

CHAPTER IV.

ON DOLLAR ISLAND.

WHEN Bobby stood watching Tommy Tucker and Ikey Jones as they sailed slowly away, he realized that it was no longer possible for him to leave the island until some boat should pass that way, or come directly to their assistance.

Bad as such a position was, Bobby did not look at it as the worst of his troubles. He had yet to meet Captain Sammy, and explain what he, who had been left in charge, was doing when the pirates stole the boat. This he considered was trouble by the side of which being obliged to remain on the island any number of days was absolute pleasure.

Bobby knew that he ought to have resisted with force any attempt to take the boat, and he feared that Captain Sammy, in the absence of the real culprits, might wreak some signal vengeance on himself.

He continued to run back and forth on the beach, imploring Tommy to return, but making no attempt to warn the others of the evil that

had been wrought, for Captain Sammy's coming was worse, he thought, than Tommy's going.

But Bobby was not left long in uncertainty as to what the little man might say or do, for while he was still intent on trying to persuade the run-aways to return, he heard a most unwelcome and gruff voice from the thicket behind him,

"Halloo! What's in the wind now? What are you kicking up such a row about?"

For a moment the unhappy boy could make no answer, and while he thus hesitated the little captain came into view, where he stood looking in surprise at Bobby, not observing the theft of his boat.

"What's the matter with you? What are you yelling so about?" he asked, impatiently.

"They've gone! they've gone!" cried Bobby, pointing to the boat, whose occupants were now making every exertion to get away even from the sound of the one-legged man's voice. Tommy had laid aside his dignity of captain for the time being, and was tugging away at one of the oars as if he feared pursuit, even though he knew it was impossible.

Captain Sammy gazed out over the water, shading his eyes with his hand, as if it was difficult for him to believe that he was not deceived, and then he looked down at the place where his boat should have been, too much surprised even for words.

Dare and Charley had come up beside him, and they too were at a loss to understand it all.

"It's Tommy Tucker; he's taken the boat," cried Bobby, growing more frightened at this unaccountable silence on the part of the captain. "They've stolen her, an' gone off to be pirates!"

"Come back here, you rascals! come back here!" shouted Captain Sammy, as he realized all that had been done; and then, with a quick, angry movement, he unfastened his wooden leg, and stood with it in his hand, as if deliberating whether or not he should throw it at them. "Come back here, or I'll break every bone in your bodies!"

The boys in the boat made no reply, but bent all their energies at the oars, until Tommy, in his eagerness, dipped too deep, "caught a crab," and fell over backward in the bottom of the boat, a confused mass of gorgeous piratical uniform and frightened boy.

Dare and Charley ran down on the beach, as if they thought they might do some good by thus getting nearer the runaways; while Captain Sammy, without stopping to think that he still held his leg in his hand, attempted to do the same thing.

Of course there could be but one ending to such a start; and when the angry and forgetful little man attempted to step on the leg that was no longer in its accustomed place he very nearly

turned a somersault, and came rolling down on the beach, very much to his own discomfiture, and frightening Bobby almost out of what few senses still remained to him.

Captain Sammy choked and sneezed, because of the sand that had gone down his throat and up into his nose, while Dare and Charley had considerable trouble to keep from laughing at the comical appearance he presented.

This accident did not lessen Captain Sammy's anger, and when at last he succeeded in standing on his one foot he was in a fine state of rage. He began to realize that he could effect nothing by holding his wooden leg in his hand, while he might work himself farther injury if it was not placed where it belonged; so he adjusted it at once.

"How did it happen? how did they get her?" he demanded, furiously, as he turned to Bobby with a threatening gesture.

Although Bobby was not a brave boy he could never be accused of lying, even when the truth was as much against him as it was in this case, and, with considerable hesitation and evident shame, he related the events as they had occurred.

"Why didn't you stop them? Why didn't you chew 'em all up?" demanded Captain Sammy, furiously.

Bobby thought it was absurd in the captain

to talk about his chewing two pirates up and he replied, almost piteously,

"I couldn't; there were two of them, and they said they'd serve me out if I tried to stop them."

"Serve you out!" sneered Captain Sammy. "Why, they couldn't have done anything if you'd only dared to go up an' knock their heads together."

There was a difference of opinion between Bobby and the captain as to what Tommy and Ikey could have done; but, as Bobby thought it would be useless to attempt to make the angry man view the matter in the same light he did, he remained silent.

"How did they get over here?" asked the little man, after he had relieved his mind somewhat by shaking his fist savagely at the retreating pirates.

Then Bobby told what Tommy had said about coming over in an old boat, and Captain Sammy started around the beach to find her, filled with the hope that she might serve as a means of pursuit. But one glance at the boat, after they had found her, was sufficient to show that nothing could be done with her. She was so old and worm-eaten that it was a wonder she had held together long enough to bring the boys over. The Wise Men of Gotham who went to sea in a bowl had a more staunch craft than she was.

Captain Sammy surveyed her in silence for some time, and then said, emphatically,

"Well, this *is* a nice kettle of fish, an' no mistake!"

"How are we going to get home?" asked Dare, thinking of the anxiety his mother would suffer if they were not with her by night.

"That's jest it! that's jest it!" cried Captain Sammy, again giving way to his anger. "Oh, how I wish I had hold of them precious villains for a little while! They'd wish they really was pirates. I'll tell you how we're goin' to get home. We're goin' to stay here till somebody comes along an' takes us off; an' we may be here a week, for the matter of that, for nobody would understand any signals we could make from here. It's worse than a regular shipwreck."

For some time the party stood in silent despondency, the boys thinking of the fears which would beset Mr. and Mrs. Evans at their absence, and Captain Sammy wondering if sleeping in the open air would not be sure to bring on an attack of his old enemy the rheumatism.

"It won't do any good to set here," said the little man at length, speaking in a more cheerful tone. "We're here for a while, anyhow, an' we might as well make the best of it. How are we off for provisions?"

There was no need for any one to reply to the question, for the moment it was asked each one

knew that the only things they had taken out of the boat on their arrival were the axes, and the pirates had not only captured a boat, but they had gotten one that was provisioned for several hours at least.

"Well, we shall have to suck our thumbs for a while, at any rate," said the little captain, as if he had resolved to bear his troubles as philosophically as possible. "We will build up a fire, in the hope that some one in Tampa may see the smoke an' come over here to find out the meaning of it. And, since you boys came here for timber for your rafts, the best thing you can do is to go to work felling it. The work will keep you contented, and you won't be wasting your time."

Bobby, who should have done something toward preventing the misfortune that had come upon them, was charged with the work of building the fire-signal and keeping it going, while Dare and Charley started about what was really the preliminary work of raising the *Pearl*.

It was then hardly more than ten o'clock, and they had quite a long day before them in which to work, even if they were prisoners on an uninhabited island.

All hands went to work with a will, and while Dare and Charley were blistering their hands in their efforts to hew down the largest trees, Captain Sammy busied himself with gathering the

tiny oysters that were fastened to the rocks just below the surface of the water.

These little shell-fish were very acceptable to the boys, who had grown hungry the moment they knew their food had been carried away, and, thanks to the lunch the little man brought them, they were able to keep at their work all the more closely.

Captain Sammy had a small canteen of water with him when he left the boat, and the contents of this he doled out very sparingly, but in such quantities that they were not actually suffering with thirst.

By six o'clock the boys had felled and trimmed of their branches ten trees—a sufficient number, in Captain Sammy's opinion, to form the heavier portion of the rafts they wanted to build—and then it was time to make some arrangements for a place to sleep that night, since it was hardly probable any one would come to their rescue before the next day.

Bobby had kept the signal-fire burning all day, and after some consultation it was decided that they should use the level piece of ground just back of it as their camping-place.

The little captain had had no voice in the selection of the camp, for after he had given the boys all the oysters they wanted for dinner he seemed to have forgotten his philosophical ideas, and had relapsed into a moody silence.

It was after Dare and Charley had decided upon the camping-ground that they went to the point of reef on which Captain Sammy was sitting, enveloped in a cloud of tobacco-smoke.

"We think we had better camp for the night near the fire, sir," said Dare, "and if you have no objections we will put up some kind of a shelter."

"It don't make much difference where we lay, my lad," said the little man, without looking up. "I'll be sure to have the rheumatiz anyhow, an' it's no odds to me whether it comes when I'm layin' on the ground or settin' here by the water. But I'll show that Tucker boy what a pirate is when I get hold of him."