

## CHAPTER IX.

### A DISCOURAGED PIRATE.

**T**HANKS to the early hour at which the young wreckers retired, they were up almost as soon as the sun was on the day when the success or failure of their plan for raising the *Pearl* was to be determined.

The day was all that could have been asked for, with no breeze strong enough to ruffle the surface of the water, and Dare knew that if they failed it would not be because of heavy sea or bad weather.

The rafts floated securely where they had been anchored on the previous night, and as the boys looked at their stout frames, which would offer so much resistance to any weight that might be put upon them, it was easy to believe firmly that when they were made fast to the steamer the action of the tide would lift the *Pearl* very readily.

They had three hours at their disposal before the water would be low enough to admit of their beginning work, and this time was to be employed in releasing Tommy from his imprisonment.

Breakfast was hurriedly eaten, and, without any fear that their belongings in the tent would be disturbed, even if any one from the town should pay them a visit, they started for Dollar Island and the pirate.

The pull over was not so laborious as when they had rowed Captain Sammy, for the boat they were then in was not as large as the one Tommy had wrecked, and, besides, it was earlier in the day, consequently much cooler.

But it was sufficiently hard work to make them realize just how long a distance a mile was on the water, and none of them were sorry when the bow of the boat grated upon the beach of Dollar Island.

They had supposed that Master Tucker would keep a very sharp lookout for approaching boats, and had no doubt but that he would be on the beach awaiting their arrival.

But when they landed he was nowhere to be seen. They began to think he had already been rescued, and that their labor had been in vain. But they did not propose to return until they had both made a thorough search, and taken a short rest; therefore they went to their old camping-place, as the starting-point from which to begin the search.

When they arrived there they understood why it was that the prisoner had not welcomed them to the island.

There, on the ground, on the same spot where they had encamped, lay the once brave but now thoroughly cowed pirate, sleeping quite as soundly as if he had been in his own bed at home. Around him were a number of shells, showing that Captain Sammy was right when he said the boy would find something to eat, and by his side was a club almost as large as himself, which he had probably taken to bed with him, in case it should become necessary to defend himself.

Dare leaned over and shook him several times before he awakened. Then, as soon as his eyes were opened, he leaped to his feet and looked anxiously around, as if he expected to see Captain Sammy pop out of the bushes somewhere near him.

"Where is he?" he asked, as if doubting whether he could trust the intentions of his visitors.

"He's at home, if you mean Captain Sammy," replied Dare, "and we have come to take you home too."

"Are you goin' to take me to *him*?" he asked, with very little of the piratical swagger that had frightened Bobby at the time he captured the boat.

"No; you shall go wherever you want to," and then Dare told him of the promise they had made regarding him. "Now, you know that Captain Sammy will blame us if you do any

more mean things, and we want you to promise us that you'll try to do right."

"Got anything to eat?" asked Tommy, as if he was disposed to get all he could before he bound himself by a promise.

"Yes," said Charley, as he produced the lunch-basket which his thoughtfulness had prompted them to bring. "Are you hungry?"

"Awful," was the pirate's reply, as he looked longingly at the basket.

Dare was not one who could see another suffer for anything when it was in his power to relieve him; and although he felt that Tommy should have given his promise first, he opened the basket and took out the food, which Master Tucker ate ravenously, as though he had been on short rations for a week instead of a day.

After he had eaten all he wanted—and the boys joined him, for their long pull had made them hungry also—Tommy seemed disposed to take up the conversation where it had been dropped.

"Now, you wouldn't get me over there, an' then let him nab me, would you?" he asked, imploringly.

"No," replied Dare, gravely. "We wouldn't tell you anything that wasn't true. If you promise us that you'll behave yourself in the future, he won't trouble you, unless you go where he is."

"No danger of that," was the emphatic reply.

"And will you promise?" urged Dare.

"Yes," said Tommy, "I'll promise, an' I'll keep it, too. I did think I wanted to be a pirate; but somehow it ain't as much fun as I thought it would be; an' now that the flag an' my sash an' cap are gone I'll let Ikey Jones be the pirate, an' I'll look 'round for somethin' else."

Dare told him that they had heard that Ikey Jones had also reformed, so that the pirates of Tampa no longer had an existence, except in the memory of Captain Sammy, where it would be likely to remain green until he had forgotten his wrecked boat.

Tommy felt better after his breakfast, although he was still thoroughly discouraged, and he freely admitted that he was very sorry for what he had done. He made many promises that he would mend his ways in the future, and Dare felt reasonably certain that they would have no trouble in keeping their word to Captain Sammy concerning him.

They remained on Dollar Island about half an hour, and when they started on the return trip Master Tucker took one of the oars, working at it manfully until they were within about a quarter of a mile of the shore. Then he ceased rowing, as if he began to mistrust that which had been told him, and, looking Dare full in the face, he asked,

"Now, you ain't foolin' me, are you?"

"How do you mean?"

"Captain Sammy ain't hidin' anywhere 'round here, where he can jump out an' nab me jest the minute we get on shore, is he?"

"If you are afraid, and don't believe us," said Dare, with considerable dignity, hurt because they should be doubted after all they had done, "you can land wherever you say, and then you will be sure we are not deceiving you."

"I ain't 'xactly 'fraid, an' I don't think you'd tell any lies about it," said Tommy, with some hesitation, "but, if it don't make any difference to you, I'd rather get out farther down the beach."

The boat was headed in the direction he desired, and when the land was reached Tommy first made sure that his enemy was nowhere in sight, and then jumped out quickly.

"Now, see here, fellers," he said, as he held on to the bow of the boat for a moment: "you've helped me out of a bad scrape, an' I'll keep my promise to you jest as long as Cap'en Sammy lets me alone." And, after crossing his throat with his fingers, to make his words more impressive, he ran as fast as his legs could carry him in the direction of his home.

There was not one of the boys who did not believe that Tommy would keep his word; and had they been told then that they would be

sorry that they had released the prisoner, they would have laughed at the idea.

It was not a long distance from where Tommy had been landed to where the *Pearl* lay, and when they arrived at the scene of their labors Captain Sammy was just coming up in a boat rowed by two men.

The little man looked at them savagely, as if he was angry with himself for having given his permission for the release of Tommy; but he said nothing, which was quite a relief to the boys.

The tide was nearly down, and it was evident that the little man had come there to work, for, after ordering the men to row him directly to the rafts, he called out for the boys to bring him the cables.

It was quite a task to load the long chains from the beach to the boat and while it was being done Captain Sammy and his men busied themselves in inspecting the rafts and the position of the sunken steamer.

"Now, then," said Captain Sammy, when the chains were finally placed on one of the rafts, "we are goin' to help you make fast to the *Pearl*, and after that you will have to do all the work yourselves. While we are passing the chains under the steamer you had better be stretching a hawser from the rafts to the shore, so that you can haul them in at high-water."

Dare preferred that they should do all the work themselves, but he knew that Captain Sammy would do it much better, and, in view of all the circumstances, the boys could not say anything against any plan he might propose. Long before the task was done, however, they were very glad that they had his assistance, for it was not many moments before they saw a number of contrivances for lessening the labor which they would never have thought of.

Even the fastening of the hawsers was not such a simple task as it looked. It was necessary to attach a short one first to each raft, and then fasten the two ends on to a longer one, so that when the boys pulled the rafts and their burden in-shore they would move at the same time and under the same amount of force. Otherwise a swinging motion might be imparted to the yacht as she hung in the chains, displacing or wrenching her.

Long as it took the boys to get the hawsers arranged properly, Captain Sammy did not seem to have begun his portion of the work when they had finished; at least, that was what Dare thought at first, although he afterward changed his mind.

One end of each of the two cables had been wound several times around the log that formed one side of the raft that floated on the port side of the *Pearl*, and then made secure by two

heavy staples. The middle, or bight, of the chains hung down in the water, while the other ends were thrown over the raft lying to starboard.

"We're all ready now to hook on, and it must be full low-water," said Captain Sammy, as he consulted his watch, and the boys interpreted the remark into an order for them to be ready to assist.

They rowed out to the port raft, and there waited the little man's pleasure. The two men had gotten into their boat, which they anchored directly over the bow of the *Pearl*, and there, each holding a long boat-hook, they too waited for Captain Sammy to give the word.

The little man was on the starboard raft, and when he was satisfied that every one was ready he shouted, as he grasped the unsecured end of the cable,

"Dare, you and Charley lean over the raft and swing your end of the cable in-shore; and you," he added to his men, "stand ready."

The boys obeyed the order without understanding what they were to effect, and when the heavy chain was slowly swung toward the beach the men in the boat fastened the iron-shod end of their poles into it at its lowest point in the water, pushing it directly under the bow of the sunken steamer.

Captain Sammy quickly made his end of the

cable fast with a piece of rope, and then exactly the same work was done on the other.

After the two cables were thus in position the two rafts were swung nearer together, and the two logs which the boys thought had been uselessly cut were placed across from one raft to the other, about ten feet apart.

After the cable had been hauled as taut as possible, the ends on the starboard raft were then secured as firmly as the others.

Captain Sammy then produced from his boat four stout chains, each about twenty feet in length, and having large clamps at one end.

These he hooked on to the cables a short distance below the surface of the water, one on each side, and brought them up around the two logs.

"There, my lads," said Captain Sammy, triumphantly, "when you want to take up the slack to-morrow all you have to do is to anchor the rafts as far apart as possible, drop the clamps farther down on the main cable, and belay the short chains. Besides, by this means, you see, there is no chance for the rafts to swing one way or the other, and drop the *Pearl* out just when you think you have her fast."

It was a contrivance which the boys would never have thought of, and Dare now congratulated himself that Captain Sammy had been anxious to aid them.

All hands now turned their attention to draw-

ing the short chains taut, and this was done by the means of a capstan-bar, a turn being taken around one end of it, and then the bar being used as a lever.

Each one had been drawn up as taut as the strength of the workmen could make them, a double hook was fastened through the links, and their portion of the work was done. It was for the water to do the remainder.

The tide had commenced to flow, and all hands went on shore to watch the effect of their labor, the boys so excited that it seemed as if the minutes had twice the usual number of seconds in them.