

CHAPTER X.

THE WORK OF THE TIDE.

ANXIOUSLY the boys watched for the first sign which would tell that their plan was a success, and as the water rose higher and higher their fears lest it should prove a failure increased.

Soon it was easy to see that the rafts were settling into the water, and the chains gave forth a dull, muffled clank now and then as the strain upon them forced the links into a more perfect bearing upon each other.

"Do you think they will raise her?" asked Dare, unable to bear the suspense any longer in silence.

"Raise her!" echoed Captain Sammy; "they'll have to, unless something breaks, and I don't think it will."

Then the boys waited in fear lest something should break, starting in alarm at the slightest sound. But there was no sign but that everything was as strong as Captain Sammy's faith in the result of the experiment.

Finally the rafts settled down as if the weight

of the *Pearl* was about to submerge them, and then, just as the boys were expecting to see them covered by the water, there was a sudden rocking motion, a sort of trembling of the planking, and they rose at once several inches out of the water.

"Hurrah!" shouted the captain, and the men joined in with him as he repeated the cheer, while the boys looked up in surprise, not seeing any reason for such outburst of triumph.

"The rafts have raised her, and the *Pearl* is afloat again, even if she is under the water," said Captain Sammy, in an explanatory way. "When the rafts were nearly covered with water it was the suction of the boat as she laid on the soft bottom that held them down, more than the weight. When they kind of trembled they were overcoming the suction, and when they rose out of the water after that they took the *Pearl* with them."

Although it was a trifle late, the boys set up their cheer of triumph, and they made considerably more noise about it than the others had done.

"Well, lads," said Captain Sammy, in a cheery tone, "the work is as good as done now. If I wasn't getting so old and full of rheumatic twinges I'd stay over here with you, an' we'd take advantage of the tide to-night, for there's a good moon; but as it is we'll have to wait till

morning, an' I'll toddle over to the dock now, to see how things are coming on there. Keep a sharp lookout that nothing happens, an' I'll be here at low-tide to-morrow."

He had started off when he commenced to speak, and by the time he had finished he and his men were nearly out of sight around the point.

The boys were alone to keep watch that the tide did its duty.

"I'll tell you what we can do," said Dare, after they had remained silent for some time watching the rafts as they lifted the *Pearl* higher and higher from the place that had very nearly been her grave: "it will be low-water at ten o'clock, and bright moonlight at the same time. We can take in the slack of those cables just as well as if Captain Sammy was with us. It will be high-tide about four o'clock in the morning, and we can take turns at watching, so that we shall be sure to pull her in at high-water. Then when Captain Sammy comes to-morrow she will be almost ready to go to work on."

Of course neither Charley nor Bobby valued the loss of sleep as compared with getting their boat afloat a day sooner, and they agreed to the plan at once.

As it was necessary to remain idle until high-water, which would be five hours later, Dare proposed that Bobby should proceed to the hotel

for a fresh supply of provisions, and also to inform his father of their success thus far.

Bobby had no objection to offer, since the pirate had been vanquished, and he set off at once, while Dare and Charley remained in the tent, resting from the fatigue of the morning.

Bobby returned in due time, warm, tired, and loaded down with good things, out of which all three made a hearty dinner. Then there was more lounging around and laying plans for their trip to the Everglades, until the water had crept nearly up to the line on the sand which marked the height to which the tide flowed.

Then the work began. The long hawser had been made fast to a tree which grew on the bank, and Charley and Bobby stationed themselves there, while Dare rowed out to the rafts and raised the anchors.

"All right!" he shouted as the last one was raised, and nothing prevented the rafts and their burden from being pulled in toward the shore.

As he spoke he jumped into the boat, rowed quickly to the beach, and did his share toward hauling their prize into more shallow water.

The task required all the strength which they possessed, but they were more than willing to expend it at such work, and by the time the tide was fully up the *Pearl* had struck bottom again, and their labor was over for six hours.

The rafts were anchored again, care being

taken that it should be done in such a way that they would swing as far apart as possible, as Captain Sammy had ordered, and when the young wreckers were in their tent again they had the satisfaction of seeing that the *Pearl* was not more than half as far away from the shore as she had been in the morning.

"Now," said Dare, as he looked at his watch, "it is a little past four. Let's see if some of us can't bottle up some sleep before it is time to go to work again. Charley, you and Bob lay down, and I will keep watch until six; Bobby shall stand guard till eight, and you till ten. After that we will divide up an hour at a time, because it will be more lonesome in the night."

This plan was carried out, and, although there was not much sleeping done before low-water, each one felt refreshed because of the rest they had thus forced themselves to take.

The night was so light that it was possible to work quite as well as in the day, and they were cheered in their labors by seeing fully half the upper-works of the little steamer above water, when, before, only her smoke-stack was visible.

The little pilot-house and cabin glistened as white in the moonlight as if the painters had just concluded their work, and through the open windows could be seen a portion of the machinery.

"Isn't she a beauty!" exclaimed Charley, as they stood on the rafts looking at the little craft which was to be the reward of their labors.

"Indeed she is," replied Dare, who hardly felt like doing anything else but looking at her; "but she won't do us much good if we don't go to work."

Thus reminded that they were there for labor rather than admiration, the boys commenced at once the difficult task before them. The chains were first unfastened one by one, and then made taut and fastened again, as Captain Sammy and his men had done at first.

While it was not possible for the boys to take in as much slack of the chains as the three men could have done, they had the satisfaction of reducing the length very materially.

Then the anchors were placed so that the rafts would swing closer together when the tide forced them to begin their work of lifting again, and the night-watch began.

It was fully eleven o'clock, and Dare proposed that they stand guard one hour at a time. As the first watch would be the easiest, Dare gave that to Bobby, with instructions to call Charley at twelve, he coming on at one.

During that night not one of the sentries fell asleep at his post. There were many times when each one of them felt very much like yielding to the slumber that beset his eyelids; but a brisk

walk along the beach soon rendered him wakeful.

At one o'clock Dare was called, and when his hour was up he could not bring himself to awaken either of the others, who were sleeping so sweetly, and arguing that, as the leader of the party, he should do the most work, continued on guard until four o'clock, when he roused the others.

Both the boys were very much surprised at finding that Dare had been on watch three hours instead of one, and Charley insisted that in the future he should do no more than his share of the work, whatever might happen.

This time it was a sleepy party who tugged and pulled at the heavy hawser; but when the *Pearl* grounded it seemed almost certain that she would be fully uncovered at low-water, and with the idea that in the morning they would be able to see the extent of the damage done their steamer, all hands rolled into bed.