around here for?”

“Probably wanted to find out whether it was worth while going there to sell Billings’ ‘Wonders of the Deep,’” answered Dick.

“I don’t believe he’s a book agent at all!” exclaimed Roy.

“What? Then what is he?” asked Dick. But Roy only shook his head.

“I don’t know. But I don’t believe he’s what he says he is.”

“Why, he sold some books to papa!” cried Harry.

“Have you seen them?” Chub asked.

“No, they haven’t come yet. He doesn’t carry them with him. He just takes orders, you know, and the publishers send the books to you by express.”

“How much do you have to pay down?” asked Roy eagerly.

“Not a cent,” answered Harry. “So, Mister Smarty!”

“Huh!” muttered Chub. “That just shows how foxy he is.”

“I think you’re perfectly horrid, Chub Eaton,” said Harry. “Mr. Noon is just as nice as he can be, and very—very gentlemanly!”

“That’s so,” allowed Chub. “He seems a mighty decent sort, but—but just the same I don’t believe he’s a book agent. There’s a mystery about him.”

Harry’s eyes brightened.

“Oh, do you think so?” she asked eagerly. “Perhaps he’s a lord or something traveling in—in—”

“Incognito,” aided Roy.

“Yes,” cried Harry. “Haven’t you noticed that he talks sort of—sort of foreign sometimes?”

“Can’t say I have,” Roy laughed. “Although now and then there’s just a suggestion of brogue about his talk.”

“The idea!” Harry said indignantly. “He’s not Irish a bit! I think he’s either English or—or Scotch.”

“Probably Lord Kilmarnock looking for a wealthy bride,” said Chub. “I’ll ask him to-morrow if he has his kilts with

him.”

“And his bagpipe,” Dick added.

“Come now, it’s a shame to spoil Harry’s romance,” Roy remonstrated. “We’ll call him His Lordship until we learn what he really is.”

“He’s already been the ‘Licensed Poet,’ ‘W. N.,’ ‘Seth Billings,’ and ‘Mr. William Noon,’” said Chub. “So I guess another name or two won’t matter. There’s just one thing I wouldn’t think of calling him, though.”

“What’s that?” asked Roy.

“Book agent,” Chub answered dryly.

CHAPTER XIII
BILLY ENTERTAINS

The next morning they started the work of transforming the *Pup* from a black-and-tan—I am using Chub's expression—to a fox-terrier. They loaded a good-sized rock into the rowboat and from there lifted it over the side of the launch and placed it on the starboard seat. But as it didn't raise the other side of the *Pup* high enough out of the water Harry was delegated to join the rock. With Harry perched on the coaming all was ready for the painters. So Dick, Roy, and Chub began work. Chub sat in the canoe and Dick and Roy in the rowboat. At first it was lots of fun, but presently their wrists began to ache, while, to add discouragement, they discovered that it would be necessary to put on at least two coats to hide the black paint beneath. Chub began to show signs of mutiny about eleven o'clock and was joined by Harry. Chub declared that his wrist was paralyzed and Harry said she was getting a headache and a backache, and that if they thought it was fun sitting there on that edge they might come and try it themselves. Both mutineers were, however, prevailed on to continue in service a few minutes longer, and at half-past eleven the *Pup* was painted with one coat of white from bow to stem on the port side. Then all hands were quite ready to quit work, Roy declaring that for his part he wished they hadn't begun.

"There's three days' more work on her," he grumbled, "for she'll have to have two coats all over her."

“Tell you what we might do, though,” said Chub. “We might put another coat on this side and let her go. I think it would be kind of original and sporty to have one side black and the other side white.”

Dick said he was an idiot, and Roy indorsed the sentiment heartily, and good nature was not restored until they had donned their bathing-suits and were splashing around in the water off Inner Beach.

After dinner Dick armed himself with pot and brush and went back to work, and after looking on for awhile Roy and Chub were forced to join him.

“You fellows needn’t help,” Dick assured them. But the assurance was only half-hearted and Chub grunted irritably.

“Huh,” he said, “you know blamed well we can’t sit there in the shade and see you working out here all alone. If I get sunstruck, like Billy Warren in the boat-race, you’ll be sorry, I guess.”

Dick had discovered that the first coat of white had dried sufficiently to allow of a second and so before supper-time they had finished the port side of the hull. And very nice it looked, too; until you got a glimpse of the other side!

“It’s like having two boats,” said Chub cheerfully, wiping the paint from his hands to his trousers. “If it was mine I’d put one name on one side and another name on the other. For instance, Dick, you could call the white boat *Pup* and the black boat *Kit*.”

“They might fight,” said Harry, who had spent the afternoon comfortably on shore. “Just supposing the *Pup* began chasing the *Kit*, Dick!”

“It would be a stern chase,” said Chub.

The next day was Flag Day at Camp Torohadik. In the morning they sailed down to Silver Cove in the *Pup*, the paint having fulfilled the promise of its maker and dried overnight, and got their flags. There was a nice red-white-and-blue yachting ensign for the stern and an owner’s flag for the bow. The latter consisted of a white ground with a blue Mercury’s foot on it, a design suggested by Roy in allusion to Dick’s prowess on the cinder-path. The poles were each finished off with a brass ball, and when poles and flags were set the *Pup* looked very gay and jaunty.

Harry, who had been at work spasmodically on the camp banner, produced the completed article that morning, and after their return to the island Roy got busy with a small can of black paint and lettered the long strip of white cotton cloth which Harry had brought with the inscription: CAMP TOROHADIK. Then it was bent to the halyards and with Chub, at popular request, singing “The Star-Spangled Banner” it was hoisted into place and for the rest of their stay flew proudly by day above the camp. (The truth is that it also flew occasionally by night; but it wasn’t supposed to, of course, and any fellow is likely to forget things now and then, and so we won’t mention it save parenthetically.)

Taken all in all, that was a busy and eventful day on Fox Island. For late in the afternoon, shortly after they had returned from a six-mile trip up the river in the *Pup* (it having been unanimously decided to postpone painting operations until next day) and just as Dick was kindling his fire, there was a hail from the water and they ran to the point to discover Doctor Emery paddling toward them in a canoe. Harry at once decided

that she was wanted at home and was busily lamenting her fate when the Doctor announced cheerfully that he had come to visit the camp and take supper. Mrs. Emery, he explained as the boys drew his canoe up on the beach, had gone to the Cove to spend the afternoon and evening, and he had decided to beg hospitality of the campers. The campers declared with enthusiasm that they were awfully glad to see him, and that supper would be ready in about half an hour, and that they were going to have fricasseed beef, and that fricasseed beef was the best thing their chef did, and—oh, lots more besides, every one talking at once! The Doctor could have had no doubt of his welcome. Presently it developed that he was lamentably ignorant of his island, and so he was personally conducted around by Harry and Chub.

"If I owned an island," said Harry, "I guess I'd know every inch of it! I'd just love to have an island all my own, too! Wouldn't you, Chub?"

"You bet I would! One away off from everywhere, you know. I'd live on it, and I wouldn't let any one on it that I didn't like."

"Wouldn't that be lovely!" cried Harry. "Still, you wouldn't want it so far off that you couldn't get to the land sometimes, would you? Supposing you needed things to eat?"

"Oh, I'd keep plenty on hand," answered Chub.

"Well, I think an island like this is pretty nice," said Harry. "I guess I'd like sometimes to go home at night." And she stole her hand into her father's.

"Then you think this one would suit, do you?" asked the Doctor smilingly, and Harry nodded ready assent. When they

reached the farther end of the domain Harry pointed out Point Harriet very proudly and the Doctor was properly impressed. Then they kept on past The Grapes, ascended Hood's Hill, ran down the other side and—came plump upon Billy Noon in the act of jabbing a knife-blade into the lid of a can. His fire was already lighted and a few cooking utensils were scattered around him.

"It's the Licensed Poet!" cried Harry.

Billy turned suddenly at sound of the voice, dropped can and knife, and whipped his right hand quickly behind him. Then he recognized his visitors and laughed apologetically.

"I didn't hear you coming," he explained. He greeted Harry with a gallant bow, expressed his pleasure at meeting the Doctor again, and nodded to Chub. "You find me immersed in household duties," he went on lightly. "I was just about to prepare my frugal repast." As there was nothing edible in sight save bread, butter, and the contents of the tin can, the others thought the adjective well chosen.

"Well, don't let us disturb you," said the Doctor. He glanced about the beach and the underbrush. "But you surely don't sleep here without any cover?" he asked.

"No, I sleep aboard the boat," answered Billy, nodding to the *Minerva*, which rocked gently in the current with her nose imbedded in the sand. "She's not very large, but I manage to keep pretty comfortable in her. I cook on board, too, sometimes, but when it's possible I like to build my fire outdoors. Perhaps you'd like to see my private yacht?" he added smilingly. The Doctor hesitated, but Harry was already scrambling over the bow, and so the others followed. There wasn't much to see; just the tiny cockpit and, beyond, a rather

dim cabin lighted by the sun which streamed through a few round ports. There was a bunk on one side, made ready for the night, a small stove at the apex of the space and, on the other side, a bench. There was a small clock above the stove, a few hooks which held clothing, a wash-basin and bucket of water, a few books on a small shelf, a pair of shoes and a valise under the bunk, and some cooking things in a tiny cupboard above the bench.

The middle of the cabin was taken up by the center-board and the Poet pointed out a shelf which was made to fit over the center-board box and serve as a table. But there was one other thing which aroused Chub's curiosity. On the bench just where the light from the hatchway fell upon it, was a pocket map spread out. Thinking that it was a sailing chart, Chub leaned over to examine it. It proved, however, to be a map of the country thereabouts, and the words Silver Cove stared him in the face. The map had been ruled with pencil into squares about half an inch each way and many of these squares had been filled in with pencil strokes until the map around the words Silver Cove was checkered with dark spaces. Chub had time to see no more, for Billy Noon reached past him and, taking the map, deftly folded it and tossed it carelessly on top of the few books, inviting them to be seated. But they had seen all there was to be seen and so they filed out on to deck again, Harry declaring ecstatically that it must be beautiful to live in a boat, and asking Billy how he managed to sail it when he was asleep. She and Chub found themselves back on the sand before the others and she seized the opportunity to whisper hurriedly in Chub's ear.

"Let's ask him to supper," she said. "Shall we?" And seeing his hesitation, she added: "Why, he hasn't a thing to eat! Just

look, Chub!" And Chub looked and relented.

And so the Licensed Poet was invited and he accepted instantly. They waited while he gathered his few things together and returned them to the *Minerva*, closing and locking the hatch after him. Then he drew on his coat and the four went on. Presently Chub found himself walking beside Billy, Harry and her father having lost ground because it was necessary that the former should see the view from Gull Point.

"Say," asked Chub suddenly, "what were you reaching for when we came up?"

Billy darted a swift glance at him. Then he answered:

"My handkerchief. I'd been making the fire and my hands weren't very clean, you know."

"Do you carry your handkerchief in your hip pocket?" asked Chub skeptically.

"When I haven't my coat on," replied the other. "I guess it's there yet; I don't think I've taken it out. Yes, here it is." And he reached back to his hip pocket and drew it forth.

"Oh," said Chub, looking a little foolish. "I thought—" He hesitated.

"You thought," said Billy, his blue eyes sparkling with good-natured raillery, "that I was going to 'pull a gun' and blow holes in you. Wasn't that it?"

"Well, it looked as though you were reaching for a revolver."

"Did it? You're too suspicious," laughed the other. "I'll confess you startled me, but I'm a more peaceable chap than

you give me credit for being." There was a moment's silence. Then Billy laughed softly. "Say," he asked, "do you know what I was doing when you folks came along?"

Chub shook his head.

"I was just going to open that can of mushrooms," answered Billy. "I'd had a pretty successful day and thought that now was my chance to celebrate."

"Did you sell some books?" Chub asked.

"Well, something of that sort. I found a customer, in fact, two or three of them. But I guess those mushrooms bear a charmed life. Just as I'm going to stick my knife through the lid you come along and ask me to supper, and back go the mushrooms to the store-room. It's funny, isn't it? That's the second time I've almost had them opened."

"Maybe the third time will be successful," laughed Chub.

Supper was late that evening, for Dick had two extra persons to provide for, and it was incumbent, besides, to set a rather more elaborate repast than usual. But when it was ready it proved to be well worth waiting for, and the fricassee of beef was delicious. Dick had learned the trick from a ranch cook out West. The ranch cook used to call it "frigasy de boof," but he made it much better than he pronounced it. After supper Billy Noon and the Doctor got into a spirited discussion on the subject of Early Elizabethan Drama, a subject which didn't greatly interest the others after the first ten minutes. But taken in connection with one thing and another, including the marked map seen in the cabin, Billy Noon's knowledge of the subject in discussion set the boys wondering harder than ever that night after the guests had taken their departures.

“Of course he isn’t a book agent,” snorted Chub contemptuously. “And what’s more, he isn’t staying around here for any good. I’ll just bet he was going to pull out a revolver this afternoon, even if he did have a handkerchief there!”

But Roy and Dick weren’t willing to go so far as to suspect the Licensed Poet of wrong intentions.

“Maybe he isn’t a book agent,” allowed Dick, “but that doesn’t mean that he’s a—a pirate or a ‘bad man.’”

“Pirate!” answered Chub. “Who said anything about pirates? He might be looking around the country to see what was worth swiping, mightn’t he?”

“A burglar? Pshaw,” said Roy, “you’re daffy! Why, any one could see he’s too much of a gentleman for that. Besides, you crazy chump, burglars don’t take all that trouble. They just go and find out where there’s stuff worth stealing and steal it. Why, he’d starve to death before he got anything!”

“Well, then, what—” began Chub stubbornly.

“Bless you, *I* don’t know,” yawned Roy. “But he’s no burglar; I’ll bet anything on that.”

“He swiped our butter and our bread,” said Chub.

“Shucks! That was just a sort of joke. Look at the way he talked back at the Doctor about those old play-writers! Think burglars know about—what was it, Dick?”

“Early Elizabethan Dramas,” answered Dick glibly.

“Some might,” answered Chub, warming to the argument. “Look at that fellow in the book.”

“Raffles? Pshaw, that was just fiction; I’m talking about real burglars.”

“Well, it’s mighty funny,” grunted Chub. “And I think we ought to ask him point-blank what he’s up to.”

“That would be polite!” scoffed Dick. “Why, we wouldn’t do that to a Greaser out West. You haven’t any sense of hospitality; and you’re too suspicious, besides.”

“That’s what he said,” murmured Chub.

“And he was right. The idea of accusing him of going to shoot you!”

“I didn’t! I just meant that he was feeling for a revolver, like he was scared. I didn’t think he meant to shoot us.”

“Same thing,” said Roy. “Men don’t carry revolvers in their pockets if they’re all right.”

“That’s what I’m saying,” answered Chub triumphantly.

“But you don’t know he had a revolver there,” said Roy. “He said it was a handkerchief he was after, and he showed it to you.”

“Yes, but he might have had a revolver there too, mightn’t he? Besides, I don’t know that he didn’t put the handkerchief there after he got into his coat. I wasn’t watching him.”

“You ought to have been,” said Roy severely. Chub grunted. Then he returned to the argument.

“What’s that map for, then?” he demanded.

“Maybe he’s employed by the Government to make—observations,” suggested Dick vaguely. “They do that.”

“Oh, tommyrot!” said Chub. “You fellows make me tired. I’m going to bed.”

“Guess we’d all better go,” said Dick, yawning. “If we’re going to finish painting that boat to-morrow we want to get to work before the sun’s very hot.”

Chub and Roy groaned in unison.

But they didn’t paint the boat the next day, as it happened; nor for many days afterward. For when they awoke in the morning it was raining hard and by the time breakfast was over with it had settled down into a regular torrent. Going for Harry was quite out of the question. They passed the morning as best they could, remaining, for the most part, in the tent. They were glad enough for the ditch which surrounded them, for if it hadn’t been there they’d have had to sit in water. Even as it was little rivulets crept over the banks of the ditch and meandered across the floor. Roy was the only one of the three who wasn’t thoroughly bored by the middle of the afternoon. He was at work on his map of the island, becoming so absorbed in the task of tracing his lines on the big sheet of paper he had purchased for the purpose that he forgot all about the weather. Once it became necessary to verify a portion of his map, and he donned his thickest sweater and went around to Turtle Point, unheeding the ridicule of the others. By supper-time he had finished it, and although there were many criticisms offered he was very proud of it.

After supper Billy Noon came over to visit them, and they were heartily glad to see him. There was no camp-fire that night, for they had thoughtlessly left their store of wood exposed and there wasn’t enough dry fuel, beside what was needed for the stove, to make any kind of a blaze. Billy was in

the best of spirits and this affected the spirits of the others favorably. He shed a yellow oilskin coat and hung it from a tent-pole under the single flickering lantern.

“Well, how goes it to-night, boys?” he asked.

“Oh, we’ve been bored to death all day,” answered Dick. “I never saw such weather!”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Billy. “I like a day like this once in awhile. I like to get out and feel the rain. Where’s Miss Emery to-night?”

They explained that the weather had been too bad for her to come.

“I see,” said Billy. “Well, what have you been doing to pass the time?”

“Reading,” sighed Dick, “and playing two-handed euchre. Roy has been making a silly old map all day and wouldn’t say a word. Show him your map, Roy.”

Roy did so and Billy praised it highly.

“You’re a genuine chartographer, aren’t you?” he said.

“Gee, Chub,” laughed Dick. “We called him everything else, but we never thought of that, did we?”

But Chub only grunted. Ever since Billy’s entrance he had been sitting silent, watching the visitor as a cat watches a mouse. Roy kicked his shins once when Billy wasn’t looking and begged him not to be a silly fool, but Chub only looked wise and frowned. Soon Billy was telling stories, some warranted strictly true and some frankly impossible, but all interesting. The boys forgot their low spirits and laughed and

applauded and begged for more. All save Chub. Chub sat and watched, soberly, like an avenging Fate. From tales Billy passed to ventriloquism and held an animated conversation with a man named Bill Jones who was presumably sitting astride the ridge-pole and doubtless getting very wet.

"Gee!" said Dick admiringly. "I wish I could do that! Couldn't you teach me?"

"If there was time enough," answered Billy. "But I'm going on in a week or so, and as it took me two months to learn what I know about it I guess it wouldn't be worth while starting to teach you. It's just a trick of the voice, but it takes a lot of practice. Now I'll hold a key in my teeth. Professionals pretend that that's a difficult stunt, but as a matter of fact it isn't anything at all, because you keep your mouth still anyway."

"Were you ever on the stage?" asked Roy eagerly.

Billy shook his head.

"Not regularly," he answered. "I did ventriloquism and sleight-of-hand tricks once for three nights."

"Oh, can you do tricks, too?" cried Dick.

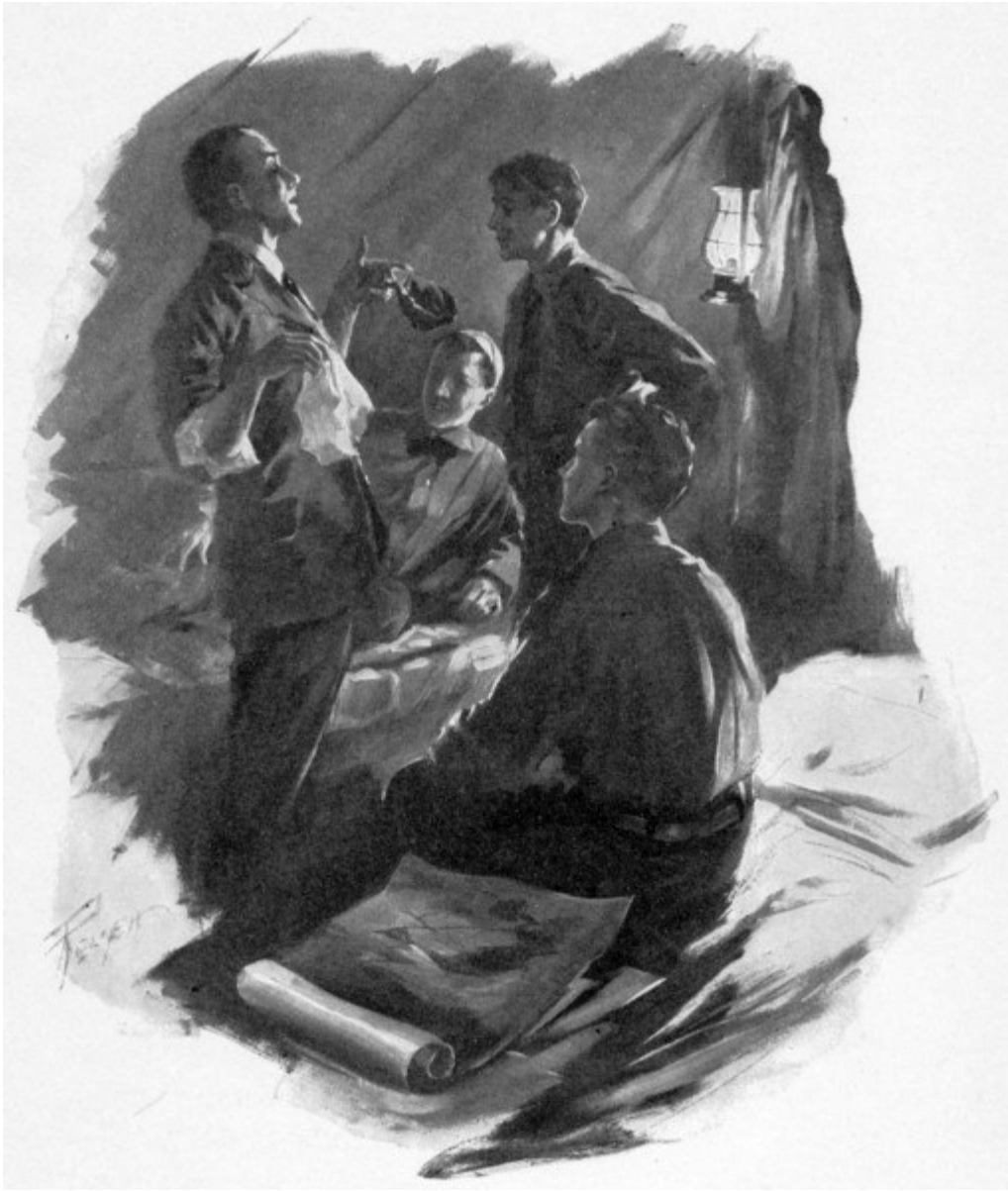
"A few," replied Billy modestly. "I'm rather out of practice, I'm afraid. You've got to work every day to keep your muscles limber or you're not much good. I'll try a few card tricks, if you like."

So the cards were produced, and for the next quarter of an hour Billy Noon had Dick's eyes popping out of his head. Chub still glowered, but it was noticeable that he leaned forward now and then and seemed pretty well interested in the Licensed Poet's dexterous fingers. Then Billy did some

palming tricks with, first, a coin and, afterward, a tennis-ball which Roy happened to have.

"Now," said Billy, "to conclude the entertainment, ladies and gentlemen, I will ask one of you to kindly step upon the platform and lend me a moment's assistance." Billy arose and looked over the tent as he drew back his coat sleeves. "Thank you, sir," he said, smiling professionally at Roy, "you will do nicely. I can see that it will be very hard to deceive you, sir. You will observe, ladies and gentlemen, that I have nothing up my sleeves, nothing in my hands." He turned his palms out and back quickly. "Now I should like to borrow a silk hat from some member of the audience." Dick and Roy were chuckling merrily. "Or failing that—let me see, ah, that cap on the bunk will do nicely. Thank you, sir." And Billy bowed impressively as Dick handed him his cap. "And now may I have a handkerchief, if you please?"

That proved a rather embarrassing request, and in the end Roy had to go to his suit-case and dig out a clean one from the bottom of the confusion therein. Billy took it with a flourish.



Mr. Noon entertains the three boys

“Now, sir, if you will kindly stand here.” He placed Roy beside him, facing the “audience.” Roy grinned steadily and watched Billy as though he feared the latter was going to make him disappear.

“In doing these tricks,” said Billy, rolling the handkerchief between his palms, “it is necessary to demand of the audience the very closest attention. So I will ask you to keep your eyes on me very carefully, ve-e-ery carefully, because I might do something that you didn’t see, and I wouldn’t want to do that, believe me. I always take my audiences into my confidence, and if anything transpires here this evening which you do not fully understand—”

Dick and Chub were gazing fascinatedly at the handkerchief which had been rolled into a smaller and yet smaller ball and which was now entirely out of sight between Billy’s palms.

“I want you to tell me so that I can explain,” continued Billy. Then he brushed the palms of his hands lightly together. The handkerchief had utterly disappeared!

“Gosh!” said Dick.

“Blamed if I understand that,” muttered Chub. Billy laughed.

“Oh, that’s very simple,” he replied with a laugh. “Merely transference. Now, if the person in the audience is quite through with the handkerchief I’ll ask him to return it by one of the ushers.” Billy’s eyes ranged questioningly from Dick to Chub and back again, while he smiled politely and expectantly. Then, “I say if you are quite through with the handkerchief,” he announced in a louder voice, “you will be kind enough to return it.” Chub and Dick grinned. Roy stood on his other foot for a change and grinned too. Billy pretended to be cross. “Really, ladies and gentlemen,” he said, “I assure you that I can’t go on with the performance until the handkerchief is returned. I know where it is and if the gentleman who has it doesn’t return it at once I shall be obliged to call on one of the

ushers for assistance." The audience made no reply. "You, there," cried Billy, pointing suddenly at Chub. "There's no use in acting this way. The handkerchief is in your right-hand coat pocket. Kindly return it, sir!"

Chub nearly jumped off his soap-box. Then he stared dazedly at Billy for a moment, finally dropping one hand into the pocket specified, a look of incredulity on his face. But he found it, or at least he found something, for,

"*Thunder!*" he yelled, jerked his hand out again and jumped to his feet as something fell to the ground with a soft *thud*. The something went hopping away toward the tent door amidst howls of laughter from Roy and Dick. It was a large fat toad. Chub stared at it until it had hopped from sight. Then he stared at Billy. Finally he stared at Roy and Dick, and those youths went into spasms of even more riotous laughter. "Gee!" said Chub finally, and sat down again after looking at the soap-box carefully to see that there were no more toads about.

"You'd better look in your pocket again, Chub!" cried Dick. "There may be another!"

Chub obeyed the suggestion very gingerly and heaved a sigh of relief when he found the pocket empty.

"My mistake," said Billy easily, when the laughter had subsided. "I beg your pardon, sir. Had I known that you were in the habit of carrying pets around with you I should have been more careful, sir. I'm very sorry, really. You'll pardon me, I trust?" Chub grinned sheepishly and Billy was silent a moment, frowning intently at the lantern. Then, "Ah!" he exclaimed. "How stupid of me! Really, ladies and gentlemen, I don't know when I've made such a foolish mistake before! I am really chagrined, I assure you!" He turned to Roy beside

him. “You, sir, are at liberty to return to your seat. I thank you very much.” Roy smiled, hesitated, and moved toward his bed upon which he had been seated when summoned to assist “the Professor.” But he wasn’t destined to get off so easily, for:

“Oh, but one moment, sir, if you please,” said Billy. “You had better leave the handkerchief here, hadn’t you?”

Roy stopped and smiled helplessly.

“I suppose so,” he said, “if I’ve got it.”

“Do you mean to deny that you have it?” exclaimed Billy in apparent astonishment.

“You bet I don’t,” answered Roy forcibly, to the amusement of the others.

“Ah,” said Billy, “then I’ll trouble you for it.” And he held out his hand.

“I—I guess you’ll have to take it,” answered Roy uneasily.

“You compel me to use force,” said Billy. “I’m sorry, but —” He seized Roy quickly, plunged a hand into the inside pocket of his jacket and drew forth the handkerchief neatly folded!

Roy stared at the handkerchief and at Billy. Then he shook his head and made for his seat.

“Gee,” he said laughingly, “I wasn’t sure it wasn’t in my mouth!”

“Tell us how you did it!” demanded Dick. But Billy, pulling his sleeves down, shook his head smilingly.

“Professional secrets,” he said. “And now I must be off to

bed. I've kept you fellows up pretty late, I'm afraid." They assured him that they liked it and that he should stay longer. But he got into his oilskin coat and took his departure through the rain.

"Say, he's all right, isn't he?" asked Dick awedly. They all agreed that he was. But a moment later Chub said suddenly:

"I guess a fellow who can do things like that wouldn't have much trouble getting a handkerchief into his hip pocket!"

CHAPTER XIV
VOICES IN THE NIGHT

The next morning when they awoke they found that it was still raining, although not so heavily. At half-past ten Roy and Chub went over to the Cottage and found Harry and brought her back with them. It very nearly ceased raining after dinner and they all went around to Billy Noon's camp to pay him a visit. But both he and the *Minerva* were absent. After supper, however, he showed up and there was another evening of stories and tricks, Harry demanding them since she had not been in the audience the evening before. Even Chub took part in the general hilarity to-night. He still had his suspicions of Billy Noon, but it was very hard to remember them when that gentleman was so frank and friendly and entertaining. To the amusement of the others, Chub kept his hands in the pockets of his jacket all the time Billy was doing his sleight-of-hand tricks; no more toads for him, he asserted. So the toad this evening was a pine-cone, and Harry found it in the pocket of her rain-coat and was terribly disturbed until she discovered that it wasn't nearly as dangerous as it felt.

The party broke up early, however, in spite of the jolly time they were having, for Harry was nervous about going home because of an attempted burglary the night before at Farmer Mercer's house about a half mile away. So at half-past eight Roy and Chub paddled her across to the landing and only left her when the gate in the hedge was reached.

"There," said Chub, "burglars can't steal you now, Harry."

“No,” answered Harry, “good night!” And she dashed across the campus. Roy and Chub stumbled back down the path. It was very dark there in the grove, for there was neither moonlight nor starlight, and so it wasn’t altogether awkwardness that sent Chub sprawling over a root.

“Hello!” cried Roy. “Are you hurt?”

“No,” Chub answered, picking himself up from the ground. “At least, not much. I’ve gone and wrenched that old tendon again, the one I hurt last year. Gee! Give me an arm down to the landing, Roy.”

“That’s too bad,” said Roy as they went on, Chub supporting himself on the other’s shoulder. “It’s the tendon at the back of the ankle, isn’t it?”

“Yes, but it will be all right to-morrow if I don’t use it. My, isn’t it dark! and warm, too! Where’s the canoe? All right, I can get in.”

Back in camp Roy turned himself into a doctor and treated Chub’s bruised ankle with cold water. Then he gave it a good rubbing and finally did it up in wet bandages. It had swollen up considerably and hurt half-way up the back of Chub’s leg. But it was nothing serious, and he knew it, and so composed himself to sleep when Dick blew out the light. But slumber didn’t come easily to him. His foot and leg pained him considerably, and, besides, it was a warm, muggy night with almost no air stirring and the interior of the tent was stifling. So Chub lay awake, staring into the darkness, listening enviously to the measured breathing of Dick and Roy, and all the time trying to discover a comfortable position for the injured foot. The night was very still save for the soft lapping of the water and the incessant voices of the insects. To make

matters worse the mosquitos were having a gala night of it; the weather was just the sort they liked best. Usually Chub wouldn't have stayed awake for all the mosquitos in the world, but to-night their buzzing got on his nerves badly. He stuck it out for nearly two hours. Then he sat up in bed irritably, muttered uncomplimentary remarks in the direction of Roy, who was snoring softly, and suddenly felt as wide awake as he had ever felt in his life!

It was absurd to stay here in bed and suffer from the heat when it was, of course, much cooler outside. So he swung his injured foot carefully to the floor, arose and hobbled out of the tent. It wasn't very cool out there, but the air was fresher and the odor of the damp woods and pine trees was soothing. So he hopped across to the nearest bench and made himself comfortable with his feet off the ground and his back against the trunk of a tree. It was a relief to get out of that hot, stuffy tent, he told himself. It wasn't long before the mosquitos found him, but he didn't mind them greatly; some people experience very little distress from mosquito bites and Chub was one of them. Presently, too, the rough bark of the tree began to make itself felt through his pajamas, while his aching leg protested against the cramped position it held. But in spite of all this Chub was actually nodding, nearly asleep, when voices, seemingly almost beside him, drove all thought of slumber from his mind. Startled, he raised his head and peered about into the darkness. He couldn't see a yard away from him, but the voices—and now he realized that, although distinct, they came from some little distance—reached him again.

"I don't like the idea of waiting," said one speaker. "They may move the stuff."

“Not if they don’t suspect,” said a second voice. “And it’s better to get them all while we’re at it. Once let them know we’re after them and they’ll scatter, destroy the stuff, and hide the plates!”

“Yes,” said the first voice, “I guess that’s so. He’s due back on Thursday, Whipple says. Then Thursday night—?”

“Thursday night, unless something happens meanwhile. Only thing I’m afraid of is that the local police will blunder on to a clue and spoil the whole job.”

“Not them! I know ’em all and—”

The voices suddenly died away to a faint murmur, and while Chub was trying to explain this the creak of boom came to him. That was it! The two men had been in a sail-boat on their way either up or down the river in the main channel and very near the island. There was almost no wind where Chub was, but there was probably enough on the water to keep a boat moving. But the odd part of it all was the fact that Chub was almost certain that he had heard both voices before, although, try as he might, he couldn’t place them. If the voices were familiar it disposed of the theory that the men were merely traveling the river. Perhaps they were going to land on the island! Perhaps—! Chub started, forgot his injured ankle and sank back on the bench with a groan. Supposing one of the men was—he uttered a sudden exclamation.

“Billy Noon!” he whispered. He knew the voice of the second speaker now; there was no doubt about it. And yet Billy had left them at half-past eight in the direction of his boat, declaring that he was going to turn in. Still, that didn’t signify anything. The voice was Billy Noon’s voice without a doubt, and very probably the boat was his as well. At that moment,

from below the island, came again the creak of a boom. Then they were bound down-stream, thought Chub. In that case—but it was all an unfathomable mystery, and although Chub sat there for the better part of the next hour and tried to explain it he was at last forced to give it up. By this time he was very sleepy, and so, hobbling back to the tent, he threw himself down on his bed and dropped off to slumber on the instant.

When he awoke Roy and Dick had finished breakfast and it was nearly nine o'clock! Roy explained that they thought maybe he hadn't slept very well, and so they didn't awaken him. The ankle was almost well, and after giving it another sousing with cold water Chub ate the breakfast which they had left on the stove for him with hearty relish. Dick was out in the launch bailing the water out with a saucepan. The sun was shining brightly and almost every cloud had been swept aside by the westerly breeze that rumpled the surface of the river.

"Say, this is Sunday, isn't it?" Chub asked. And Roy replied that it was. Chub groaned.

"That means letters to write," he sighed.

"How did you sleep?" asked Roy.

"Pretty well," answered Chub thoughtfully. "I was awake until long after midnight, though." He was trying to decide whether to mention the men in the sail-boat. Viewed by the sane light of morning the incident seemed to mean very little. And while he was still hesitating there came the sound of a merry whistle and Billy Noon appeared around the point. Chub looked at him attentively. He didn't look at all like a person who had been up half the night. Perhaps, after all, Chub thought, he had been mistaken in the voice; lots of voices sounded alike, especially in the dark. So he kept his own

counsel for the present.

"Well, what's the program for to-day?" asked Billy merrily.

"Write letters," said Chub dismally.

"Go to church," said Roy. "We didn't go last Sunday and so Dick and I are going to-day. You coming, Chub?"

"With this ankle?" asked Chub in surprise.

"You said it was about well," Roy answered. Chub sighed.

"I know," he said, "but I wouldn't want to have a relapse."

Billy asked about the injury and by the time Chub had finished telling him Dick came back with the saucepan.

"She's all ready," he announced, greeting Billy. "We're going to sail down to the Cove and go to church," he explained. "Want to come along?"

"I don't know but I might," was the reply after a moment's thought. "I'll have to spruce up a little first, though. Can you wait a few minutes?"

"Easy! We don't need to start for an hour yet, I guess. You going along, Chub?"

"Sure," replied Chub cheerfully. "Church for mine!"

"Thought you said your foot was too bad," observed Roy suspiciously.

"Well, you didn't tell me you were going in the launch, did you? Sea-trips are beneficial to invalids."

Billy was back shortly and a little before ten they started off. The *Pup* ran splendidly and they reached the cove long before church-time. As they passed up the street they encountered the

freight-handler who had helped them get the launch into the water. They didn't recognize him until he spoke to them, for he had his Sunday clothes on and was quite a respectable looking citizen. As he passed Chub turned to have a further view of him. The freight-handler had also turned his head and as their glances met, the latter nodded and:

"A fine morning after the rain," he called cheerily.

But Chub made no answer. He went on silently for the next block, stumbling over two curbstones and thinking busily. Even if he had made a mistake in thinking that he had heard Billy Noon's voice last night, he was positive that he was making no mistake now. One of the men in the boat was the freight-handler! Chub was stumbling over his third curb when Billy, who was walking beside him, put out a hand quickly and steadied him.

"Here," he said, "that isn't good for your ankle. Maybe we're walking too fast for you?"

"Not a bit of it," murmured Chub.

I'm afraid he didn't hear very much of the sermon, for his thoughts were busy with the problem of the man in the boat. He wished that he had looked at Billy as they had passed the freight-handler and seen whether the two had recognized each other. He might ask Billy, but there was no reason to suppose that the latter would confess to an acquaintance with the freight-handler unless he chose to. No, he would just keep things to himself and watch. Whatever was to happen would not occur until Thursday, and that was four days distant. Perhaps before that he could find a solution of the mystery.

Letter-writing and reading consumed most of the afternoon.

At about four Billy passed down the river in his boat, hailing them as he sped briskly along. Chub watched him as long as he was in sight and then returned with a sigh to his letter. Later they went into the woods in search of fuel and at six sat down to supper. Harry was spending the day with a girl friend at the Cove and so there were only three at table this evening.

But Harry was on hand bright and early next morning with Snip and a basket of fresh, still warm doughnuts.

"I've been up ever since a quarter of six," she explained proudly, "and I had these all made by half-past seven."

"I'll bet they're good, too," said Chub as he stole one and put his teeth into it. "Yum, yum! No almond flavoring this time, fellows!"

After breakfast they went fishing about two miles up the river and had fairly good luck. Chub had wanted to go in the launch, but Dick had declared that he wasn't going to have the *Pup* all messed up with bait and fish-scales. So they took the canoe and the rowboat, and by the time they were back in camp and the fish were sizzling in the pan they were four of the hungriest persons extant. The boys did full justice to the doughnuts and praised Harry's cooking ability until she blushed with pleasure.

"Oh, these are dead easy to make," she said. "I only wish I could make cake, though."

"I'll show you any time you like," said Chub kindly. "I've taken prizes for my cake."

"I guess you mean for eating it," laughed Harry. "Oh, but just you all wait! On my birthday I'm going to have the biggest cake you ever saw! It's going to be fourteen inches across on

top and it's going to have pink and white icing all over it and sixteen candles!"

"By jove!" cried Roy. "I'd forgotten about your birthday. Is it this week, Harry?"

"Yes, Thursday, and I shall be—"

"*Thursday!*" exclaimed Chub sharply. The others stared at him in surprise.

"Why, yes," said Harry.

"Do you object to Thursday?" asked Roy sarcastically. "Because if you do Harry can change it."

"No," muttered Chub, "but I didn't know it was so soon."

"He's worried because he's forgotten to buy you that diamond necklace," explained Dick. "How old will you be, Harry? Not sixteen?"

"Sixteen!" declared Harry proudly. "Isn't that lovely? And I'm going to have a birthday party at the Cottage. And you are all invited."

"Hum," said Roy suspiciously, "who else is coming?"

"Oh, just some of the girls I know," answered Harry carelessly. But she looked at the boys anxiously. Roy shook his head.

"I guess that lets us out, Harry," he said. "I wouldn't dare take Chub into society. He'd probably eat the candles off the cake or drink out of his finger-bowl."

"Oh, I think that's mean!" Harry cried disappointedly. "I wanted you to come!"

“Too many girls,” grunted Dick. “Can’t stand them in bunches like that. I get nervous for fear I’ll tread on one of ’em.”

“I tell you what we will do, though,” said Roy. “We’ll give you another birthday party here in camp in the evening, and it’ll be a dandy, too! What do you say to that?”

“Oh, that would be nice!” said Harry rapturously. Then her face fell again. “But I did so want you to come to the Cottage, Roy!”

“Much obliged,” murmured Dick.

“Oh, I meant all of you,” declared Harry, “and you know very well I did.”

“I’m not afraid of a few girls,” said Chub. “I’ll go, Harry.”

“You’ll stay right here,” answered Roy. “I’d just like to see you at a girl’s party!”

“I’ve been to lots of them,” said Chub loftily. “I’m a great success at functions of that sort. At home they can’t do without me.”

“Well, they can do without you here, all right,” responded Roy cruelly. “And they’re going to. Harry’s going to have her girls’ party in the afternoon and then she’s coming over here and we’re going to give her another. We will employ that celebrated caterer, Mr. Richard Somes, to prepare the repast.”

“And we’ll invite the Poet!” cried Harry.

“Of course,” said Dick. “We’ll have him write an ‘Ode to Harriet on her Sixteenth Birthday.’”

It was settled so, and Harry regained her good spirits and fed

doughnuts to Snip until the boys made her desist, not, as Chub explained, because they had any fears for the dog's health, but for the reason that it was a shame to waste good doughnuts on an unappreciative nature. Harry declared that Snip had a very appreciative nature, but was at a loss when Chub demanded proof. Snip, finding the harvest at an end, jogged off to investigate things in the woods, and while the dinner things were being cleared up he made day hideous with his incessant barking. Finally Chub went off to investigate.

"I'll bet he's treed another bear," he said. "You dig your revolver out of your bag, Dick, and stand ready to come when I yell."

But Chub didn't yell. Instead he was back in a minute with news written all over his face.

"What do you think?" he cried.

"A racoon!" guessed Roy.

"A skunk!" cried Dick.

"No, a house-boat," answered Chub with a grin.

"A what? A house-boat?" exclaimed Roy. "What are you talking about? Snip caught a house-boat! Say, you're too funny for anything, Chub, you are, I don't think!"

"I didn't say he'd caught it," answered Chub, "but he discovered it. It's lying against the shore near Round Head. Come and see for yourselves!"

CHAPTER XV
THE FLOATING ARTIST

Sure enough, there it was; although from where they were it was hard to get a good look at it. So they hurried along the beach until they came up to it. It was lying close against Round Head, its deck almost on a level with the top of the big rock, two ropes—Chub called them “hawsers” and no one dared dispute with him—holding the boat at bow and stern.

The first thing they noticed when they arrived abreast of the boat was a big, handsome red setter watching them intently from his place on the deck. His head lay between his paws and he never moved at their approach, but his brown eyes watched them suspiciously every moment. It was doubtless the presence of the setter which had so excited Snip. Snip was still excited, and said so plainly and at the top of his lungs, but the red setter paid absolutely no attention to him. There was no one in sight on the boat. The four stopped at the edge of the wood and examined the odd craft to their hearts’ content.

For it was odd; there was no doubt about that. In the first place, it was painted in such a funny way. The lower part of the hull was green—a real pea-green like the boat that the Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea in—and above that was a foot-wide streak of reddish-pink, and above that again the hull was finished off in white. She looked very much like a scow with a little cottage on board. There was a suggestion of a bow, however, and a rudder-post arose a few inches above the level of the deck at the stern. In length she was about thirty feet and

in breadth about ten. There was a few feet of deck space at the bow and a few more at the stern, just enough to accommodate a small dinghy and leave room to pass, and it seemed just possible to walk along the side of the boat without falling off. But the rest of the deck was monopolized by a cabin, or, more properly, house, some eight feet high. This was painted a dazzling white, while the two doors and the six one-sash windows which faced them were trimmed with green. The top of the house seemed to be something between a promenade deck and a roof-garden. There was a railing about it and it was covered with a faded red-and-white canvas awning. Here and there about the edge were red flower-boxes filled with crimson geraniums which were masses of bloom, German ivy which was already creeping up and along the iron railing and the white-and-green-leaved vinca whose drooping sprays made a swaying festoon along the top of the house. There were several green willow chairs on the roof-deck, a small table holding magazines and books and some bright-hued rugs beneath. At the stern a flight of steps gave access from the deck below, while at the bow the house was crowned with a small pilot-house.

The windows were curtained with white dimity and through one of the doors, which stood partly open, they saw an engine. ("Gasolene," murmured Dick knowingly.) On the hull at the bow was painted the name in bold black letters: *Jolly Roger*; and above, from a pole at the forward end of the roof-deck was a white flag which, when the little breeze spread its folds, displayed the gruesome skull-and-cross-bones in black!

"Must be a pirate ship," said Roy, and Harry looked somewhat uneasy until she saw that the others took it as a joke.

“Isn’t she a wonder, though!” exclaimed Chub, half in admiration and half in derision.

“I think she’s perfectly lovely!” cried Harry. “Wouldn’t it be the biggest fun to live in a boat like that and travel all around the world?”

“Well,” Roy laughed, “I don’t believe I’d want to go across the ocean in her! Still you could have lots of fun.”

“Why don’t you buy her?” asked Chub. “She’s for sale, you see.”

Which was true, since on the forward end of the house was a board bearing the inscription in startlingly large letters:

FOR SALE!
INQUIRE WITHIN
OR WITHOUT

“What’s it mean by ‘without’?” asked Harry.

“Without any money,” Chub suggested.

“I suppose,” said Dick, “it means that if the owner isn’t inside he’s up there on top.”

“He should have said ‘Inquire above or below,’ then,” said Roy.

“Let’s change it for him,” Chub proposed genially. But Roy glanced at the dog and shook his head.

“There’s no sense in carrying philanthropy too far,” he answered. “We’ll let him make his own changes.”

“I wish we could see inside of it,” said Dick. “Do you

suppose he's in there? We might say we wanted to purchase and would like to look it over first."

"That's so," said Chub. "We could tell him we were particular about the drains. I wonder how much land goes with it?"

"Just what's in the flower-boxes, I suppose," answered Roy.

"Let's call out and see if he's at home," whispered Harry.

"All right; you shout," Roy said. But Harry told him it wasn't a lady's place to shout.

"I guess if he was at home," remarked Dick, "he'd been out here five minutes ago to see what the trouble was; Snip's been making enough racket to wake the dead."

"Who do you suppose he is?" wondered Harry. "And how long do you suppose he's going to stay here?"

"I think," said Chub, "that he's a traveling salesman for a paint factory, and this is his color card. I think I'll go in and order a gallon of that old-shrimp pink."

"I think it's painted very prettily," murmured Harry.

"Ought to have a touch of blue, though," said Dick.

"And orange," Chub added. "There ought to be more variety; it's too—too somber as it is." The others laughed; all save Harry. She had advanced across the rock until she had only to take a step to reach the deck of the house-boat. The setter didn't move an inch, but he kept his eyes on her very intently.

"How do you do, Mr. Red Setter?" inquired Harry affably. The red setter flapped his tail once or twice, feebly but good-

naturedly. “Will you kindly tell us where your master is?” For reply the dog arose, stretched himself luxuriously, and walked dignifiedly to the edge of the deck. Harry had no fear of any dog that ever was born, and so she reached forward and patted the setter’s head. He responded by wagging his tail in a leisurely and friendly manner and looking up into her face with a pair of very intelligent brown eyes.

“Isn’t he a dear?” cried Harry.

“He’s a rascal, that’s what he is,” laughed Chub. “Here he had us all scared stiff and he’s just an amiable old Towser, after all!” And Chub started across the rock to join Harry. But he thought better of it, for the setter turned his head toward him and growled warningly, the hair along his back standing on end.

“Well, of all the rank partiality!” cried Chub, rejoining Dick and Roy, who were laughing at his discomfiture.

“He knows I love dogs, don’t you, you old dear?” murmured Harry.

“I love dogs myself, don’t I?” asked Chub offendedly. “Why doesn’t he know that?”

“It’s your face, Chub,” said Roy. “He has only to look at that to see that you’re a suspicious character. He’s a very intelligent animal, isn’t he, Dick?”

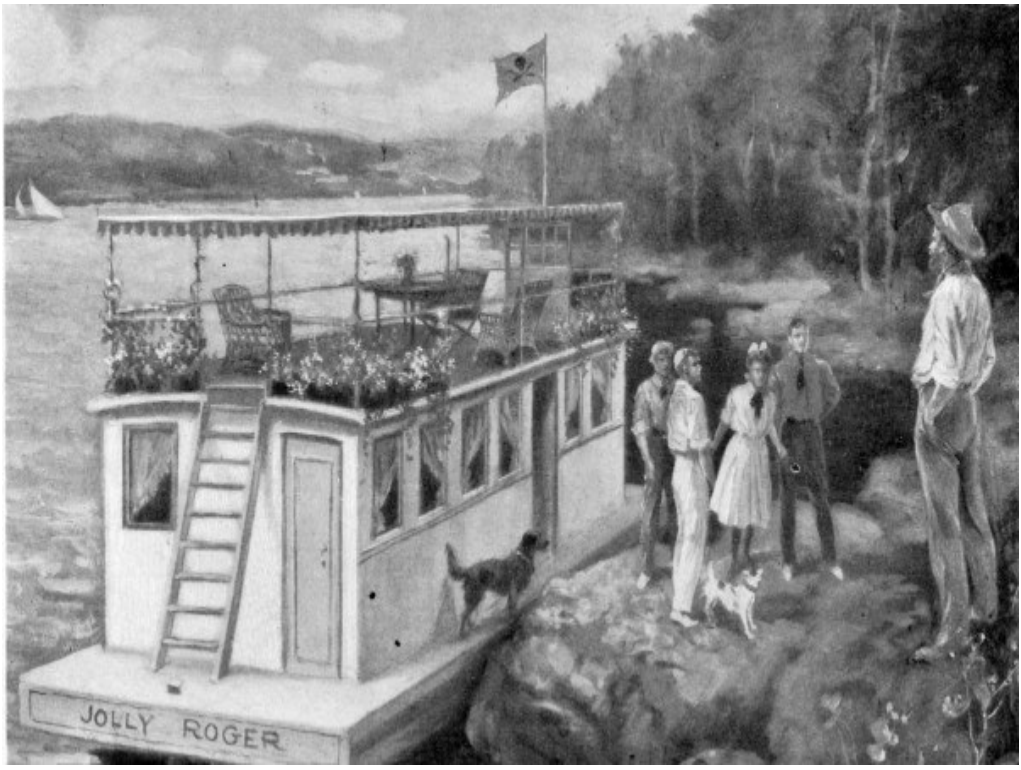
“Oh, I don’t know; ’most anybody could size Chub up after a glance at him. Well, if we can’t see any more, suppose we go on about our business and come back later on when the chap’s at home? I’d sure like to get a look inside, fellows.”

“Oh, so would I!” cried Harry. “Do you suppose that he’d

invite us in if he was here?”

“No,” replied Chub, somewhat disgustedly, eying the setter in disfavor. “I’ll bet he’s a regular old bear! A man that’ll have a dog with as suspicious a disposition as that one isn’t going to invite us in to see his old boat.”

“A Daniel come to judgment!” exclaimed a deep voice behind them.



“‘A Daniel come to judgment!’”

Snip, who had ceased barking for very weariness, broke out again frantically as the boys turned startledly about. At the edge of the wood, a few yards away, stood a big, brown-bearded man viewing them solemnly with his legs apart and his hands thrust into the pockets of a pair of yellow corduroy trousers. I say yellow because they were possibly a little more

yellow than they were anything else, but there were many other colors to be found on those trousers; spots of red and blue and green, splashes of brown and white and black, and smears of all the variants possible. Even in his surprise and embarrassment Chub remembered his guess that the owner of the *Jolly Roger* was a paint salesman, and silently congratulated himself on his acumen.

I have said that the man was big, but that doesn't begin to convey an idea of the impression received by Roy and Dick, Chub and Harry, as they turned and found him there. At first glance he seemed to them the biggest man outside of a museum. He was tall, well above six feet, and more than correspondingly broad, with huge muscles that indicated great strength. He was wonderfully good looking, with a long, straight nose, wide, brown eyes, a heavy head of wavy brown hair and a thick brown beard trimmed to a point. He suggested strength, health, sanity, and kindness. And after the first instant even his intense solemnity of countenance didn't deceive the campers. For there was a half-hidden twinkle in the brown eyes. The red setter began to bark joyfully and so for a moment the dogs had everything their own way. Then:

"Be quiet, Jack," commanded the man, and the setter dropped obediently to the deck and restricted his manifestations of delight to a frantic wagging of his tail. Snip was not so easily controlled, but Dick grabbed him up and muzzled him with his hand.

"Well, here's the bear," said the man, still regarding them solemnly. "A big brown bear ready to eat you up. Aren't you frightened?"

"No," said Harry, "not a bit! That was just some of Chub's

nonsense. He didn’t mean anything.”

“You’re sure?” asked the man anxiously. He had a splendid deep voice that made one almost love him at once.

“Yes, quite sure,” laughed Harry.

“I am relieved,” said the man soberly. He took his hands from his pockets and came toward them with long, easy steps which showed that, in spite of his size, he was far more graceful than many a smaller man. “So you’d like to see inside the bear’s den, would you?” he asked. “Well, come along then, ladies and gentlemen; this way to the grand salon.”

They followed him on to the boat, Harry, Dick, Roy, and Chub, Chub still looking a trifle abashed and keeping to the rear. Their guide led them along the side of the house to the space at the rear, threw open a door and bowed them in. They found themselves in a little room about ten feet square. The sunlight streamed through the two windows on the island side and cast a golden glow over the apartment. It was furnished with a table, which still held the remains of a meal, two chairs, a large easel holding a clean canvas, a high stand bearing a huge paint-box, brushes, knives, and tubes, and a green bench. There was a cupboard built against the wall in one corner, a pile of canvases under the table and a few pictures between the windows.

“This is the workroom,” explained the host. “Not lavishly furnished, you see.”

No one answered. What they were all wondering was, how on earth the man managed to move around in that tiny room without upsetting the easel or the table! Perhaps he surmised their thoughts, for:

“Rather a small den for a big bear, isn’t it?” he laughed, showing a set of big white teeth through his beard.

“It’s very nice,” murmured Harry. “Do you make pictures?”

“Yes, I’m a painter,” he answered, as he opened another door.

“Told you he was!” whispered Chub to Roy, and received a scathing glance in reply.

Out of the living-room was a tiny kitchen with an oil-stove, cupboards for dishes and food, a sink, and, in short, all the requirements for housekeeping. Harry went into raptures over the place, and the boys agreed that it was “just about all right.” On the other side of the kitchen, or the “galley,” as their host termed it, was a small engine-room with a twenty horse-power gasolene engine. That interested Dick, and he had to know all about it before he would consent to go on. The man explained smilingly, obligingly.

“It’s a fairish engine, I guess,” he said, “but I’m free to confess that I don’t understand it and never shall. Engines and machinery are beyond me. I start it going and if it wants to it keeps on. If it doesn’t want to it stops. And I stay there until it gets ready to go again. It’s stopped now, as it happens. That’s why I’m here.”

From the engine-room he conducted them on deck and then through a door near the bow. Here was a narrow entry crossing the boat, opening on one side into a bedroom and on the other into a sitting-room. The bedroom was simply and comfortably furnished and had a real brass bedstead in it. The sitting-room was very cozy and inviting, and was the largest room of all. There were two windows on each side and one looking over

the bow. A queer circular iron stairway popped straight upward to the pilot-house above. There was a window-seat along the front containing some comfortable leather cushions—the sort a fellow isn't afraid of soiling—a table in the center, three comfortable chairs, a bookcase half full of volumes and holding a bowl of geraniums, a talking-machine which pointed its horn threateningly toward the front window as though ready to be fired at any moment, and, to Harry's delighted approval, a big, gray Angora cat asleep on the window-seat.

"Isn't he a perfect beauty," cried Harry, falling on her knees beside him. "Oh, I never felt such long, silky hair! Dick, maybe you'd better put Snip outside. You know he sometimes chases cats that he isn't acquainted with."

Dick, who still held the excited Snip in his arms, turned toward the door but his host stopped him.

"Put him down, put him down," he said. "Let him get acquainted with my family. The cat won't hurt him, and if he wants to tackle the cat—well, I believe in letting folks fight their own battles. It's good for them. Beastie, observe the fox-terrier. Behave yourself, now. You, too, Jack."

Snip was set at liberty. Approaching Beastie cautiously he gave one experimental bark. Beastie only blinked at him. Whereupon Snip paid no more attention to the cat, but proceeded to make friends with the red setter.

"I don't use this room much," said their host as they sat down at his invitation, "so I fancy it doesn't look very well. I'm a poor housekeeper. Well, boys, what do you think of the bear's den?"

"It's just swell!" answered Chub earnestly. "I shouldn't

think you'd want to sell it, sir."

"No," murmured Roy and Dick.

"Had it four years," said the painter, "and been all around in it. Besides, it's too big for comfort. Two rooms are all I need. So I'll sell when I get a chance. But I've been trying to get rid of the thing for over a year and haven't done it yet."

"Wish I could buy it," said Dick seriously. "I suppose, though, it would be worth a lot of money, sir?"

"Not a bit of it, my boy! You can have it to-morrow for a thousand dollars. It cost me just short of three, engine and all. But I'll sell it cheap. It's in the best of condition, too; nothing run down—except the engine." He chuckled. "Or I'll take the engine out and you can have the boat for fifteen hundred! Want to buy?"

Dick shook his head ruefully. "I'd like to," he said, "but I guess I couldn't find that much money right now."

"Well, when you do you let me know and maybe the boat will still be waiting for you. Cole's my name, Forbes Cole, and 'New York City' will reach me any time. You see, I began to lose interest in this boat when I'd worked out the last combination in color on her. How do you like the way she's painted now?"

"Very nice," answered Dick, after an appreciable pause.

Mr. Cole burst into a bellow of deep laughter.

"Don't care for it, eh? Well, you should have seen her two years ago; she was worth while then. I had her in Roman stripes. Beginning at the water line, she was blue, white, orange, cerise, purple, and pale green; stripes about six inches

broad. Well, she attracted a lot of attention that summer. Folks thought I was crazy." And he chuckled enjoyably, his brown eyes twinkling. "Then, the year before, I had the hull all bright green and the house burnt-orange. But I didn't care much for that myself; it was a bit too plain."

The boys laughed.

"Are you going to stay here long?" asked Roy politely.

"Ask the engine," replied the artist, "ask the engine. I give her a few turns every morning. If she starts, why, I go on; if she doesn't I stay. It's simple enough. Saves me the bother of deciding, too. But I've never stopped just here before, and it looks as though I might find some paintable bits around. Where am I, by the way? Is this a private island I'm hitched to? Any law against trespassing?"

"It's Fox Island," answered Roy, "and it belongs to Doctor Emery, Miss Harriet Emery's father." He nodded toward Harry. "He is principal of Ferry Hill School which is just across there on the hill. I don't believe he would mind your staying here as long as you—as long as your engine likes."

"Do you boys go to school there?"

"Yes, that is, Chub and I have just graduated and Dick has another year of it. We three are camping out here, and Harry comes over every day. It's pretty good fun."

"Yes, but it would be more fun in a boat like this," said Dick. "I'm going to have one some day, you bet!"

"So'm I," said Harry, lifting her face from where it had been buried in Beastie's silken coat. "And I'm going to travel all around in it, Japan, Greece, Africa, Venice, Holland—

everywhere!”

Mr. Cole laughed again until Chub wondered why the windows didn’t fall out.

“Bless me,” said the artist, “you’re adventurous for a young lady, Miss—er—Emery! I’ll have to sell the *Roger* to you.”

“Roy says,” remarked Chub, “that you ought to have your sign read: ‘Inquire above or below.’ We wanted to change it for you,” he added audaciously, “only we didn’t like the look of the dog.”

“‘Above or below,’ eh? Ho, that’s not bad, boys, that’s not bad! I’ll do it, I’ll change it myself. ‘Above or below,’ eh? Yes, yes, that’s a splendid idea. Folks will think I’m dead, maybe.”

“Roy meant,” began Harry anxiously, “that—”

“Don’t tell me,” interrupted Mr. Cole. “It might spoil it. Now, where’s this camp of yours, boys?”

Roy explained and told him that they would like very much to have him come and see them.

“Of course I’ll come,” answered the artist heartily. “And you come and see me, any time. If I’m at work, why, here’s some books and there’s the ready-made music.” He pointed to the talking-machine. “You can’t disturb me, so come around whenever you like while I’m here. And we’ll have a dinner-party some time, maybe, when I get some provisions in.”

They made their adieus, their host accompanying them to land and shaking them each by the hand with a pressure that made them gasp. Jack, too, followed, wagging his tail in friendly farewell, and Beastie stood at the doorway and blinked

benevolently.

“You needn’t be afraid of Jack the next time,” said Mr. Cole. “He knows you now. Good-by, good-by. Come again. The bear’s den is always open, and if I’m not here make yourselves at home.” He waved one big brown hand in farewell as they passed around the point.

Harry

“Isn’t he jolly?” exclaimed Dick when they were out of his hearing.

“Bully,” said Dick.

“He’s all right,” added Chub. “Nothing stuck-up about him.

I knew an artist chap at home once and he was a chump. Always talking about when he studied in Rome. I asked him once if he meant Rome, Georgia, and he got all het up about it."

They went back to camp by way of Point Harriet and Billy Noon's camping place, but, as usual, Billy wasn't at home.

"If people keep on coming here," said Roy, "we'll have a regular village pretty soon. Already the population has increased fifty per cent. That's pretty near the record, I guess."

"We ought to establish a form of government," said Chub. "I'll be mayor."

"You're too modest," replied Roy. "You ought to try and fight against it, Chub."

"It's no use," Chub sighed. "I was born that way. Lots of folks have spoken about it."

"Well, I don't care who's mayor," said Dick, "if I can be chief of police."

When they got back to camp Dick remarked casually: "This would be a dandy afternoon to do a little painting, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, and it would be a dandy afternoon to do no painting at all," answered Chub. "Let's go out in the launch and bum around up and down the river. Let's go over to Coleville and make faces at Hammond. By the way, I wonder if Mr. Cole comes from Coleville."

Dick finally allowed himself to be persuaded that it would do them more good to take a sail than to paint, and so they all four piled into the *Pup* and, as Chub put it, went barking

around for an hour or more, Harry serenely happy at being allowed to take the wheel and steer, Snip fast asleep in her lap. Harry reverted to the subject of the birthday party that they were to give her and begged them not to forget to invite the Licensed Poet.

“We won’t,” said Chub. “And, say, why not ask the Floating Artist, too?”

“That’ll be lovely!” cried Harry, laughingly. “A Licensed Poet and a Floating Artist for supper!”

“That’s all right,” answered Dick, “but I’d rather have a Broiled Beefsteak.”

“I have an idea,” remarked Chub, “that the Licensed Poet won’t be able to accept.”

“Why?” demanded Harry anxiously.

“I think he’s going to be busy Thursday night.”

“Doing what?”

“Well, I don’t know just what,” answered Chub mysteriously, “but something.”

And although they tried their best to make him explain he only shook his head and frowned darkly at the passing shore.

CHAPTER XVI
A MEETING OF FRIENDS

It turned off quite cool that evening toward sunset, a stiff breeze blowing up the river, snapping the flag at the top of the pole and sending the smoke from the stove swirling away in sudden gusts. They lighted the camp-fire early and, although the "dining-room" was sometimes invaded by choking gray fumes that made them cough and set their eyes to smarting, the warmth was grateful. Scarcely had the things been cleared up when there came a mighty hail from Inner Beach:

"Hello, the camp!"

They answered, and the big form of the Floating Artist, as Chub insisted on calling him, arose into sight over the bank, looking bigger than ever against the golden haze of sunset. Jack was with him, trotting demurely at his heels. Of course Snip was thrown into a fit of terrible excitement and had to dance around and bark wildly for the ensuing minute. But at last order was restored in camp, Snip silenced, Mr. Cole installed on an empty box that creaked loudly whenever he moved, and Jack was lying at Harry's side with his head in her lap.

"Well, you're pretty comfortably settled here," said Mr. Cole. "And I suppose you're having a grand time."

"Yes, sir," answered Roy, "we've had a good deal of fun so far."

"Got a launch, too, I see; and a rowboat and a canoe. Quite a

navy at your command."

"The launch belongs to Dick," said Chub. "The canoe is mine and the skiff belongs to the school. The launch is named the *Pup*."

"The *Pup*?" laughed their guest. "How'd you happen to think of that?" Dick explained and the artist was vastly amused.

"Well," he said, "if I followed your method my boat would be called the *Great Silence*, I guess."

"Won't the engine go yet?" asked Dick solicitously.

"Oh, I haven't tried it since morning. I don't like to hurry it. I think, though, that I'll stay here a day or so. I've found some nice bits that I'd like to try my hand at."

"Do you paint landscapes?" asked Harry.

"Mostly, yes; figures now and then. Landscape is my line, but I'd rather do figures; I guess it's human nature to always want to do something you can't. And that reminds me," he turned to Harry, "you look like an amiable young lady. Suppose, now, you should sit for me a little while to-morrow. What do you say? It won't be difficult, you know. Just sit kind of still for—hem—an hour. I'd be awfully much obliged, really."

"Sit for you?" stammered Harry. "Do you mean that you want to *paint* me!"

"Exactly. Sounds a bit alarming, does it?"

"N-no," answered Harry, "only—"

"I know," laughed the artist. "You haven't anything to wear.

Isn’t that it?” Harry’s silence gave assent.

“Well, now, I’d like you to wear just what you’ve got on.” He paused and eyed her critically. “Never mind a hat. I want that glorious hair of yours, Miss Emery. And—let me see—if you have a bit of blue ribbon at home you might just tie it around your waist. What do you say, now? Yes, I hope.”

Harry was much too delighted to speak, but the others mistook the emotion.

“Oh, go ahead, Harry,” said Roy. “I’d like to see a picture of you.”

“Sure,” chimed in Chub. “And maybe if it’s awfully good we’ll buy it for the camp.”

“There’ll be refreshments in case you get hungry,” said the artist smilingly. “Let me see, what do young ladies like? Candy, of course, and—hum—pickled limes and gingerbread.”

Harry giggled nervously.

“I don’t like pickled limes,” she said.

“All the better, for I haven’t any. How about gingerbread?”

Harry shook her head.

“No? Then it will have to be candy. I can manage that, I guess. It’s all settled, then, is it?”

“If you want me,” answered Harry shyly.

“Of course I do! And what time, now? Morning? Afternoon? Morning would be better for me; the light’s clearer. What do you say to ten to-morrow forenoon, Miss Emery?”

Harry nodded.

“Very well, and thank you. I’ll expect you then at ten o’clock. If you like you may bring one of these young gentlemen with you, but we don’t want a crowd, do we?”

“I guess I’d rather not have any one, if it doesn’t matter,” answered Harry.

“Isn’t she tight?” cried Chub. “She’s afraid we’ll get some of the candy! If she backs down, Mr. Cole, I’ll sit for you any time.”

“Ho, ho!” laughed the artist. “You like candy, too, do you? Well, there’ll be enough for all. The rest of you can happen around when the sitting’s over.”

There was a noise in the woods and Billy Noon appeared and joined the circle around the fire. As he came into the light the artist exclaimed:

“Well, well! Where’d you come from, Noon?”

Chub turned in time to see Billy press a finger swiftly against his lips.

“Eh?” said Mr. Cole. “Oh, yes—er—well, I didn’t expect to come across you up here on this desert island.” The two shook hands, as Billy replied:

“Guess I didn’t expect to see you, sir. In your boat, are you?”

“Yes, in the old *Jolly Roger*.”

“Chub turned in time to see Billy press a finger swiftly against his lips”

“I see,” said Billy as he found a seat. “You’ve changed her name and her paint, haven’t you?”

“Oh, plenty of times since you saw her last,” was the reply. “Let’s see, she was the *Ark*, then, wasn’t she?”

"No, sir, the *Greased Lightning*."

"To be sure, so she was. That was when she was ultramarine and sulphur yellow: Well, she's had many names since then, and many colors. You ought to have seen her when she was *Joseph's Coat*; she was striped then with six colors and very effective. At one place I stopped they wanted to arrest me for disturbing the peace." And the artist laid back his head and laughed uproariously in his deep voice.

"I saw her lying at the island this morning," said Billy, "and I thought that she looked something like your boat, but the difference in the name and the painting misled me."

"Naturally, although you ought to be able to penetrate a disguise, Noon. I mean that you ought to have remembered her graceful lines. I was telling these chaps this afternoon that I wanted to get rid of her now, for I've tried about every combination of colors I can think of, and I'm running out of names as well."

"How would the *Keep Mum* do for a name?" asked Billy carelessly.

"Eh? Oh, well, it might," answered the artist thoughtfully, eying Billy across the firelight. "By the way, what are you doing now?"

"I've got a bit of a boat with a sail in it, and I'm going down the river in the interests of Billings's 'Wonders of the Deep,'" answered Billy. The artist chuckled.

"Let's see," he said, "the last time I saw you you were buying old furniture, weren't you? Ever do any of that sort of thing now?"

“I’m doing a little on the side,” was the reply. “Had a pleasant summer, Mr. Cole?”

“So far, yes, although I’ve been pretty lazy. But then, I generally am lazy. Miss Emery here has just consented to pose for me to-morrow. I’ve got a little sketch in mind that ought to turn out well.” He half closed his eyes, cocked his head on one side and studied Harry for a moment, a proceeding which brought the color into her cheeks and caused Chub to grin maliciously. Billy asked the boys what they had been doing to-day and they gave him a history of events. Harry reminded Roy in a whisper that they were to invite the Poet and the Artist to supper Thursday, and Roy promptly issued the invitations. To Chub’s surprise Billy accepted at once, as did the artist.

“It’s some time, though,” the latter added, “since I’ve attended a birthday celebration, and I don’t know whether I’ll behave myself.”

“We’ll risk that,” laughed Dick. “It won’t be very much of an affair, sir; just some supper here in camp, you know. Harry’s going to hold her real celebration at home in the afternoon.”

“I see. Well, now, look here, boys! I don’t want to upset any plans, but the fact is that I was thinking about having you all on board the *Roger* some evening while I’m here. And as I don’t suppose I’ll remain here more than two or three days, why can’t we lump the thing and hold the celebration on the boat? You bring your things and I’ll supply the rest, and we can do the cooking in my galley. Now, what do you say?”

The boys hesitated, but Harry clapped her hands in delighted approval.

“That would be dandy!” she cried. “Let’s do that, Dick! Do you mind?”

“No, I think it would be very nice,” answered Dick. And so it was arranged that on Thursday afternoon Dick was to bring their share of the feast to the *Jolly Roger*, and as chef, was to take charge of the preparation of the feast. Presently Mr. Cole rose to leave.

“By the way, Noon,” he said, “you’re a sort of Jack-of-all-trades. Know anything about gasolene engines?”

“He knows all about them, sir,” answered Dick.

“Does, eh? Well, then supposing you walk back to the boat with me and look over mine, Noon? It hasn’t been acting quite fair lately. I don’t mind its stopping now and then for a day or so, but it’s been overdoing it recently; it’s been imposing on me.”

So the Floating Artist and the Licensed Poet took their departure, followed by Jack. When they were gone Harry turned to the boys.

“Why do you suppose he wants to paint me?” she cried breathlessly.

“Well,” answered Roy judicially, “you know you’re not half bad looking, Harry.”

“Pshaw!” exclaimed Chub. “It’s a case of love at first sight. He just wants an excuse to see her. Oh, look at Harry’s blushes, fellows!”

“I’m not blushing!” cried Harry, with a stamp of her foot.

“Oh, of course not,” answered Chub, “it’s just the light from

the fire!”

“You’re terribly fickle, though,” teased Dick. “A few days ago it was the Licensed Poet, and now—”

“Harry’s a patron of the arts,” laughed Roy. “She won’t look at us pretty soon.”

“I,” declared Chub, “shall learn to sculp.”

“Learn what?” asked Roy.

“Learn to sculp; to be a sculptor, you ninny. That’s an art, isn’t it?”

“Not the way you’d do it,” answered Roy unkindly. “It would be a crime. Say, I thought you said Billy wouldn’t accept for Thursday.”

“I didn’t say he wouldn’t accept,” Chub replied. “I said I didn’t think he’d be able to.”

“Well, what’s the difference?” asked Dick jeeringly.

“If you don’t know I shan’t tell you,” answered Chub with intense dignity. “Come on and get the canoe, Roy. This young artist’s model must go home and get her beauty-sleep.”

Harry, who for several minutes had been sitting chin in hand staring into the fire, roused herself.

“I think,” she remarked dreamily, half to herself, “that I’ll wear the gold brooch Aunt Harriet gave me for Christmas.”

When they were getting ready for bed Dick said suddenly:

“I’d like to know who the dickens this Billy Noon is! Where do you suppose the painter chap got to know him?”

“Oh, that’s easy,” yawned Chub. “It was when Billy was

with the circus. Mr. Cole was the elephant.”

CHAPTER XVII

HARRY SITS FOR HER PICTURE

When Harry reached the *Jolly Roger* the next forenoon Jack arose from his place on the sunny deck and walked forward to meet her, wagging his tail in cordial welcome. As she spoke to him Mr. Cole heard her voice and put his head out of one of the studio windows.

"Good morning," he said. "Come aboard. I'm just getting my things ready."

From the stern of the boat she saw that the little cedar tender was floating in the water at the end of its painter and that the oars which lay across the seats were still wet. Evidently the artist had been out rowing.

"I'm going to ask you to sit up top," said Mr. Cole, emerging from the studio with an easel tucked under one arm and a paint-box in his hand. "It'll be cooler there, I guess, and the light's better than down here." He led the way up the steps and Harry followed. "Now just make yourself comfortable for a moment, please. You'll find that big rocker fairly easy, and there are some magazines on the table. I'll be back in a minute."

He swung himself down the steps in two strides, and Harry heard him singing to himself in his mellow bass as he moved about underneath. Obediently she picked up a magazine from the willow table and perched herself in the big green rocker, but it was far more interesting to look around her than to study

the pages of the magazine. It was so pretty up here. The bright rugs underfoot echoed the colors of the blossoms in the boxes around the edge. The faded awning overhead filtered the ardent sunlight to a soft, mellow glow. Framed by the flowers and the fluttering scallops of the canopy was a picture of blue water aglint in the sunlight, a purple-shadowed shore and a green hill arising to the fleece-flecked sky. It promised to be a very warm day, but as yet the morning breeze still stole up the river. The door of the little pilot-house was open and Harry could see the steering-wheel with its brass hub and rim, a little shelf of folded charts and several gleaming brass switches and pulls which she supposed connected with the engine-room. At that moment the artist climbed the stairs again, a clean creamy-white canvas and a bunch of brushes in one hand and a white box in the other. He handed the box to Harry.

"I pay in advance, you see," he said smilingly.

"Oh," said Harry in concern, as she opened the box and glanced at the name on the lid, "you had to go 'way down to the Cove for this! You oughtn't to have done that, Mr. Cole!"

"What? Why, it's no more than a mile, I'm sure; just a nice after-breakfast row. I enjoyed it, really. But I'm afraid the candy isn't very good. However, you probably know what to expect; you doubtless know all about Silver Cove confectionery."

As he talked he set up his easel at one side of the deck, got out his palette and began to squeeze wonderful blots of color on to it.

"It's very nice candy," answered Harry earnestly. "Won't—won't you have some?"

Mr. Cole glanced at his hands, the fingers of which were already stained with paint, and hesitated. Then:

“Suppose you feed me a piece,” he said. He came over to her and leaned down with his mouth open.

“What do you like,” laughed Harry.

“Oh, something with nuts in it, I guess,” he replied.

“Well, I think there’s a nut in this, but I’m not sure.” She popped a chocolate into the open mouth and watched anxiously while he bit into it. After a moment of suspense he nodded his head vigorously.

“Right,” he said, returning to his palette. “That was a good guess. Do you know, I think they ought to mark the pieces that have nuts in them so we could tell, don’t you?”

Harry said she thought that was a very good plan, the while she cuddled the big four-pound box to her and munched happily at a nougat. It was very interesting to see the paint come squirming out of the tubes. Each succeeding tube was a new surprise. She wondered why he needed so many, many colors to paint her since she was all in white save for the tan shoes and stockings and the dainty blue ribbon at her waist. Then, as a flash of orange vermilion joined the other mounds of color, she wondered in consternation whether that was for her hair! Presently the palette was set, the canvas on the easel and all in readiness. Then the artist stood up and looked at his model. Harry began to feel nervous. Maybe she wasn’t as pret—well, as nice looking this morning! Maybe he was disappointed in her! Oh, he was, for he was frowning!

“My dear child,” he said, “what have you done to your hair?”

“N-nothing,” faltered Harry. “At least, I just put it up in a different way. Mama thought it would look nicer. She says I always have my hair so untidy. So I—I made it neat. Don’t you like it?”

“Yes, indeed,” he answered heartily, “it looks very nice that way, but for my purpose the other way was the better. You know, artists are strange persons with unaccountable tastes. I don’t suppose you could rearrange it, could you, as you wore it yesterday?”

“Oh, yes, I can; that is, I could if I had another ribbon. I guess you wouldn’t have one, would you?”

“What kind of a ribbon?” he asked.

“Oh, just any old ribbon would do; just to tie around the end, you know.”

“Well, now you run down and skirmish around. Maybe you’ll find something. How would a ribbon off one of the curtains in the sitting-room do? They’re white, but that wouldn’t matter to me.”

So Harry disappeared for a few minutes, and when she returned her beautiful coronet was gone and her hair was once more down her back in two shimmering red-gold braids.

“That’s more like it,” said Mr. Cole. “Now, if you’ll just sit here in this chair. That’s it. Could you turn your head a little more toward the side? Just make believe that you are very much interested in something that’s going on across the river. That’s it! Fine! Just hold it that way for a few minutes; not too stiff, or you’ll tire the muscles. Now the hands—there, just folded loosely in the lap. That’s stunning! Hm!” He backed away toward his easel, observing her through half-closed eyes.

“Now you must forgive me if I’m not very entertaining, for I’m liable to forget my duties as host when I get at work. But you might talk to me, if you like, and tell me about yourself. I suppose you have a pretty good time living at a big boys’ school as you do?”

His voice trailed off into a murmur and Harry could hear the soft sound of the charcoal on the canvas, although, as her head was turned away, she could not see the rapid, deft strokes of his hand. It wasn’t hard for Harry to talk, and here was a fine opportunity. So she made the most of it for some little time, the artist throwing in an occasional word or question which, if not always especially apropos, encouraged the sitter to continue. But finally Harry noticed that the replies had ceased and so she allowed the one-sided conversation to lapse. She was getting rather tired of looking at the shore, across the dazzling river, and her neck was beginning to feel stiff; also her hands simply wouldn’t keep still in her lap. Unconsciously she emitted a deep sigh and the man at the easel heard it, looked up quickly, smiled, and:

Harry sitting for her portrait

“Rest, please,” he said. “Walk around a minute and have some more candy.”

“Could I see it?” asked Harry as she obeyed. But the artist shook his head.

“There’s nothing to see yet,” he replied. “You’d be disappointed and perhaps throw up your job or demand higher wages. Wait until the sitting’s over.”

As he talked and as Harry strolled around the deck, not forgetting to return at frequent intervals to the box on the table, he worked on at the canvas, shooting little glances at her and painting rapidly.

“I’m rested now,” said Harry presently. “Shall I sit down again?”

“Please, and take the same position. That’s it, only please lean the body a little further back. Thank you. Just a little while longer now.”

Then silence fell over the *Jolly Roger* again, broken by the movements of the painter or the lazy stirring of Jack on the deck below. The sun crept upward and the heat grew. After all, reflected Harry, it wasn’t such good fun, this sitting for your picture! She knew she would have a headache pretty soon if he didn’t let her go. She wished Roy and Dick and Chub would come, as they had promised, and set her free. She closed her tired eyes against the blur of the sunlit water, but:

“The eyes, please, Miss Emery,” said the artist. “Thank you.”

Another period of silence, and then:

“There!” said Mr. Cole. “That’ll do for this time. Would you like to see it now?”

Harry stared at the canvas in bewilderment. The picture wasn’t at all as she had expected to find it. There she sat in a green willow chair, to be sure, and there was the river beyond

and the shore beyond that, but the green chair had turned very dark, the river was a radiant, magical blue and the woods on the shore were just a lot of broad blue-green brush-strokes. As for herself—well, it wasn't finished yet, as the painter reminded her, but if she looked anything like the girl on the canvas she would be happy for ever and ever! And if her hair was anywhere near as beautiful as that golden-red mass she would never be dissatisfied with it again as long as she lived! Mr. Cole watched her amusedly as she stood in rapt contemplation of the picture with the color heightening in her soft cheeks. Perhaps he guessed her thoughts, for:

"I'm afraid I haven't done full justice to my subject," he said, "but the next sitting will remedy that somewhat. The detail comes later, you know. You're not disappointed, I trust?"

"Disappointed!" breathed Harry. "I think it's beautiful! Only —only—" she paused, "I suppose artists are like photographers, aren't they? I mean that they sort of change things to suit themselves?"

"Change things? Oh, yes, sometimes; that is, we idealize things. What are you thinking of, the water?"

"Yes, and—"

"I deepened it a few shades. It throws out the figure, you see. Observe how the white gown stands out against it."

"Ye-es," said Harry, "and I daresay you have to flatter folks too, don't you? Idealize them, I mean."

"Sometimes, but not on this occasion," replied the artist smilingly. Harry gave a gasp.

“Do you mean,” she cried, turning to him with wide eyes, “that I really look like that?”

“Well, as near as I could do it, young lady, I put you into that picture just as you are. I hope I haven’t made you vain?”

But Harry was looking raptly at the picture again. Presently:

“Yes, I guess it’s me,” she sighed, coming out of her trance, “for there’s my horrid little snub nose!”

“A very interesting nose,” replied the artist. “Not classic, perhaps, but human. And put there, I fancy, for a good purpose.”

“What?” asked Harry.

“To keep you from getting over-vain,” was the response. “Ah, here come your squires.”

The *Pup* came chugging alongside and Dick gave a hail. Harry and Mr. Cole went to the railing.

“Come aboard,” cried the artist. “Hitch your steed and come up, and let’s have your judgment on the picture.”

A moment later they were all clustered about the canvas, emitting various exclamations of admiration. It was Chub who finally summed up the sentiments of the three in one terse sentence.

“It’s a James Dandy!” he said emphatically.

“Do you think—it looks much like me?” asked Harry with elaborate carelessness. Chub grinned at her.

“Well, it’s got your nose,” he answered.

Harry’s mouth drooped until Roy cut in with an indignant:

“Don’t you mind him, Harry. It’s a bully likeness. I’d know it anywhere!”

“So would I,” said Dick. “Chub’s just teasing.” And Chub owned up that he was.

“Say, don’t you love the colors, though?” asked Roy eagerly. “Why, that blue looks good enough to eat!” He turned toward the artist with a new respect. “I guess you’re a cracker-jack, sir.”

“Oh, you’re all too flattering,” laughed Mr. Cole. “You’ll never make art critics of yourselves unless you restrain your enthusiasm. I will acknowledge, though, that I’ve been rather successful with this; it’s one of the best figure studies I’ve ever done; and much of my success has been due to my subject who proved quite a model model, if I may use such an expression.”

Harry smiled shyly and recollecting the candy, passed it around.

“Me, I don’t care for any,” said Chub as he scooped up a handful. Then they sat down and had a nice cozy talk up there on the roof-deck, and ate candy to their hearts’—or rather their stomachs’—content. Presently Chub asked:

“Wasn’t it funny, Mr. Cole, that you should meet Billy Noon here?”

“Why, yes, it was,” was the answer. “Still, Noon’s the sort of a chap that you’re likely to come across in strange places and when you least expect to.”

“Have you known him long?” asked Chub in politely conversational tones. The artist suppressed a smile.

“For several years,” he replied.

“He seems to have tried all sorts of trades,” continued Chub, nothing daunted. “He says he’s been a dentist, a clown in a circus, a sleight-of-hand performer, a ventriloquist, a—a—”

“Book agent,” prompted Dick.

“Engineer,” supplied Roy.

“Yes,” Chub went on, “and a poet.”

“Indeed,” laughed the artist, “I’d never heard of that. How did you find that out?”

So Chub told him about the missing bread and butter and the verses substituted, about the fish and the poem written on birch bark, and so worked around to Billy’s experience with the Great Indian Chief Medicine Company.

“Well, he’s tried his hand at lots of things,” said Mr. Cole, “and strangely enough he does everything well. I haven’t any doubt but that if I could persuade Noon to take the *Roger* to sell for me he’d find a buyer inside of a week.”

“Couldn’t you?” asked Dick. The artist shook his head.

“I’m afraid not,” he answered. “He’s a pretty busy person.”

“But I should think it would pay him better than selling books,” Chub insisted. Mr. Cole smiled mysteriously.

“Noon’s book-selling is a bigger thing than you think,” he replied.

CHAPTER XVIII
THE STORM

"Chub!

"Chub!!

"CHU-U-UB!!!"

"Eh?" asked Chub drowsily.

"Get up; it's after eight o'clock," said Roy.

"Pull the bedclothes off of him," counseled a voice outside the tent which Chub, just dropping back to slumber, recognized as belonging to Dick.

"Can't," Roy answered. "He's kicked them on to the floor. Chub, you lazy duffer, get up! Do you hear? We're eating breakfast."

"Then it's too late," murmured Chub serenely. "Call me before lunch."

"He won't get up, Dick," announced Roy. "You'd better come."

"No!" yelled the tardy one, jumping as though a yellow-jacket had wandered into bed with him. "I'm up, Dick, honest! Ain't I, Roy?"

"You're half up," was the answer. "I want to see you all up before I leave."

"All right." Chub stretched his arms above his head, yawned

and stumbled to his feet. “What time did you say it was?”

“About ten minutes after eight.”

“Phew! Don’t it get late early? I did sleep, didn’t I? Go ahead and eat, Roy, I’ll be out in two shakes of a lamb’s tail. My, but I’m sleepy! Say, what time was it when we got to bed last night, anyway?”

“A little after eleven.”

“Is that all? I thought it must have been about one. These parties are very unsettling affairs. Say, but wasn’t Billy funny with his imitations?”

“He surely was,” answered Roy, smiling reminiscently. “We had a lot of fun, didn’t we?”

“Well, rather! And can’t that Floating Artist sing, what? Say, if I had a voice like that I’d never do a lick of work!”

“I haven’t noticed that you are killing yourself with labor,” answered Roy as he moved toward the door of the tent. Chub reached for a shoe, but Roy was gone before he got his hand on it. So he sat down again on the side of his bunk and thought of some of the funny things that Billy Noon had said last evening and grinned and chuckled all to himself until a little breeze came frolicking in through the door bringing a fragrant aroma of coffee. Then Chub came back to earth and tumbled feverishly into his clothes.

Harry was to sit again for the Floating Artist at ten o’clock and so was not coming over to the camp for breakfast. Besides, as to-morrow was Thursday, Harry had much to do in regard to her birthday party at the Cottage, and Fox Island was not likely to see much of her before Thursday evening at seven, at which

hour the celebration on board the *Jolly Roger* was to commence. After breakfast Dick made a bee-line for his paint-pots and brushes, and it took all Chub's and Roy's diplomacy to restrain him from going to work again on the *Pup*.

"Honest, Dick," said Chub, "there's too much to do to-day and to-morrow for us to start messing with paint. Wait until after Harry's birthday, like a good chap."

"What is there to do to-day?" demanded Dick.

"Why," answered Chub, "we—er—why, we've got to go to the Cove to buy provisions for one thing, and—"

"We can get those to-morrow just as well."

"But think of the time it will take to finish that painting," begged Roy. "We've got to find another rock and lug it out there first."

"Yes, and there'll be only you and Roy to do the painting," said Chub, "because I'll have to sit on the gunwale to heel her over so as you can reach the bottom; and that means an all-day job."

"Oh, if you fellows don't want to help," said Dick with dignity, "I guess I can get it done somehow."

"But we do want to help," answered Chub eagerly. "That's just it, don't you see? That's why we want you to wait until we can all take a hand at it. When Harry's here, you see, I can paint too, because she will do the heavyweight act for us."

"Oh, thunder!" muttered Dick, half laughing, half scowling, "you fellows are a pair of squealers, that's what you are! Hang it, I'll never get the launch finished!"

“Oh, yes, you will,” said Chub soothingly. “Besides, what if you don’t? I should think you’d be proud to have the only half-and-half boat on the Hudson River!”

They went in bathing instead, managing to kill the better part of two hours in that occupation. They didn’t go far up Inner Beach for fear of disturbing Mr. Cole, who, with Harry, was plainly to be seen on the roof-deck of the house-boat. But about noon, having dressed themselves, they walked up there. The sitting was over and the picture practically finished, although the artist explained that there was a little more to be done to it.

“But he doesn’t want me to sit any more,” said Harry, almost regretfully.

“No, that isn’t necessary,” replied Mr. Cole. “The rest can be done any time.”

“If I had money enough I’d buy that picture,” declared Chub. “I think it’s dandy. I suppose you get a good deal for one like that?”

“Well, that won’t be sold, I guess. If it should, though, I’d want about three hundred for it.”

Chub’s eyes hung out of his head.

“Three hundred!” he gasped. Then, fearing that the artist would think him discourteous, he added: “I—I guess that’s pretty reasonable.”

Mr. Cole laughed. “Well, I don’t think it exorbitant,” he said. “I’ve seen a much smaller canvas than that sell for four thousand.”

“Guess I’ll be an artist,” said Chub with a helpless shake of

his head. “Want to give me lessons, sir?”

“Hardly,” was the reply. “I don’t think you would ever make a Sargent or a Chase; do you?”

“Sure,” answered Chub with assurance. “If I learned how I could make them.”

When the rest had stopped laughing Roy said:

“We’re going to Silver Cove after dinner, Mr. Cole, and we thought maybe you’d like to come along and have a sail in the *Pup*.”

“I’d like to first rate,” said the artist, “but I’m going to be busy this afternoon. I’m sorry. Perhaps you’ll let me come some other time, boys.” They assured him that they would be glad to have him whenever it suited him to go, and then they took their departure, Harry accompanying them after a final look at the picture.

“Well,” said Dick as they walked back to camp along the beach, “I suppose you’re feeling pretty stuck-up, Harry, since you’ve had your picture painted by a real artist.”

“And a Floating Artist at that,” added Chub. But Harry shook her head soberly.

“It must be beautiful,” she said softly and wistfully, “to be able to paint pictures like that!”

“That’s so,” agreed Chub vigorously. “I used to think that an artist chap must be a sort of a sissy; I knew one once: I told you about him, remember? I never thought that sitting down and painting pictures of things on pieces of canvas was a decent job for a full-grown man. But I do now, by jove! A chap must have a whole lot of—of *goodness*, don’t you think,

fellows, to do a thing like that picture of Harry?"

"I should think so," answered Roy. "Painting a thing like that seems to me like composing a wonderful poem or writing a fine piece of music, eh?"

"You bet!" said Chub. "But I'd rather be a painter than a poet any old day."

"You're like Harry," laughed Dick. "She prefers painters to poets, too, nowadays."

"Harry's fickle," said Chub.

But Harry seemed to be in a strangely chastened mood and paid no heed to their insinuations. After dinner they took her across to the Ferry Hill landing in the canoe. A pile of big purple clouds had formed in the west above the distant hills and already the thunder was muttering along the horizon and flashes of lightning were appearing behind the ragged edges of the clouds.

"We're going to get that sure," said Dick, who was the weather-wise member of the party. "You'd better hurry back, you fellows."

They did, sending the canoe up-stream with long racing strokes of the paddles. But already the big drops were popping down upon the leaves and a little wind was moaning through the woods as they landed.

"No launch sail this afternoon," said Dick aggrievedly.

"No," answered Roy. "It's the tent for us, I guess. Wish there was something to do besides play cards and read."

"We can write letters," suggested Chub virtuously, and the

others laughed consumedly.

"I tell you what, fellows," said Dick a moment later, while they were tightening the guy-ropes around the tent. "Mr. Cole told us to come over there whenever we wanted to. Let's go now. Shall we?"

"He said he was going to be busy, didn't he?" asked Roy.

"Yes, but he said before that we wouldn't bother him. Let's go!" And Chub tossed his cap into the tent, ready for a dash along the beach.

"All right," said Roy. "We can keep quiet and read. I saw some dandy books there the other day."

"Last man there's a chump!" bawled Chub as, having already taken a good lead, he darted off toward the beach. The others followed and the three raced along in the rain, which was now coming down in torrents, and reached the *Jolly Roger* side by side. A door was thrown open and the smiling face of the artist greeted them.

"In with you!" he cried to an accompaniment of delighted barks from Jack, and they found themselves in the studio, panting and laughing and dripping. "Just in time," said their host as he put his weight against the door and swung it shut. As if in explanation, a sudden gust of wind burst against the boat, making the windows rattle in their frames and the timbers creak. With the wind came a blinding wall of rain that darkened the little room as though sudden twilight had fallen. The great drops ran down the panes in tiny rivulets and on the island side it was impossible to see a thing. The sound of wind and rain was for a moment deafening. Then the wind died down for a moment and a mighty crash of thunder sent Jack

cowering to his master.

“Glad I’m on the leeward side of this island of yours,” said the artist. “It must be pretty rough on the other side.”

“Gee!” exclaimed Chub. “The tent, fellows!”

They looked at each other in consternation. Then Dick whistled, Roy smiled, and Chub burst into a peal of laughter.

“I’ll bet a hat it’s gone home,” he said. “The wind would just about carry it toward the boat-house.”

“Oh, maybe it hasn’t any more than blown down,” said Dick. “We made those ropes good and tight. I’ll bet our things will be good and soppy, though.”

“And I left my bag open!” mourned Chub.

“Well, there’s no use in worrying,” said Mr. Cole cheerfully. “Get your wet coats off, boys. You don’t want to catch cold!”

“I’m afraid we’re disturbing you,” said Roy glancing at a canvas on the easel.

“Not you, the storm,” was the answer. “I can’t work in this light. Suppose we go forward to the sitting-room and make ourselves comfortable?”

He led the way through the engine-room, remarking as they passed the engine: “Noon fixed her up for me the other day and I guess she’s all ready to move on when I am.” In the sitting-room Chub went to a window on the river side.

“Gee,” he exclaimed, “I never saw the Inner Channel cutting up like this! Come, look, Roy.”

It certainly did look tempestuous. The shore was almost

hidden in the smother of rain. The river which an hour before had been like a mill-pond, was a gray-green waste of tumbling waves.

"I wouldn't care to go out there in the canoe now," said Roy.

"We might have some music," observed Mr. Cole, "but I don't believe we could much more than hear it." As though to prove the truth of his assertion there came a dazzling flash of lightning and a burst of thunder that shook the boat until the china danced on the kitchen shelves.

"*Thunder!*" exclaimed Chub involuntarily.

"And lightning," added Dick.

"Well," said Mr. Cole, "find seats, boys, and be as comfortable as you can. This can't last very long; it's too severe. As long as the cables hold us to the shore we're all right."

Roy and Dick settled themselves on the window-seat, but for Chub the seething expanse of troubled water held a fascination and he remained at the window watching. Jack had crawled between his master's knees and placed his head in his lap, trembling and glancing about affrightedly.

"Poor old boy," said the artist, patting the dog's head, "thunder just about scares him to death, doesn't it, Jack?"

At that instant there was a sharp cry from Chub, and as the others sprang to their feet he turned a pale, excited face toward them.

"Look!" he cried. "There! It's a boat bottom-up with a man clinging to it! Can you see?"

“Yes,” they answered, and for a moment they were silent while the wind and rain roared outside and the capsized boat tossed heavily between the waves.

“The wind will drive him on shore if he can hold on,” said Roy. But there was little conviction in his tones.

“Not with that current,” answered Chub hoarsely. “He’s going down-stream fast. When I first saw him he was fifty yards further up.”

“Haven’t you a boat?” demanded Dick eagerly of Mr. Cole.

“Yes,” replied that gentleman calmly and thoughtfully, “but it’s just a cockle-shell and hard to row. There’s no use in thinking of that.”

“But we can’t let him drown!” cried Chub.

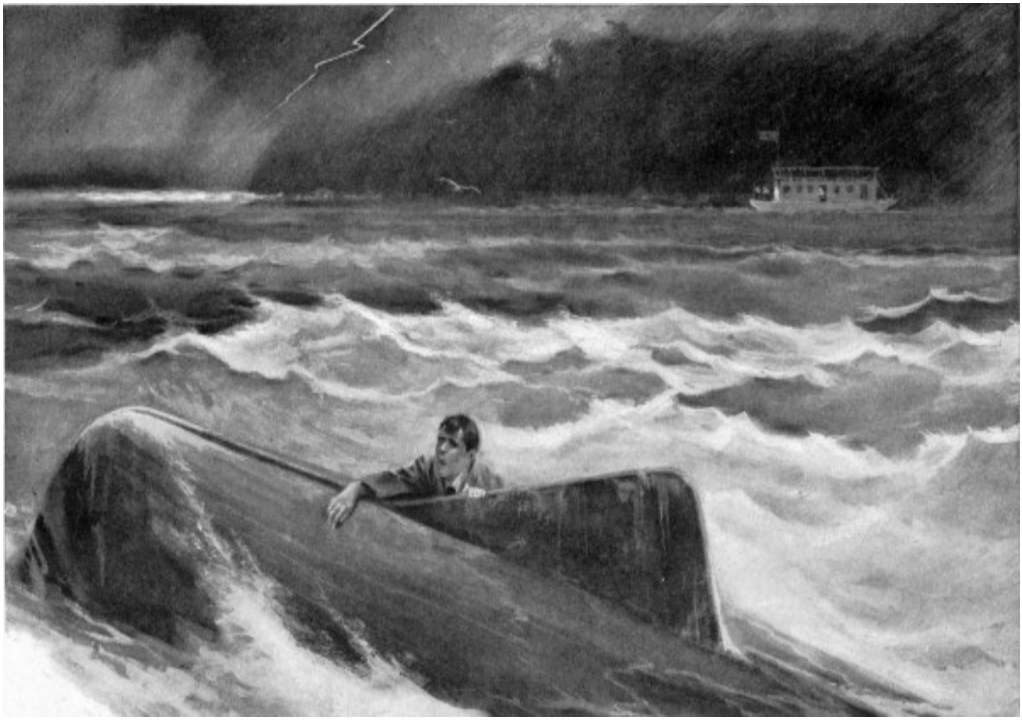
“No,” answered the artist. “We can’t do that. One of you look in the locker in the engine-room and bring me the coil of rope you’ll find there.”

Roy darted away in obedience.

“What are you going to do?” asked Dick.

“Swim out to him,” was the reply. Mr. Cole was already shedding his outer clothes. “Do you know who he is?”

They shook their heads.



“‘It’s a boat bottom-up with a man clinging to it!’”

“I can’t see,” said Chub. “But he’s having a hard time staying there, I can tell that. The waves are going over him every minute. Do you think you can get to him, sir? Wouldn’t you like me to go along? I’m a pretty fairish swimmer, sir.”

“Let me go!” cried Roy, hurrying back with the big coil of half-inch rope. But Mr. Cole shook his head as he took the rope and tied it under his armpits.

“One’s enough,” he answered. “You keep this end of the rope and when you think best—haul in hard.” He took a final look out of the window at the tossing boat and went to the door and flung it open. The wind and rain burst in upon them, making them gasp. Mr. Cole turned to Dick.

“Hold the dog,” he shouted. “He may try to follow. Pay out the rope as long as you can, boys. If it won’t reach, let go of it

and I’ll try to make the end of the island. All right.”

He raised his arms and plunged far out into the tossing water.

CHAPTER XIX
THE RESCUE

There was a moment of suspense for those on the deck of the house-boat. Then a brown head arose from the water fully twenty feet away, and a powerful arm followed it, and with long, swift strokes the artist headed toward the overturned boat on his mission of rescue. His task was not a difficult one for a good swimmer, as he at once proved himself, as long as he was going with the wind behind him and the current partly in his favor. The water was terribly rough, but as he swam low anyhow, with his face under the surface more than half the time, that didn't matter very much. The difficult work would begin when, with the rescued man in tow, he faced wind and current to regain the island.

The boys watched eagerly and silently. Dick had shut Jack inside the cabin and his dismal howls arose above the roar of the wind. Roy, with the coil of rope in his hand, fought his way to the bow, for the capsized boat had already drifted past them and it was a question whether the rope would prove long enough. The rain had almost ceased, but the wind still blew violently, although here, in the lee of the island, it was less intense than it was out in the channel.

"Wonder how long the rope is," said Chub anxiously as he looked at the lessening coil on the deck. Roy shook his head.

"Too short, I'm afraid," he answered. "Can you see him now?" Chub answered no, but Dick pointed him out, a darker speck on the dark, tossing water, almost up to the boat. Boat

and swimmer, borne by the current, which was always strong in the narrow inner channel, had passed the center of the island and in another moment or two would be abreast of the camp.

"Let's get off of here," cried Dick, "and go on down the beach. That rope will never reach from here."

It was true, for already the last coil passed into Roy's hands.

"Is he there yet?" he asked.

"No, twenty feet this side, I'd say," shouted Dick, who had climbed part way up the steps to the roof-deck. "If we go down the beach, though, the rope will be plenty long enough."

But there remained but a scant five feet of rope and to reach the shore without letting go of it would necessitate hauling it in.

"We ought to have done it before," muttered Chub. But Dick was equal to the emergency.

"Here," he cried, "let me have it."

He took a turn with it about his waist and, just as he was, minus only his coat, he jumped off the stern of the boat, swam two or three strokes and then, finding his feet, stumbled up the beach where Roy and Chub had hurried around to reach him.

"Don't feel much wetter than I did before," he said as they hurried along in the teeth of the wind, pulling in the slack of the rope. In another moment Roy gave a cry and began to pull hard.

"He's got him," he said. "Lend a hand and pull like anything!"

They did, but presently the rope grew taut and came very

unwillingly. With two men at the other end and wind and tide both striving to defeat them it was a veritable tug-of-war. But foot by foot the line came in, wet and dripping, as the three boys dug their heels into the yielding sand and put weight and muscle into the task.

“There they are,” muttered Dick in a moment. “I can see them. They’re almost into the calm water.”

And then the rope came easier, and presently, with Chub and Roy still pulling, Dick sprang out, floundered to his armpits, and relieved the artist of his limp burden. In another moment the rescued man lay on the sand above the water and the artist was throwing off the rope with hurrying fingers. His face was white and his breath came in gasps. But the boys were staring in amazement at the upturned face on the beach.

“Billy Noon!” cried Chub.

“Is he drowned?” asked Roy in a trembling voice.

“No, he’s alive,” answered the artist, “but we’ve got to get him to the boat. Who’ll give me a hand with him?”

“Here,” said Dick, “you let us take him, Mr. Cole. You’ve done enough. He isn’t heavy.”

But he was, for his clothes were sodden with water; and the wind buffeted them at every step. Mr. Cole bore his share of the burden and in a few moments they laid him on the floor of the studio. Pillows from the bedroom were hurriedly brought and the limp body was turned over on them, face downward, while coat and shirt were torn away and the artist’s strong hands manipulated the body. There proved to be but little water in the lungs and so they turned Billy over on his back and placed one of the pillows under his head. Then Roy pumped

the arms up and down as he had learned to do in the foot-ball field while the artist massaged the upper part of the body until the flesh began to glow. The ashen hue of the lips disappeared and a faint spot of color came into each cheek. The breathing, which had been faint and labored, became strong and regular. Mr. Cole brought a flask and pressed a few spoonfuls of spirits between the lips. Then they finished undressing him and all took a hand at bringing warmth back to the chilled body. In another moment the eyelids flickered and opened. Billy looked weakly at Mr. Cole and closed his eyes again.

"He's all right," said the artist heartily.

And Billy proved it by saying something, the sense of which no one gathered, and trying to sit up.

"Here, you stay where you are for a minute," commanded the artist. He brought a big dressing-gown and they rolled Billy up in it. Then they carried him into the bedroom and laid him on the bed, covering him with blankets until Chub feared that they'd go to the other extreme and smother him to death.

"Now you go to sleep," said Mr. Cole, and Billy obeyed like a sleepy child. The others returned to the sitting-room where Jack went into spasms of delight over the return of his master.

"That'll do, old fellow," said the artist, sinking into a chair. "Now you boys had better get dry. I don't want you to catch cold. You," he added to Dick, "look as though you'd been in the water yourself."

They explained the reason and he insisted that Dick should take off his wet garments and dry himself.

"I will if you will," answered Dick.

“Eh? Well, that’s so,” laughed the artist. “I’m not very dry myself, am I? But I’m warm enough, goodness knows. However, it’s a bargain. We’ll get some blankets and towels and go to the studio. I guess the storm’s about over, from the looks.”

And, sure enough, the clouds were breaking and there was even a suggestion of watery sunshine on the opposite hills. The wind had lessened and was now blowing steadily, like a well-behaved westerly gale. Mr. Cole and Dick disappeared and the others found their coats and put them on.

“What do you suppose happened to Billy Noon?” asked Chub.

“I think he was capsized,” answered Roy.

“Smart, aren’t you? I mean, how do you suppose it happened?”

“Search me,” Roy replied. “I thought Billy was a good sailor. I guess we’ll know about after he gets awake. Say, Mr. Cole’s about all right, isn’t he?”

“You bet!” said Chub heartily. “And he’s a dandy swimmer.”

“Let’s go and look at the camp,” Roy suggested presently. “We might as well know the worst.”

So they went, and half way up the beach the sun came forth with a sudden dazzling burst of splendor, lighting the tossing waves and glinting the windows of the school buildings across on the slope of the hill. Evidences of the storm were plentiful. Broken branches strewed the edge of the wood and the beach grass was flattened down. When they left the beach and came

in sight of the camp they gave a shout of surprise and delight. The tent was just as they had left it. Inside, however, things were pretty wet.

"Don't see how we can sleep here to-night," said Roy, feeling the bedding. But Chub was gazing ruefully at his bag which had been left open. He took it outside and spread the contents in the sunlight, such of them as would not blow away. The contents of the larder were in pretty good shape, since 'most everything was kept in tin boxes or pails. Suddenly Chub uttered an exclamation and ran to the beach. Then he gave a sigh of relief. For once the canoe had been left in the cove instead of on Inner Beach, and the worst that the storm had been able to do was to hurl it up against the bank, where, save for a few deep scratches, Chub found it undamaged. The *Pup* was pretty filled with water and had dragged her anchor until she had buried her nose in the sand. The rowboat, which had been left on Inner Beach, had utterly disappeared.

"I guess it's joined Billy's cat-boat," said Chub. "Maybe we'll find it, though."

They spread the bedding and such of their clothing as had got wet out of doors, and trudged back to the *Jolly Roger*, Roy remarking on the way that there wouldn't be much difficulty now in finding firewood. It was after five o'clock by this time. They found Billy, wrapped in a blanket, sitting in a chair in the sitting-room. He had just started his account of the afternoon's adventures as they came in.

"I had been up the river a couple of miles on business," Billy was saying. "When I got back to my boat I noticed some clouds over in the west but didn't think much about them. I'd gone about half a mile or so, with almost no wind, when I saw

that I was in for a squall. I turned and headed for the shore, but the squall struck before I was half way there and so suddenly that I had only started to drop the sail. The *Minerva* went over like a ninepin. I thought she'd float on her side; thought the sail would keep her up; but the canvas must have dropped as she went over, for she just stuck her mast straight down, and the best thing I could find to lay hold of was the center-board. It wasn't so bad for a while, and I thought we'd be driven ashore about a mile up here. But the current got us then and the waves began breaking right over me. I was just about half drowned in five minutes. I remember seeing the end of the island come abreast of me, and after that I guess I didn't know anything. Of course, I'm eternally grateful to you, Mr. Cole; I can't begin to thank you enough. I guess I'd have let go in another minute or so; and I never cared much for drowning. Besides, there's a rather important matter to be settled up before I leave."

"Well, all's well that ends well," said the artist heartily. "Now I'll go and see what there is in the kitchen for five hungry men."

"Oh, we're not going to stay to supper," Dick protested.

But Mr. Cole contradicted him flatly.

"There's no use trying to get anything at your camp," he said. "Why, you haven't any dry wood, for one thing. You stay right where you are. There may not be much of a variety to be had, but I guess there'll be enough."

And there was, and they had a very merry meal, although Billy was rather more quiet than usual. After supper Mr. Cole asked how the boys had found their camp, and it ended with their camping out on the *Jolly Roger* for the night, Billy

sharing Mr. Cole's bed and the three boys occupying the window-seat and a bunk on the floor in the sitting-room.

They awoke late, to find the sun pouring in at the windows and Nature looking as pleasant and tranquil as though yesterday's storm had never been. The first thing after breakfast was to search for the lost boats, and at half-past nine the three boys and Billy set out in the *Pup*. The rowboat was soon located a few hundred yards below the Ferry Hill landing and taken in tow. But the *Minerva* failed to reveal herself for some time.

"Of course," said Billy, "she may have sunk, although I don't quite see how she could."

"I hope not," said Roy. "Did you have much in her?" Billy shook his head.

"No, not much. Just a few clothes and a few books and the can of mushrooms. I guess I'll never eat those mushrooms," he added sadly. Fate proved kind, after all, for they came on the runaway boat about a mile below Silver Cove, stranded in a little natural harbor. They returned to the Cove and Billy went off to find some one to rescue his craft while the others started on a shopping tour. They had lots of things to buy for Harry's birthday supper, for besides their own list Mr. Cole had asked them to bring back supplies for the *Jolly Roger*. It was over an hour before the last purchase had been made. And then, when everything had been stowed aboard the *Pup*, Chub announced the fact that they had neglected to stop at the post-office for their mail. So, while they waited for Billy Noon, he went back uptown. When he returned he wore a long face.

"Bad news?" asked Roy anxiously. Chub nodded.

“I got a letter from dad,” he answered. “He says I must come home.”

“How soon?” asked Dick after a moment of sorrowful silence.

“This week, he says, and here it is Thursday already. The letter was written Monday.”

“By Jove, that’s too bad,” said Roy. “I wonder what made him change his mind.”

“Oh, I know what it means,” said Chub disgustedly. “It means that he can’t find any one to play golf with him, and so he sends for me. He doesn’t mind breaking up *my* fun.”

“Well, I guess that settles camp,” said Roy. “Were there any other letters, Chub?”

“Oh, yes, I beg your pardon, Dick. There’s one for you, from your father.” He took it out of his pocket and handed it across. Dick opened it and ran his eyes quickly down the single sheet of paper.

“Me too!” he cried. “Dad says he’s coming across and I’m to meet him in New York. He sailed three days after he wrote, and he wrote on Saturday week. He’s on his way now, then, and ought to be here next Tuesday.”

“Well, I guess we’ll shut up camp,” laughed Roy.

“It’s mighty mean, though,” said Chub. “Why, we haven’t been here a month yet!”

“Look here, though,” Roy said. “There’s no use in spoiling Harry’s fun to-day. So we won’t say anything about it until to-morrow, eh?”

“Right you are,” Chub replied. “It’s her birthday and she ought to be allowed to enjoy it. I suppose I’ll have to leave Saturday morning. How about you, Dickums?”

“Well, I might as well go then, too.”

“We’ll all go down Saturday morning on the eleven o’clock,” said Roy. “That’ll give us to-morrow to pack up and get ready. Well, we’ve had a bully good time, haven’t we?”

“Sure,” answered Chub and Dick in unison.

“But I wish there was going to be more of it; that’s all,” added Dick.

“Why not?” asked Roy. “There’s next summer, you know.”

“That’s so! Will you come up? Will you, Chub?”

“Yes,” said Roy, and Chub echoed him. Dick looked more cheerful. “That’s the ticket!” he said joyfully. “I was afraid I wouldn’t see you fellows again until I got to—to college.”

“*What?*” cried the others. Dick nodded sheepishly.

“I’ve been thinking about it,” he answered. “I guess I’ll try, anyhow.”

“Bully for you!” Chub cried, clapping him on the back. “We’ll make a man of you yet, Dickums!”

At that moment Billy Noon returned, reporting success, and jumped aboard to be taken back to the island. Mr. Cole had offered him hospitality until his cat-boat was restored to him and had placed the tender at his services. Dick started the engine and the *Pup* barked her way back to the island. The boys were rather thoughtful, although the prospect of meeting again the next summer had taken away the sting of present

parting. Billy, too, was unusually silent, and the trip was a quiet one indeed for the *Pup*. The artist appeared on the after deck of the *Jolly Roger* as they approached and waved a handful of brushes at them.

"What luck?" he roared.

"Found them both," answered Dick. The *Pup* sidled up to the house-boat and they put off Billy and the groceries.

"Everything's there," said Dick. "And I'll come around about four o'clock and get to work."

As they rounded School Point on their way to the anchorage they sighed regretfully as the camp came into view. The white tent in the green clearing had never looked so homelike and so attractive as then.

At four Dick, dressed in his best camp attire, went over to the *Jolly Roger* to enter upon his duties as chef and caterer. Chub and Roy got into the crimson canoe and went for a paddle, realizing that it might be the last one they would take together in those waters.

"I won't have much time to crate this canoe to-morrow," said Chub.

"I'd forgotten about that," Roy replied. "It seems funny to think that we're pulling out of here for keeps, doesn't it? And Dick will have to get the *Pup* stored somewhere, I guess, until he comes back in the fall."

"Johnson, the fellow who has his ice-boat, will look after it for him, I guess. He will have to take her down to-morrow. Hello, there goes Billy."

A half mile above them the artist's little cedar tender was

bobbing its way across the inner channel, Billy Noon alone in it.

“He’s a mystery, that fellow,” observed Roy thoughtfully.

“Yes, but I’ll bet we’ll know more about him by to-morrow,” said Chub.

“Why to-morrow?”

“Because to-day’s Thursday.”

“Say, you know something, I’ll bet. Out with it, Chub.”

“No.” Chub shook his head. “No, I don’t know anything—for sure; I just suspect.”

“Well, what do you suspect?”

Chub thought a moment. Then, “I don’t know,” he answered with a grin.

“You’re an idiot,” said Roy good-naturedly. “Come on, let’s go back to the landing and get Harry. It must be nearly time.”

Harry, however, was late, and it was well past six before she came scampering down the path. She had on a brand new dimity dress—white, it was, sprinkled with little yellow rosebuds—and her cheeks were very pink.

“Merry Christmas!” called Chub.

“Happy New Year!” added Roy as she stepped into the canoe.

“Oh, I’ve had the loveliest things!” said Harry, fighting for breath. “Mama gave me this; see?” She held forth the little gold necklace which encircled her throat. “And papa—he gave me something perfectly beautiful! I’ll tell you about it later.

And Aunt Harriet—" her face fell a little—"sent me a dandy work-box made of ivory and all—all—oh, deary, I've forgotten it!"

"Forgotten what?" asked Roy.

"The word. It's something about Arabs."

"What word is it?"

"Why, what papa said. He said the box was ara—ara—"

"Arabesqued?" asked Roy.

"Yes, that's it! All arabesqued with silver. It's splendid!"

"What else did you get?" Chub inquired.

"Oh, lots of little things from the girls; two handkerchiefs, a book, a sachet bag and something else; I don't know what it's for yet; I'll have to ask, I guess."

Roy and Chub laughed.

"And what's that you're holding on to so tightly?" asked Chub. Harry glanced at the folded paper in her hand and smiled happily.

"That's what papa gave me," she replied. "It's very important."

"It looks it," Chub agreed. "It looks like a will. Maybe it's the long-lost will, Roy, leaving us the old farm and the family plate."

"No, it isn't," laughed Harry. "But—but you're warm."

"That's no joke," answered Chub as he wiped the perspiration from his brow. "But what is it, Harry?"

“I’m not going to tell you until supper.”

“Oh, very well.”

Roy gave a shout and Dick and the artist appeared on the deck of the *Jolly Roger*.

“Many happy returns, Miss Emery!” called the latter as the boys lifted their paddles and let the canoe glide up alongside the stern.

“Me, too!” called Dick.

“Is supper ready?” asked Chub.

“It will be in five minutes,” Dick answered. “Come on and help lay the table, Chub.”

CHAPTER XX

ABOARD THE *JOLLY ROGER*

The artist held out his hand gallantly and Harry stepped on to the *Jolly Roger* with all the impressiveness of a queen disembarking from a royal barge.

"This way, if you please," said Mr. Cole, holding open the studio door. They all trooped in and Harry gave a little cry of surprise and delight. On the easel, with a broad shaft of sunlight across it, stood a small canvas. The others echoed Harry's exclamation. For there were two Harrys present, one gazing with shining eyes at the canvas, and one gazing smilingly back at her. Mr. Cole had copied the head and shoulders from the sketch for which Harry had posed, and in the lower right-hand corner were painted the words "To Harriet Emery with the artist's homage." Then followed the date and the signature: "F. Cole," and for once Harry didn't mind being called Harriet.

"Oh, it's—it's lovely!" she sighed. "Do you—do you really mean that it's for me?"

"I really do," answered Mr. Cole. "But there's a string to it."

"Wh-what?" faltered Harry anxiously.

"You'll have to leave it with me until to-morrow at least, for I only finished it an hour ago and the paint is still wet."

"Oh, that's nothing," she answered vastly relieved. "And—and I can't tell you how much I thank you." Then, in spite of

the fact that she had been sixteen for several hours, which, as every one knows, is quite grown up, she impulsively threw her arms about the artist and hugged him. And Mr. Cole stood it beautifully!

"And now," cried Harry, blushing a little, "I've got something to show you all. Look! You take it, Roy."

She held out the folded paper which she had kept tightly clutched in her hand and Roy took it. He looked it over.

"Shall I read it?" he asked.

Harry nodded vehemently. Roy unfolded it and began to read.

"Why, it's a deed!" he exclaimed.

"Yes!"

"And—and—why, say, Harry, that's great!"

"Oh, come," said Chub impatiently. "Let us into it!"

"Papa has given me the island!" cried Harry.

"The isl—you mean *this* island, Fox Island?"

"Yes, he's given it to me—forever—and my 'heirs and signs __'"

"*A*ssigns," corrected Roy.

"And—and it's all my owntiest own!" ended Harry happily.

"Well, that *is* great!" cried Chub.

"And some day I'm going to live on it," declared Harry. "And I'll invite you all to come and visit me."

"And we all hereby accept," laughed Mr. Cole. "Well, I

suppose I shall have to begin and pay you wharfage after to-day."

"And I guess we'll have to pay you rent," laughed Dick.

"No, you won't," answered Harry. "But isn't it fine to have an island all of your own? Oh, I've always wanted to own an island."

"So have I," answered the artist, "but no one has ever insisted on giving me one, and I've never been able to make up my mind which particular island I wanted to buy. Well, and now how about supper, Mr. Dick?"

"Ready as soon as we finish setting the table."

"Let me do it!" Harry begged.

"No, sir," answered Dick. "You're to stay out until it's all ready."

"Where are we going to eat?" asked Chub, looking anxiously about for the table which had disappeared.

"Forward, in the sitting-room," answered Mr. Cole. "There's more room there, and it's pleasanter. You and I, Miss Emery, will take a stroll on deck until they're ready for us."

And so Harry and her host went up to the roof-deck and watched the sun setting behind the western hills, and Harry told about her birthday luncheon at the Cottage, and the big cake with its sixteen pink candles, and—

"Oh!" she cried, halting in the midst of her narrative, "I ought to have brought some of the cake for you!"

"Well, it's just as well," said Mr. Cole, "because—er—well, you see, there's another cake! I believe it was to be a surprise,

but I didn’t want you to feel bad about not bringing any of the other, you see. Perhaps you won’t mind just *seeming* a little surprised when you go in?”

“Oh, no” laughed Harry, “not a bit. That’ll be fun, won’t it? They won’t know that I knew anything about it!”

And they never did, for when, presently, they were summoned to supper, and Harry entered the sitting-room on Mr. Cole’s arm, she simulated astonishment so perfectly that the boys howled with glee.

“Why,” exclaimed Harry, “I was never so surprised—!”

The cake—it wasn’t a very big one, nor, as events proved, a very excellent one—sat in the center of the round table, the sixteen flames from the sixteen little pink candles making sixteen little points of rosy flame in the glow of the late sunlight. There were five places set and one of them, to which Harry was ceremoniously conducted, was piled with packages.

“Oh!” said Harry. And this time she was genuinely surprised, and her eyes grew large as she looked from the packages to the merry watching faces. Then the candle flames grew suddenly blurred for her and a tear stole down one side of her nose.

“And this time she was genuinely surprised”

“What’s the matter?” asked Chub in distress.

“Every one’s much too nice to me,” sniffed Harry, searching for her handkerchief. (Of course she didn’t have one and so had to borrow Roy’s.)

“Nonsense!” said Roy cheerfully. “Don’t cry, Harry.”

“I’m n-not cr-crying,” answered Harry from behind the folds of the handkerchief. “I’m ju-just blowing my n-nose!”

Every one laughed then and sat down with much scraping of chairs, and Harry, smiling apologetically, opened her packages. There was a pair of silver links for the cuffs of her shirt-waist

from Roy, a little gold bar pin from Dick, a Ferry Hill pin from Chub (Harry had lost hers a month before), and a volume of Whittier's poems from Billy Noon.

"Oh!" said Harry distressfully, when she reached the last present, "I'd forgotten him! Isn't he coming?"

"No," answered the artist. "He begged me to make his excuses and tell you that he was very sorry he couldn't be present. He has a rather important piece of business on hand for this evening, I believe."

Chub looked triumphantly at Roy and Dick with an "I-told-you-so" expression. But it was quite lost, for they were watching Harry's face as she read the lines which the Licensed Poet had written on the fly-leaf of the book.

"Aren't they beautiful?" she sighed finally, looking about the table.

"We don't know," laughed Roy. "Suppose you read them to us?"

But Harry shyly pushed the book to Mr. Cole.

"You do it, please," she said.

"Very well," answered the artist. "Here they are":

TO MISS EMERY

ON HER SIXTEENTH BIRTHDAY

Accept, I pray, this little book,
For in it, if you will but look,
You'll find lines sweet enough, 'tis true,
To have been written just for you.

Were I a poet I would write
Words fair enough to meet your sight;
But as it is, ’twill have to suit
To make this book my substitute

In hope that, as you read, it may
Arrange its lines in magic way
Until you find before your sight
The Birthday Poem I’d fain write!

Sincerely yours,
WILLIAM NOON.

“Oh, but I think that’s just too sweet for anything,” cried Harry. “It’s—it’s perfectly dandy! And I think it’s too bad he can’t be here.” The others echoed both sentiments. Then Harry deposited her presents in a place of safety and the feast began, much to Chub’s satisfaction, for that youth declared that he was rapidly starving to death. I’m not going to even attempt to do justice to that banquet, but you may rest assured that the five persons around the table did. The sun sank lower and lower, and the golden glow faded from the quiet surface of the river. Lamps were lighted and the shades pulled across the little windows. The cake was cut, Harry declaring that never had she dreamed of having two birthday cakes in one day, and Chub convulsed the table by surreptitiously concealing a pink candle in Roy’s slice and causing his chum to leave the room precipitately.

“Aren’t mad, are you?” asked Chub when Roy returned.

“Not if I get another piece of cake without any filling,” was the answer.

“I was afraid you’d wax wroth,” said Chub. For that he was

captured by Roy and Dick and made to apologize to the assemblage, Mr. Cole encouraging them to administer any punishment they saw fit. The dessert finished—there was ice-cream in two flavors, cake, fruit, and candy—the table was hurriedly cleared and moved back to the studio and Mr. Cole started the talking-machine. The first selection was, as Mr. Cole announced, Handel's "Sweet Bird," sung by Madame Melba. The audience listened very closely and politely, the artist watching them with twinkling eyes. When it was finished he asked them how they liked it. Harry was quite enthusiastic, Roy said it was splendid, Dick said it was very pretty, and Chub merely strove to look appreciative and didn't succeed.

"Well," said Mr. Cole, "since you like classic music we'll have some more. I was afraid you wouldn't care for it."

Chub winked soberly at Roy, their host having turned his back to select a new record, and Dick fidgeted in his chair.

"I think you'll like this one immensely," said Mr. Cole, clasping his hands on his breast and looking dreamily at the ceiling. The machine began to play and suddenly some one with an inimitable negro pronunciation launched forth into "Bill Simmons." The surprise depicted on the faces of his audience was too much for Mr. Cole's gravity and he laid his head back and for a moment drowned the music with his mellow laughter. There was no more classic music that evening; in fact, the cabinet seemed to be devoted principally to the other sort; for almost an hour the machine poured forth songs and instrumental selections that wrought the audience to the wildest enthusiasm. When they knew a song they joined in and helped the talking-machine, Mr. Cole almost raising the roof when he let himself out. Then Chub had a brilliant idea,

the rug was taken up, the furniture moved out and they had a dance. Of course Harry was in great demand and she went from Roy to Chub and from Chub to Dick and from Dick to Mr. Cole with scarcely a pause. But even without Harry for a partner it was still possible to dance and the evolutions of Mr. Cole and Chub, clasped in each other's arms was well worth a long journey to witness.

Perhaps that is what Billy Noon thought when at about half-past nine he peeked through one of the windows after having made fast his boat, for he smiled broadly as he looked. Then he went to the door and knocked. Dick, who was nearest, threw it open and Billy walked in.

"Hello, Noon!" cried Mr. Cole, pausing in the dance. "Is that you? What luck?"

"Good," answered Billy smilingly as he laid down his hat and seated himself beside it on the window-seat.

"Then you got them?"

"All three."

"Good for you!" said the artist heartily. "Where are they?"

"Silver Cove. Brady has them. We're going down on the midnight. I brought your boat back and thought I'd stop a minute and say good-by."

"Are you going away?" cried Harry.

"Yes, I must go now," was the answer.

"I'm so sorry," said Harry. "And I want to thank you a thousand times for your present and the poem you wrote for me. I think it's perfectly beautiful, Mr. Noon."

“I’m glad you liked it,” answered Billy, looking pleased.

“Are you going away to-night?” asked Chub.

“Yes, we’re taking the midnight train for New York.”

“Oh, there’s some one with you?”

“Yes,” answered Billy, with a slight smile, “I have four others with me now.” Chub frowned, while Dick and Roy and Harry looked perplexed. The atmosphere of mystery grew heavier every moment.

“Are they all—book agents?” faltered Harry. Mr. Cole broke into a laugh.

“You’d better let me show you up in your true colors, Noon,” he said. Billy smiled.

“Well, I guess there’s no harm in it now,” he answered.

Mr. Cole struck an attitude.

“Miss Emery and gentlemen,” he said, “allow me the honor of introducing to you Mr. William Noon of the United States Secret Service!”

CHAPTER XXI

"UNTIL TO-MORROW"

There was a moment of silent amazement. It was broken by Chub.

"Huh," he grunted. "I knew you weren't any book agent!"

"And I knew you knew it," laughed Billy. "I'm sorry I had to sail under false colors, but I had a difficult job on hand and I was forced to take every precaution. And when you say I was not a book agent you aren't altogether correct, for I really have been a book agent for nearly two months this time, and I've acted the same part before. As a matter of fact I've taken orders for nineteen sets of Mr. Billings' 'Wonders of the Deep' during my stay around here."

"Were you trying to arrest some one?" asked Dick eagerly.

"Just that," was the reply. "The Department found nearly a year ago that some one was getting out some very clever imitations of ten-dollar bank-notes of the series of 1902. I was instructed to find the counterfeiters and arrest them. With me was a man named Brady. You've seen him."

"The man at the wharf!" cried Chub. "The fellow that helped us with the launch that day, Roy! Remember? Isn't that right, Mr. Noon?"

"That's right. He was watching the freight and people that went out from Silver Cove because I discovered finally that the counterfeit money was being sent to New York from this point.

I took up the vocation of book agent since it provided me with an excuse for visiting all the houses around here. About the time you boys came to the island—I was camping on the shore of the mainland then—we got word from New York that a new batch of the bills had made their appearance there. We knew that they didn't go by express, and satisfied ourselves that they hadn't gone by freight; so we concluded that they had been taken by messenger, probably by one of the gang itself. As it is easier to come and go unnoticed by boat than by train we decided that the messenger had traveled by river. For awhile I thought that perhaps he had a small boat of some sort and was making trips up and down in it, but after watching closely for over two weeks I gave that notion up. Brady found the messenger when he returned,—spotted him the moment he put his foot off the boat,—and followed him out of town only to lose him finally about three miles north. Then I took up the hunt again and finally located the outfit in a small cabin up in the hills some four miles from here. But we wanted to get all the evidence we could, press, plates that the bills are printed from, and some of the counterfeit money itself; and we wanted to get the whole gang.

"So we watched for awhile, Brady and I taking turns, and found that there were only three of them. One of them, the engraver, was an old hand and the Department had been after him for years. He was the one who took the money down to New York and handed it over to a confederate there for circulation. About two weeks ago he made another trip, and we set men to watch him when he reached the city. He was shadowed, his confederate marked down and we learned that he was coming back to-day. He reached here on the noon boat. At seven o'clock Brady and I went up and rounded up the three

of them."

"Was there fighting?" asked Chub eagerly.

"No, we managed to surprise them. We got their press, some plates, and a few counterfeit bills, enough to convict them, I guess. We took them to the jail at Silver Cove, and at midnight we'll go on with them to New York. Now you know all about it. I'm sorry I've had to deceive you at times, but it's necessary in my business."

"Then you weren't a clown at all?" asked Roy.

"Oh, yes, I was—for awhile. And all the other things I told you about," answered Billy smilingly. "In the service we have to play many parts. Well, I must, be getting on. I was sorry I couldn't come to your party, Miss Emery. Perhaps, though, we will meet again some day. I hope so. I've enjoyed knowing you and these young gentlemen immensely. It's been real fun, and it isn't often I manage to combine fun with business. Good-by."

Harry shook hands with him sorrowfully.

"I wish you weren't going," she said.

"Thank you," he answered. "So do I. I'll miss the fishing and the good times we've had around your camp-fire."

"I hope we'll meet you again," said Chub. "It's been awfully jolly for us fellows, having you here."

"That's so," echoed Dick and Roy. "And I'm very much obliged for the help you gave me with the launch," added the former. Billy smiled, hesitated, and—

"I've got a confession to make," he answered. "I don't want

you to think I wouldn't have done anything for you that I could have, but I was more interested in that launch than you suspected. I thought that perhaps some day I might want to use it and use it in a hurry. And so I made up my mind to find out just how she ran. As things turned out, though, I had no use for her."

Dick laughed.

"Well, I hadn't suspected that," he said, "but you'd have been welcome to her if you'd wanted her. And I'm just as much obliged to you."

Billy turned to Mr. Cole.

"Good-by," he said. "You and I'll see each other again."

"Well, we always have so far," said the artist heartily as he shook hands.

"We're bound to," was the response. "I owe you for something since yesterday, you know, and I've got to pay that off. Until then, good-by."

“Good-by”

They all followed Billy out to the deck and watched while he jumped into the *Minerva*, which lay with idly flapping sail beside the *Jolly Roger*.

“What becomes of your boat?” asked Mr. Cole.

“I sold her this morning to the chap who brought her up for me. I’d have let her stay where she was if it hadn’t been for the few things on board of her. There was the can of mushrooms, you know. Brady and I are going to have those for supper when I get back!”

He pushed off, the sail filled and the *Minerva* began to drop down the river. Billy waved and called a last good-by.

“Good-by,” answered Mr. Cole. “And good luck.”

“Good-by,” called Roy and Dick and Chub. Only Harry was silent. But in a moment she was running along the deck toward the stern.

“Mr. Noon!” she cried. “Mr. Noon! You’ve forgotten something!”

There was an instant or two of silence and Harry thought he hadn’t heard. But he had, for presently his voice floated back to them across the water:

Good-by and good night!
And I hope as we part
That I float from your sight,
But not from your heart!

“Bravo! Bravo!” cried the artist. And “Good-by!” called the others. But there was no answer from the darkness which had swallowed the last wan gleam of the *Minerva’s* sail. They turned back to the sitting-room.

“I didn’t want him to go,” said Harry rebelliously.

“I trust you’ll say the same when I’m gone,” said Mr. Cole. “For I, too, must up sail and away soon.”

Chub glanced at Roy and the latter nodded.

"I guess it's good-by all around," said Chub. "Dick and I have got to go Saturday, and Roy thinks he might as well go too."

"Oh!" cried Harry. "I'm so glad!"

"What!" they cried in one voice.

"Oh, not because you're going, exactly," she explained, "but I've got to go too!"

"You!"

"Yes, Aunt Harriet's back and she wants me to come to her the last of this week. Isn't that horrid? I didn't tell you before because I thought you'd be sorry."

"That's the reason we didn't tell," laughed Roy. "So we're all in the same boat."

"Yes," said Mr. Cole, "and the boat's name is the *Jolly Roger*. Where do you boys go to?"

"New York," they answered.

"And you?" he asked of Harry. And when she had told him: "Well, that's all right then. We sail Saturday morning."

"What do you mean?" cried Harry.

"Why, that you must be my guests, Miss Emery, the whole lot and parcel of you. I'll get you to New York Sunday morning, and that ought to be soon enough for any one. You've never sailed under the skull and cross-bones before, I'll wager, and here's your chance. So pack up your duds to-morrow and come aboard bright and early Saturday morning.

And it’s, Hey for the pirate’s life!”

“Oh, wouldn’t that be glorious!” cried Harry. “Do you suppose we could?”

“Of course we can,” said Roy stoutly. “And we’ll do it. And we’re awfully much obliged, Mr. Cole. It’ll be fine!”

“That’s settled then,” answered the artist. “To-morrow we’ll get in our stores and prepare to slip anchor.”

“Bully!” cried Chub. “I’ve always wanted to be a pirate.”

“So have I,” declared Harry quite seriously. “Oh, dear, what time is it, please, somebody?”

It was after ten and Harry scurried around for her things. Roy brought the canoe alongside and Harry was helped into it, her precious deed and her presents in her lap. Then Roy and Chub followed and lifted their paddles.

“Good night, Mr. Cole,” said Harry. “I’ve had a perfectly splendid time. And I can’t tell you how much I like my picture.”

“Not nearly as much as I like the original,” answered the artist gravely. The darkness hid Harry’s blushes. Then:

“Please be very careful of my island,” she called.

“I will,” was the answer. “Until to-morrow!”

“Until to-morrow!” they replied. And—

“Until to-morrow!” echoed Dick as he stepped ashore and headed toward the camp.

Mr. Cole pulled his tender over the stern and then paused at the studio door. From across the darkness in one direction

came the faint sound of voices and the sibilant swish of the paddles. From down the beach came the sound of a merry whistle. The artist smiled.

"'Until to-morrow,'" he murmured. "It's a good world where we can say that!"

He closed the door behind him, and, as he did so, a great golden moon pushed its rim up over the edge of the eastern hills and threw a mantle of radiant light over Harry's Island.

THE END

Transcriber's Notes:

Punctuation and spelling inaccuracies were silently corrected.

Archaic and variable spelling has been preserved.

Variations in hyphenation and compound words have been preserved.

[The end of *Harry's Island* by Ralph Henry Barbour]