

CHAPTER VII.

RESCUED.

WHEN the boys awoke on the following morning the sun had risen, and Captain Sammy had followed his example. He (meaning Captain Sammy, not the sun) had kindled the fire anew; but instead of allowing it to blaze, he was doing all he could to deaden it, by flinging green boughs wet in sea-water upon the flames.

The boys watched him for some time in silence, wondering what he was trying to do, until Charley asked him the reason for his apparently contradictory work.

"Well, you see," and Captain Sammy assumed the tone he always used when imparting any information, "I kinder reckon that when the Jones boy finds that his partner don't turn up this morning, he'll tell the folks jest where we are. The chances are that no one will believe him, so I want to keep this smoke goin', for they can see that when they couldn't see the blaze."

After he had thus explained the reason for his work he made them pay for their curiosity

by assigning to Charley and Bobby the duty of keeping sufficient fire going to raise a smoke, while he seated himself on the point of the ledge, to watch for the coming of the rescuing party.

The only toilet which the boys could make that morning was to wash their hands and faces in the salt-water, and dry them on their handkerchiefs—a most unsatisfactory proceeding, which caused them to understand, as they never had before, how thoroughly fresh-water, soap, and towel can refresh one.

By the division of labor according to Captain Sammy's orders, Dare had nothing to do. At first he secured more firmly the logs which they had cut and rolled into the water the day before, that there might be no chance of their getting adrift, and in order that they might be all ready for towing to the main-land. Then he helped the other boys in their task; but finding that there was no more work than two could do easily, he conceived the idea of making an effort to find Tommy Tucker, in order that he might go to Tampa on the same boat that carried the others.

Without Captain Sammy's knowledge he told Charley and Bobby what he was about to do, and asked them to call him in case any boat came to their rescue.

Then he started, keeping so near the water

on his left that he could make no mistake when he wanted to retrace his steps.

It was not until he was some distance from the others that he dared to call Tommy's name, for he was afraid that if Captain Sammy should hear him he would try to prevent him from doing good to the pirate in return for evil.

When he did call out it was in a low tone, and he peered cautiously around each root or trunk of tree that was large enough to conceal the boy he was in search of.

In this manner he had walked so far that he was beginning to think he ought to return to the camp, when he heard a rustling of the foliage, and then came a hoarse, frightened whisper:

"Where's Cap'en Sammy?"

Dare knew, of course, that this question had been asked by the boy he was in search of, and, in order that Tommy might not think he was trying to catch him, he stood perfectly quiet, as he replied,

"He's back there on the beach, watching for a boat."

There was a moment of silence, as if the boy was making up his mind whether there would be any danger in showing himself, and then Master Tucker stepped out into view.

He was certainly the most discouraged-looking pirate that ever was seen in that part of the country. The sash was still around his waist,

and the epaulettes on his shoulders, but, owing to his unceremonious plunge in the water and the night he had spent among the trees, all the glory of coloring was covered with mud and dirt. His face was at least twice as dirty as usual, while each individual hair on his head seemed to stand out in a different direction, giving him a very comical appearance, especially about the head.

He was far from being the same bold pirate chieftain he had been the day before, and that he had had quite as much of piracy as he wanted was shown by the tone of his voice, as he asked,

"What did Cap'en Sammy say about his boat?"

"He was very angry, and I don't think he would have let me come here to find you if he had known what I was going to do."

"What is he goin' to do to me?" asked Tommy, and his knees actually trembled beneath him as he thought of the punishment he might receive.

"I don't exactly know," replied Dare, not wanting to tell the boy all the threats made against him by the angry captain, "but I suppose he will whip you."

"He'll half kill me," replied Master Tucker, dolefully but emphatically.

"I suppose he will be rather hard on you," said Dare, inclined to be sympathetic, but feel-

ing at the same time that Tommy deserved some severe punishment for what he had done. "But I tell you what you had better do: come right out with me, and have it over before any one comes from Tampa to take us off."

"I wouldn't go out there where he is not for—not for a dollar!" exclaimed Tommy, frightened at the simple idea of such a thing.

"But how are you going to get away from here, and what will you get to eat while you do stay?"

"I dunno, an' I don't care; I ain't goin' out there where he is."

Dare noticed that the pirate was so broken in spirit that he no longer called Captain Sammy an "old heathen," which was good proof that he was not so proud and triumphant as he had been ten hours before.

"I s'pose I shall get home some time," said Tommy, sullenly; "but he won't have a chance to get hold of me, I can tell him that, for I can run twice as fast as he can any day."

Dare used all the arguments he could think of to persuade Tommy to go with him and try to gain Captain Sammy's pardon; but his words had no effect.

Master Tucker declared that he had rather stay there and starve than to go out and meet the man whom he had every reason to believe would punish him severely; and he flatly refused

every proposition Dare made, replying to each, "I s'pose I'll get home somehow; but he won't never catch me."

While Dare was urging him to do as he desired he heard Charley calling loudly, and he knew that some one was coming after them.

"All right; I'll be there," he replied; and then, turning to Tommy again, he said, "I suppose a boat is in sight, and I must go. Now, Tommy, if you won't come with us, what do you want me to do for you when I get back?"

"Nothin'," replied Tommy, sullenly, and then he disappeared quickly in the bushes, as if he was afraid that Captain Sammy, guided by Dare's voice, would come to catch him.

Dare's attempt to do good to the boy had resulted in nothing; but he was glad that he had made the trial. He walked back to the beach feeling that he ought to have done more, yet not knowing what else he could have done, so great was Tommy's fear of the little captain.

When Dare reached the beach his father and two men were just landing from a boat, and Captain Sammy was explaining to them his misfortunes, with many and terrible threats against the boy who had done the mischief, which made Dare think that perhaps it was best for Tommy to remain out of sight for a time.

Captain Sammy looked at him sharply as he came up, much as if he mistrusted the errand

he had been on, but, greatly to Dare's relief, he did not ask any questions.

Mr. Evans explained that neither he nor his wife had felt any anxiety concerning the boys.

Ikey Jones had delivered his message, as Tommy had instructed him, but he had run home before any questions could be asked, evidently fearing he would get into trouble because of his share in the theft of the boat.

Mr. Evans, troubled by the scanty information almost as much as he would have been at no word at all, started at once for Ikey's home, and there, owing to the ex-pirate's wholesome dread of his mother's slipper, the whole story had been told.

It was then too late to think of sending for the prisoners that night, and, knowing that they would be perfectly safe with the little captain, as leader of the expedition, no fears were entertained regarding them.

Dare told his father of his interview with Tommy, and begged that he would intercede with Captain Sammy for his permission to allow the pirate to go with them. But Mr. Evans refused to interfere in the matter. Tommy deserved punishment, and he thought the man who had been injured by the boy should be allowed to do as he chose regarding him.

The logs that had been cut on the previous day were all ready for towing, and the captain

insisted that the men who had been employed by Mr. Evans should pull them to the main-land, in order that their trip to Dollar Island might not be wholly a failure.

Therefore, greatly to the delight of the boys, they were fastened to the stern of the boat. The oars, sail, and water-cask, which were all that remained of the little captain's jaunty craft, were put on board, and all the prisoners of Dollar Island, save the one who was still hiding in the thicket, were sailing toward Tampa.

Tommy had said that he should make Dollar Island his piratical head-quarters, and he now held undisputed possession of it.