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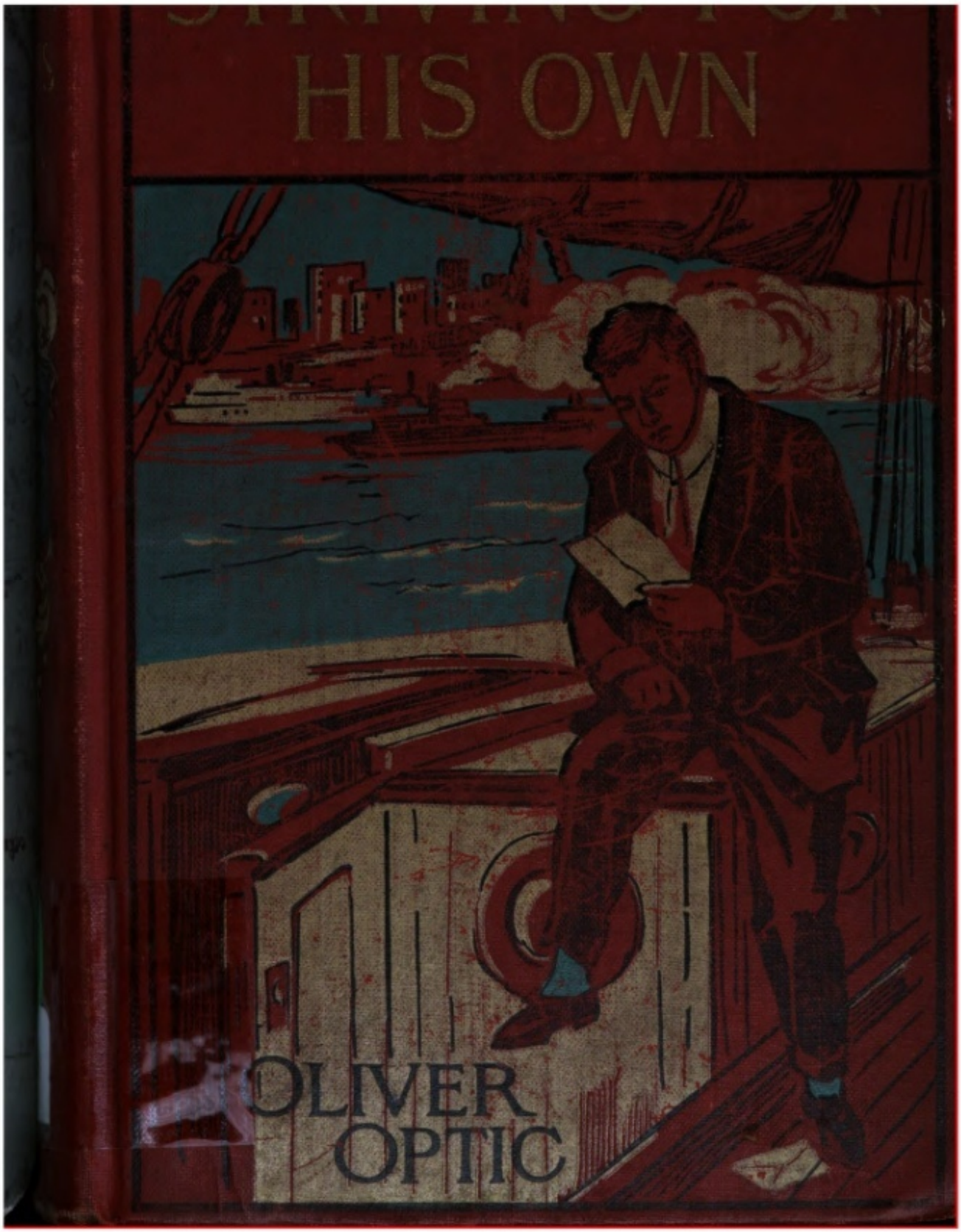

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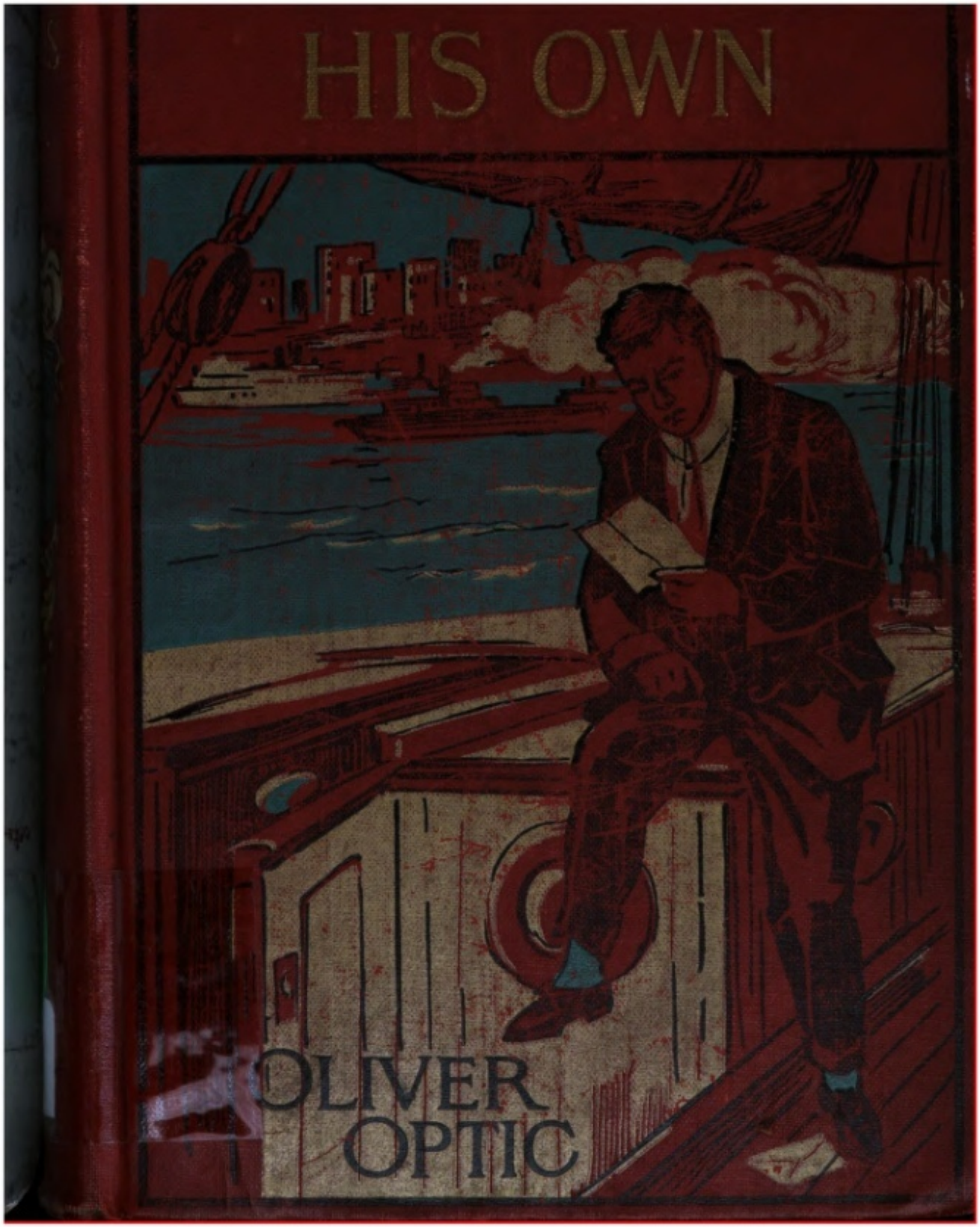

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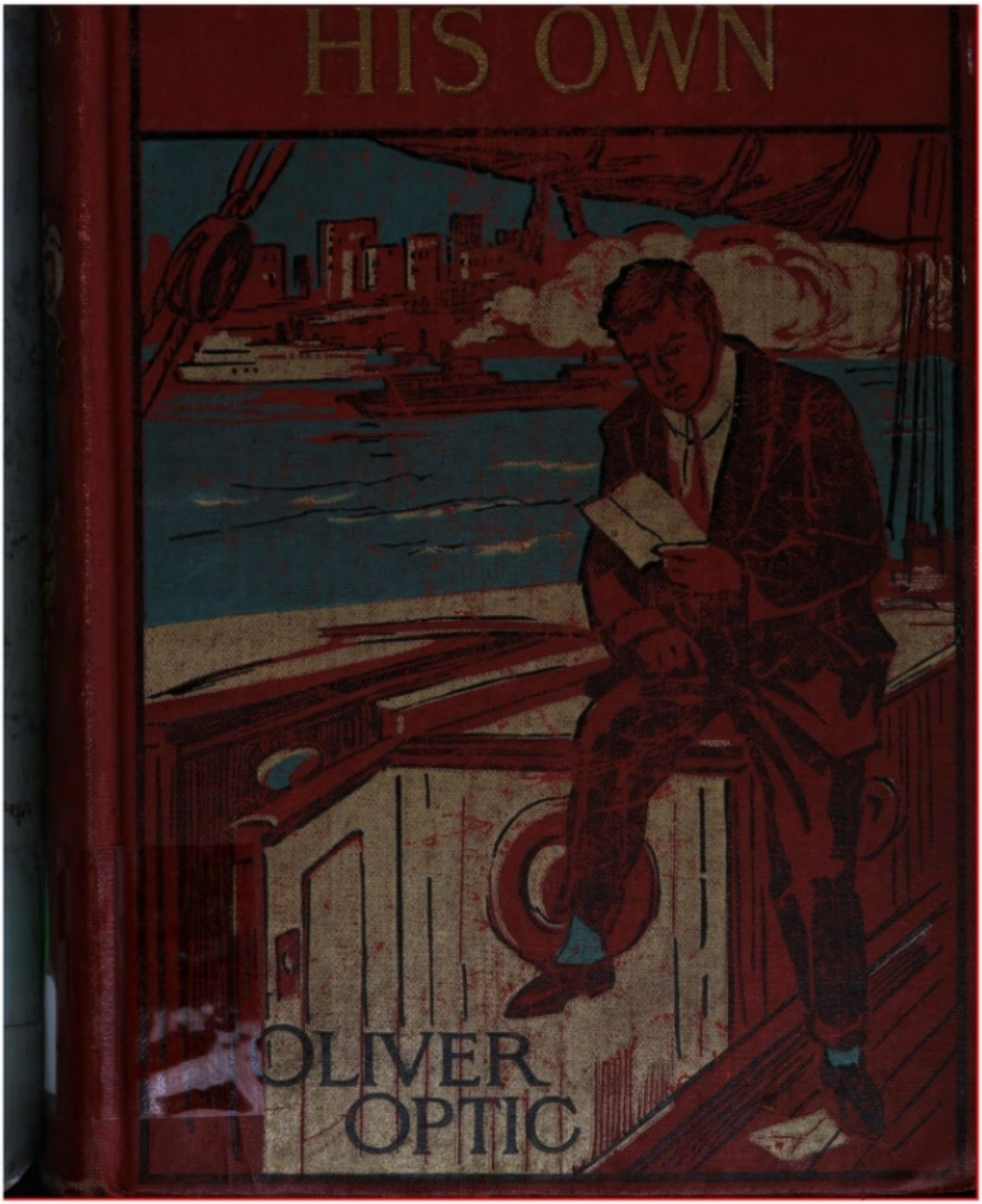

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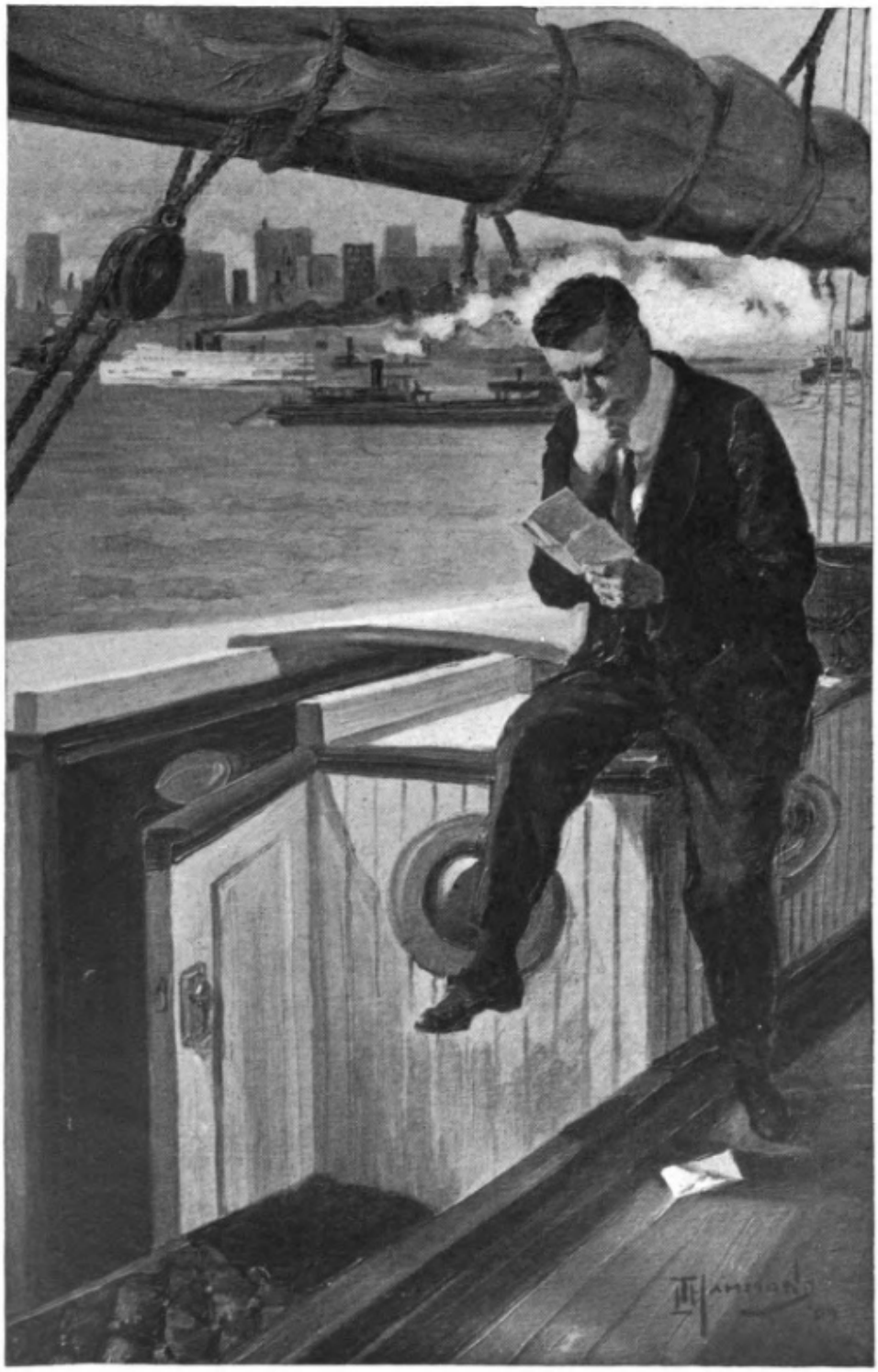

I HAD OPENED A LETTER INTENDED FOR MY FATHER.—*Page 23.*

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STRIVING FOR HIS OWN

BY

OLIVER OPTIC

AUTHOR OF

"Boat Club Series," "Woodville Stories," "Lake Shore Series,"
"Army and Navy Stories," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LYLE T. HAMMOND

BOSTON:

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

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STRIVING FOR HIS OWN.

CHAPTER I.

THE SERIOUS YOUNG MAN.

"You have lost your head, Maddy!" I exclaimed, with as much earnestness as I could throw into the words.

"If I have, I don't think you have found it," quietly responded the young man to whom my remark had been addressed. "Look here, Gay Brooks, it's no use for you to set up as a wise and prudent old man, for you are nothing of the sort."

"I don't claim to be wise and prudent, and I am only seventeen—just a year behind you in the race of life; but, Maddy, I can tell when a scheme is wild, even for a boy."

"No, you can't, Gay," replied Maddy, with a little more energy. "You make a mountain out of a mole-hill, and then tell me I have lost my head."

"I think you are clean gone crazy, Maddy! You would not have been any more wild if you had proposed to make a visit to the North Pole," I continued,

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laughing, to soften the sharpness of my criticism. "But I don't believe you are serious, my dear skipper."

"I am as serious as ever I was in my life."

"And you really mean what you say?"

"Of course I mean what I say. Do you think I am a pullet that cackles as though I were going to join a comic-opera troupe?"

"I see you are. But throw your nonsense overboard, Maddy, and let us talk like two sensible young men," I replied, rising from my chair, for we were in the front parlor of my father's house in New York.

I seated myself again directly in front of Maddy, and looked him in the eye. He was as demure as though he had just proposed to go to church.

"So you really mean to say that you think of crossing the Atlantic in the *Sleeper?*" I asked, still looking him straight in the eye.

Maddy burst into a violent laugh.

"What is the matter now? Have you got another of your serious fits?" I interposed, not conscious that I had said anything funny.

"You are a dear, good fellow, Gay, and I love you more than I should any six brothers, if I had any," he answered. "But you put it just as though I had suggested the crossing of the Atlantic in a sleeping car. I never had any such idea."

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"I am not responsible for the absurd name of your yacht."

"I like the name," growled Maddy.

"Of course you do. You delight in calling black white, and white black. Because your yacht is exceptionally fast and able for one of her kind, you called her the *Sleeper*."

"Never mind the name. Everything that denoted speed, liveliness, had been taken up when I had to give a name to the yacht. *Sleeper* is a serious name, and I like it. I propose to cross the Atlantic in her."

"I understand you perfectly now, Maddy. Couldn't you amend the proposition a little, and say that you intend to visit the moon in her?"

"But I don't propose to visit the moon in her. With all my efforts to make you serious like myself, you are still flighty. I think of visiting Europe in the *Sleeper*, and not the moon."

"About the same thing."

"What an absurd old chicken you are, Gay! The *Sleeper* is bigger than the ships of Columbus, Hendrik Hudson, or any of those ancient fellows. By old measurement she is nearly a hundred tons. She is big enough to go around the world. If I don't back down, she will put her keel into all the salt waters of Europe,"

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"I dare say you are quite right in regard to the ability of the *Sleeper* to cross the ocean. I did not dispute that; but the idea of a young fellow of barely eighteen going off on such a cruise is what looks wild to me," I reasoned, as amiably as I could.

"Call it two young fellows of that age, for, of course, you are going with me," added Maddy, looking anxiously into my face.

"I don't know about that," I answered.

But my heart leaped with delight at the idea of visiting Europe.

"Hush! There goes the doorbell! Somebody is coming. Don't say a word about the trip. It is a secret, and I wouldn't have anything said about it for all the world," interposed Maddy.

And I had no occasion to doubt his seriousness on this point.

"Is it a runaway cruise?" I asked, in a whisper, and with very grave misgivings.

"Nothing of the sort, Gay. My father and mother know all about it; took a week to consider it, and then gave their willing consent. But not a word, and I will explain another time."

The servant announced Mr. Pallingrove.

He was a friend of mine, though at least ten years older than I was. I had made his acquaintance in an

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odd way, and he had always seemed to be very fond of me, though I did not know why he should be.

I felt obliged to see him, and said so to Maddy.

"Don't so much as hint to him a suspicion about my lunacy, Gay—not for all your old clothes!"

"I promise you that I will not, Maddy."

"That's enough for me, Gay. Now meet me on board of the *Sleeper* at one. We will lunch on board, and take a run down to Sandy Hook," continued Maddy, as he moved toward the door. "I will tell you all about the lunacy in the cabin of the yacht."

I went with him to the front door, and he left me after I had repeated my promise to be on board of the *Sleeper* at one.

His name was Madison Fayrthorne. His father was very rich, and his mother also, in her own right.

"I am glad to see you, Brooks," said Charles Pallingrove as I entered the reception room.

He rushed toward me, with both hands extended to grasp mine, as though I had been a brother whom he had not seen for years.

"How are you to-day, Mr. Pallingrove?" I replied, as the double hand-shaking began.

"Mr. Pallingrove!" he exclaimed, in a tone of reproach. "Excuse me for not addressing you as Mr. Brooks. When one friend insists upon formalities, the

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other ought to follow his example. Why don't you say 'Charley,' as all the rest of my intimate friends do?"

"I am a mere boy of seventeen, and you are a man in stature and in years. It seems hardly the thing to speak to you as though you were a fellow of my own age," I replied, laughing.

"But we are the best of friends, and I wish you to speak to me as you would to an older brother, you know," protested my visitor. "I have an intense admiration for you, and I don't wish any formality in our intercourse."

"Just as you please, Charley," I added, with a smile. "But friends should be honest and candid with each other."

"Exactly so! That is just what I have always said since I was old enough to say anything. A man can be my friend without being a friend to my faults and errors," replied Mr. Pallingrove warmly. "I quite agree with you; but what was the occasion of your making use of that remark at this time?"

"Because I must honestly and candidly say that I think you are overdoing this matter."

"I don't understand," he replied, shrugging his shoulders.

"Just now you had an intense admiration for me.

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That is what I call blarney, and I might even guess that you had kissed the famous stone at Blarney Castle."

"You do me injustice. What I have said was as sincere as a mother's prayer. I repeat that I have an intense admiration for you."

"That seems too absurd to be believed. Why should you have any such sentiment as admiration for a boy like me?" I inquired.

"I could easily guess a harder one than that," laughed Mr. Pallingrove. "In the first place, you are the finest singer of your age I ever heard. In the second, you speak four languages besides your own. In the third, you have a talent as a mimic that would insure your fortune in five years if you chose to make use of it in public."

"I don't think there is any virtue in those things," I replied modestly, as I felt in regard to my abilities. "My voice was the gift of nature, and so was the mimicry. My father speaks five languages, and he insisted that I should learn French, German, Italian, and Spanish, and he has been my principal teacher."

"You have marvelous gifts, and I cannot but admire them," added Mr. Pallingrove. "But I called for a purpose. I have a pair of trotters engaged for the afternoon, and I beg the pleasure of your company."

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I could not accept his invitation, for I was already engaged. He would not give it up until I had told him that I was to make a yacht trip to Sandy Hook. He left me, and I sat for some time wondering why a man ten years my senior should take such a fancy to me.

As I left the house to join Maddy, the postman put a letter in my hand. It was addressed to me, and I put it in my pocket.

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CHAPTER II.

MYSELF AND MY FATHER.

I made my way to the East River, where the *Sleeper* had been moored, thinking of what Charley Pallingrove had said to me. Young as I was, I was still modest enough to understand that he was very extravagant in his speech.

Being so greatly my senior in years, he was not just the associate I should have sought, and he was not just the kind of person I cared to be very intimate with, for he was inclined to be "fast," I thought.

I made his acquaintance by accident. I was exceedingly fond of music, and went to the opera when I could. One night, the person sitting next to me began to groan as though he was in great pain. It was just before the curtain fell at the end of the last act.

As the audience rose to depart, he became more violent in his demonstrations. I could not do less than offer to assist him. The person on the other side of him did the same; but the sufferer rejected his attentions and clung to me.

The sufferer was Mr. Pallingrove. I gave him my arm and conducted him out of the building. He

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thought some brandy would relieve him, and he dragged me into a barroom. By the time we reached the street he was very much better.

He pressed me to drink with him; but I refused to do so. I never tasted anything intoxicating under any circumstances. I had seen enough brandy drinking in my own home to set me against it for all the days of my life.

The brandy cured Mr. Pallingrove, though he seemed to me to have recovered before he drank it. If I had saved his life at the peril of my own, he could not have been more grateful or more profuse in his expressions of gratitude.

He acted as though he wanted to hug me. He called a carriage and insisted upon taking me home. When we parted he begged the favor of my acquaintance as though I had been a magnate of the first water.

For the next month he called upon me about every other day. Half the time I was not at home, and he left his card. He took me to the opera several times, and I had been out to ride with him in Central Park twice. He would have done something with me every day in the week if I had permitted.

I saw in the beginning that he was disposed to lead me into bad places. He used all his arts and persuasion to induce me to drink with him; but after the

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first time, I resolutely refused to enter a saloon with him.

He continued to follow me up with the utmost persistency, in spite of my frequent refusals to join him in what he called his "exhilarating pleasures."

His devotion to me was a mystery. I had known him about three months when my story opens.

I came to the conclusion that he wanted to "bring me out" as a singer or a mimic in the theatre or other public exhibitions. I had a secret of my own in this connection, which I had not revealed to Maddy Fayrthorne, much less to Mr. Pallingrove.

Though he often hinted at my making my fortune as a singer or a mimic, I never took the bait. He never went beyond a hint, and his devotion to me became more of a mystery than ever. After all he might be sincere, and I had to leave my doubts unsolved.

I had introduced him to Maddy, and they had met two or three times. But my yachting friend disliked him exceedingly, and never would invite him to sail in the *Sleeper*, though Maddy seldom made a trip without me. In fact, I was the second mate of the yacht, though it was an honorary rather than a working position.

I was on board of the yacht, which was a beautiful

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schooner, built by Herreshoff, half an hour before Maddy made his appearance.

While waiting for him, I may as well give a few particulars in regard to my family relations and past life.

On the doorplate of our house was the name of Milton Brooks. This was my father's name. He had been twice married, though both of his wives were now dead. I was the son of the first, and the second had died ten years before.

My mother died in my infancy, and my father had brought me from England, where I was born, when I was less than a year old. This was about all I could ever learn in regard to myself which dated farther back than my own memory reached.

I had asked my father, years before, a great many questions about his family in England, and especially about my mother. At first he evaded making any definite replies, and when I was a dozen years old my desire for information concerning the family in England made him morose and angry.

I soon learned that it was a forbidden topic, and I ceased to meddle with it. My father told me that he had been a courier in his younger days, and had traveled all over Europe with the nobility and gentry of

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England. In this capacity he had learned four languages besides his own.

He had no business of any kind, and for his own amusement, rather than my profit, he taught me the languages he had picked up in his former occupation. He knew nothing of the grammatical structure of any of these tongues, not even the English. He had learned them by the "natural method," as a child learns to talk.

He taught me in the same manner. He bought a grammar and some other books of all these languages for me. When I was sixteen I knew more about French, German, Italian, and Spanish than he did; and for six years, most of the evenings and a portion of the days were spent in practicing in foreign conversation.

At sixteen I had learned a great deal of the grammar of the languages, and I began to correct the speech of my father. He would not stand this; it made him angry. The result was that he discontinued his lessons. He refused to say anything to me except in English, for it made him furious when I used his forms in correct language, or adopted a proper pronunciation.

I studied French and German in school, and practiced Italian and Spanish with my music teacher.

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My father never manifested anything like paternal affection for me. He did not ill-treat or abuse me; he was simply utterly indifferent to me.

He paid my tuition bills without grumbling, including those of a rather expensive music professor—a Spaniard who had spent most of his life in Italy. But he rarely gave me a dime to spend on myself. On the recommendation of Professor De Marchena, my music teacher, he paid for my ticket to the opera once or twice a week during the season.

For a year before my story opens, my father had spent most of his time alone in his library. About once a week he gave a dinner party to a few of his friends, never exceeding half a dozen. So far as I could learn, he seldom, if ever, dined out of the house.

His guests did not reciprocate his dinners. I was never allowed to be present at even one of them. There was a reason for my exclusion, for host and guests drank brandy as long as they could see out of their eyes.

He took little or no notice of me after our conversation ceased. I had perfect liberty. If I was out till midnight, no questions were asked. If I wanted a dollar, or any other sum above a nickel, I was sure of a savage refusal.

On the house bills of a certain concert company

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the name of "Augustus Leslie" was not unfamiliar to amusement seekers. I was Augustus Leslie. I sang in a quartette, and gave imitations of prominent actors and orators. From five dollars a week, my salary had been increased to twenty-five. A variety establishment had written a letter to "Mr. Leslie," offering him double this salary. I refused to connect myself with a theatre.

I used but little of the money I secretly earned, and put most of it into a savings bank. My deposit now amounted to about a thousand dollars.

It seemed to me that my father was running down hill very fast. I spoke to Mrs. Falgood, the housekeeper, about it; but she insisted that he was all right, and told me I had better mind my own business.

My father's financial affairs were as much a mystery to me as his antecedents. He did not own the house in which we lived, or any other real estate, so far as I could learn. He had nothing to do with any bank; but he always seemed to have money enough to pay all his bills.

Once or twice a year a letter came to him from London. I never saw the inside of one of these letters, and knew not who his English correspondent was. A question about the letters made him very angry.

I noticed that whenever one of these letters was

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received my father always went downtown. His income must in some way be connected with these letters, was my conclusion. The whole matter was entirely in the dark to me.

I seated myself in the standing room of the *Sleeper*, and took the letter the postman had handed me from my pocket. I was looking up the street on shore when I snapped the wax seal on the back of the envelope. It was not secured with mucilage, and opened when I had broken the seal. I was thinking of something else, and mechanically unfolded the sheet of paper.

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CHAPTER III.

BY SPECIAL PROVIDENCE.

The *Sleeper* had been hauled up alongside the pier, though she was generally anchored off in the stream. I was looking up Rivington Street all the time I was opening the letter. I did not even glance at it, and only saw that it was secured with sealing wax when I took it from my pocket.

A person receiving a letter but seldom is very likely to look at the outside of it, and wonder whom it comes from. I had read my own name on the envelope when the postman gave it to me, and had seen that it was in the peculiar handwriting of Professor De Marchena. He had been out of town, and was to inform me when he would give his next lesson.

But the letter was not in his writing, I saw the instant I looked at it. The hand was quite as peculiar, though entirely different from that of the professor.

I glanced at the signature, but it did not enlighten me. It was not an easy matter to decipher the writing, but I went to work upon the task at once.

There was no "dear sir," or any other formal ad-

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dress, at the beginning. I soon studied it out, and within five minutes I had read it four times.

If an earthquake had lifted the *Sleeper* from her moorings, and carried her to the middle of the Bowery, with me on board, I could not have been more shaken up than I was by the contents of this letter.

Just then I did not care whether Maddy came or not, or when the professor would give me the next lesson. I was utterly lost to everything around me.

I was startled through every nerve of my frame. I was confounded, and then overwhelmed, by the stunning import of the document in my hand. This was the letter:

"Your demand is unreasonable. We will not pay fifty thousand pounds, or even a half or a quarter of that sum. The only person, besides yourself, who could identify the boy, is Maldrake. He has not been heard of for ten years, and he is dead without a doubt.

"Though the term expires in about two years, we are willing to continue the annuity of one thousand pounds as long as you live, and to pay you at once the five thousand pounds you say you need.

"If you tell the boy that you are not his father, you will kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. He can never come into possession of the property, and, therefore, cannot pay you better than we do.

"I warn you again, as I have done twice before,

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that all you do is observed and reported to us. If you proceed in your treacherous course, your very life is in danger. P. GRANTHAM.

"London."

Of course, this letter was not intended for me. But its contents plainly concerned me more than any other person on the face of the earth. It was intended for the person whom I had always regarded as my father. It fully explained why he had never been a father to me.

I had dropped the envelope on the floor of the standing room. I desired to ascertain how I had made the mistake of opening a letter for Milton Brooks, supposing it to be addressed to me.

I picked up the envelope, which lay with the broken seal upward. When I turned it over, I found another letter directed to me. The mucilage on the back of it had been moistened in some way, and it stuck to the face of the London epistle.

When I pulled them apart, I found the address of Milton Brooks, as it always appeared on the face of his London letters. The handwriting was the same, but plainer than that inside of the missive.

In a word, I had opened a letter intended for my father. I had read it through before I realized that it was not addressed to me. Possibly I was careless,

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but I was entirely innocent of any intentional wrong. I would not have broken the seal of a letter for another person even if I had suspected the nature of its contents.

Indeed, I had such a consciousness of innocence that it seemed to be a special providence which had arranged the circumstances of getting the contents of this letter to my knowledge.

A bit of mucilage and a little moisture on the hand of the postman had put me in possession of a most momentous secret, the revealing of which must change the whole course of my life.

I could not regard it as an accident, except in a very narrow human view of a trivial circumstance. It was a wise Providence which had brought about this initial step in the unmasking of Milton Brooks and his correspondents in London. In the very moment of my discovery this thought took possession of my mind.

My relations with my supposed father were sufficiently explained by this letter. Now I had the key to his coldness and indifference. I need hardly say that I was glad to find that he was not my father. We have no choice in selecting our fathers; but Milton Brooks was not the sort of person I would have chosen if I had been consulted in the matter.

Somebody on the other side of the Atlantic paid

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him a thousand pounds a year to support himself and me, and keep from me the secret that he was not my father.

"P. Grantham," who used the first person plural, as though he represented some one or more besides himself, spoke of the "property" in his letter. Doubtless this was the estate of my father. I concluded that he must be no longer living. If he were, he would hold the "property" himself. Milton Brooks was assured that I could never come into possession of it.

These statements indicated that I had been wronged and cheated out of my inheritance. The estate must be very considerable, or those in possession of it could not afford to pay Milton Brooks nearly five thousand dollars a year, and nearly twenty-five thousand dollars he happened to need, to keep the secret that I was not his son.

As I reckoned it, they had paid, and proposed to pay, about a hundred thousand dollars, without going beyond the immediate future.

"All you do is observed and reported to us," said Mr. Grantham.

The conspirators had one or more spies in their employ. Mrs. Falgood, the housekeeper, was an Englishwoman, and I wondered if she was not one of them. She took good care of Milton Brooks, though she

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seemed to be entirely willing that he should drink himself to death.

When I suggested that something might be done to check his downward career, she told me that he was doing very well, and that I had better mind my own affairs.

I now recalled the fact that I had occasionally seen Mrs. Falgood engaged in writing letters. No letters ever came for her, and she never asked me to mail a letter for her.

I felt certain that she was the person who "observed" and "reported" upon everything done by Milton Brooks. Very likely she was the only one, for I could think of no one else who was in position to observe the actions of my supposed father.

Milton Brooks had evidently proposed to compromise with his fellow conspirators. He asked an enormous sum as the price of his silence, which P. Grantham refused to pay. This sum was probably a commutation of the annuity.

He had the tremendous secret, and he could demand any sum he pleased. His employers had certainly been liberal, judging by only what this letter revealed, and they were willing to be even more so.

After I had considered the revelations of the momentous letter, I wondered at the marvelous stupidity

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of "P. Grantham" in trusting so much of his secret to the chances of a sealed envelope. But that was part of the special providence.

I had the facts, and had drawn my own inferences from them. I had constructed a theory of the doings of the conspirators, as a skillful scientist describes an extinct animal from a survey of a few bones. I was entitled, of my natural right, to a name and estate in England. Milton Brooks was employed and paid to keep me out of it. Of so much I was absolutely certain.

The theory settled, the next thing was action. In spite of Milton Brooks and the spies who watched him, I would defeat the conspirators. My first impulse was to confront my father, and demand my rights. I think I should have done this if I had not seen Maddy Fayrthorne coming down the pier.

Just then it occurred to me that there were difficulties in my path. Milton Brooks knew all about the business by which I had been robbed of my birthright. He knew, but he would not tell.

The only other person who could identify the boy was Maldrake, who was probably dead. In short, I was in the power of Milton Brooks. He alone could save me, was my last view.

Maddy came on board. I did not heed him. He

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stood some time in the standing room looking at me. He could not help seeing in my appearance that something had happened to me.

Maddy could not possibly be one of P. Grantham's spies, and I decided on the instant to tell him what the letter had revealed to me. He was the only intimate friend I had, if I except Mr. Pallingrove.

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CHAPTER IV.

A SCHOONER-LOAD OF ADVICE.

"What is the matter, Gay? You look as though you hadn't a friend in the world but me," said Maddy Fayrthorne, after he had looked at me in silence for a while.

"I don't think I have, Maddy. I am utterly alone in the world," I replied.

And the feeling that I was the victim of a conspiracy no doubt made me look like a martyr waiting for the stake.

"What do you mean by that? Has your father died since I left you at your house? I see you have become serious, like me," he added, with mock solemnity.

"I have no father!"

"No father!" exclaimed Maddy. "Then the gentleman in——"

"He is not my father, and never was!" I interposed.

And possibly a little of the tragic muse worked itself into my manner.

"If he ever was your father, it would stand to reason that he was your father at the present time, if he

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is still in the land of the living; and I suppose you wouldn't be here if he had gone hence. It says 'Milton Brooks' on the door of your house, and if that gentleman ever was——"

"He never was!" I broke in, very much agitated, as the situation flashed through my mind anew. "Milton Brooks never was my father, though I always supposed he was."

"What's broken, Gay? What has come over you? You didn't show anything of this sort when I saw you at home. I thought you were getting serious, but you have levity enough to fit out a circus clown."

"Since I left you, Maddy, I have found out that Milton Brooks is not my father," I answered, crowding down the emotions that were struggling for expression. "I can't go on this trip with you; I must go up to the house, and have the biggest row I ever got into in my life."

I moved toward the gangway.

"I should judge by your actions that something dreadful had happened, Gay. The only thing for you to do just now is to keep cool."

"I will try to do that."

"We were to talk over the run across the ocean on this trip, Gay, and I promised to tell you all about it."

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"I have lost my interest in that trip," I added moodily.

"You have found out that Milton Brooks is not your father. I shouldn't groan over that. From what I have heard you say, he is not much of a father, and you won't miss him greatly."

"Milton Brooks is a villain!"

"I don't know about that; but as a father to Gay Brooks, I should say he was not a success."

"I don't know what to do," I exclaimed, bewildered, as I considered the difficulties in my path.

"I'm sure I don't," added Maddy, shrugging his shoulders. "But I think you could walk up and pick up half a dozen fathers who would do better service in that line than Mr. Brooks."

"I can trust you, Maddy?"

"If you think so, Gay, lend me a dollar."

"Come into the cabin, and I will tell you all about it, Maddy," I continued; for I felt that I needed advice, if not support, in my trying position.

"I don't ask any questions, and I don't mind anybody's business but my own," replied Maddy. "Don't tell me anything for my sake."

"But I want your advice."

"Advice is cheap, certainly; and I can give you enough to load a schooner."

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"This is a very serious matter for me, Maddy."

"Then it is just in my line, Gay. But while you are spinning your yarn, and I am giving you a schooner-load of advice, why can't we run down to Sandy Hook?"

"I don't object, though I intended to pitch into Milton Brooks at once. We will look the matter over on the trip. But no one must hear what I say; it might ruin me, destroy me."

Maddy called Mr. Waxall, the mate, and ordered him to get the yacht under way. We retired to the cabin, and I produced the letter of P. Grantham.

Maddy read it; then he read it again, and after that a third time. He did not say a word, and I sat on needles. Then he began to construct a theory out of the facts. He reached about the same conclusion I had.

"But what am I to do, Maddy? That is the great question with me; in fact, it is the only question," I interposed, when I saw that he was coming out just where I had before he reached the yacht.

"Excuse me, Gay, but you are excited, and you must get cool. The great question is not what you are to do, but what you are not to do," replied Maddy, with the most stoical indifference, as it seemed to me.

"There are a thousand things I am not to do."

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"In the first place, you are not to open your mouth to Milton Brooks, or any one in the house, about this business. That is the first thing you are not to do," replied Maddy, more positively than he often spoke.

"But that seems to be the only thing I can do," I added.

"It is about the only stupid thing you can do."

"But Milton Brooks and others have cheated me out of my inheritance, and you ask me to keep still about it."

"That's my schooner-load of advice. It doesn't cost you anything, and you needn't follow it if it doesn't suit you," continued Maddy, shrugging his shoulders again.

"I am to let things run along just as they have, and allow Milton Brooks to suppose I don't know he isn't my father. Is that what you mean?" I asked, with some indignation.

"Precisely that. Of course, you can do as you please. Do you think Mr. Brooks will own up and admit that you are the son of your father, but not his son?"

"I don't expect anything of the kind."

"He gets five thousand a year for keeping you out of the way. Do you think he will give up this bone before it is picked clean?"

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"Of course he won't."

"Suppose you write to Mr. Grantham, and kindly request him to tell you who your father is, and hand over the property of which he speaks in his letter. Of course you believe he is a little lamb, and will do it."

"I am not such a simpleton as to believe anything of the sort," I protested warmly.

"All right; then you will see Maldrake, and he will identify you. Then you will step into your possessions and sail a bigger yacht than the *Sleeper*."

"Maldrake is probably dead. No one knows anything about him. You are making fun of me, Maddy."

"I am only arguing my side of the question. The only way to get ahead in this business is to fight the conspirators in the dark. Hold on to what you know and add to it all the time. With the little you have learned, you are in condition to learn more."

"I see!" I exclaimed, as I got his idea. "You are right, and your schooner-load of advice has come to the right port."

"Good! I am glad to see that you are getting a little more serious. I should not live twenty-four hours in that house without knowing something more about this business, Gay."

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"Should you look his papers and letters over if you got the chance?"

"I should; and what is more, I should make the chance," answered Maddy, with emphasis.

"I don't like to meddle with other people's business."

"Precisely so; and that is just my style. But this is your business. The house is kept for your benefit, and all the papers and other letters relate to you. You have been cheated out of your birthright, and it is your duty to confound those who have robbed you. The house and all that is in it are paid for out of your money. But look out for Falgood. I agree with you that she is a spy in the employ of the conspirators on the other side of the Atlantic. I have no doubt she would give you a dose of strychnine if she thought the interest of her employers required it."

We talked the matter over until Barber, the steward, brought in the lunch. Maddy was as much interested as though the case were his own, though he perpetrated many of his serious jokes in the course of the conversation. We were now in perfect accord as to what was to be done, and especially as to what was not to be done.

We returned to the city before dark, and I went

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home. As I entered the house, it seemed to me just as though a great revolution had been accomplished. The rooms and the furniture looked different. I had certainly entered upon a new phase of life. Everything had assumed a new aspect.

"Your father is quite sick to-night, Gay," said Mrs. Falgood, when I went into the parlor where she spent most of her time.

It was what we called the back parlor, the one on the street being opened only when we had company. On the floor above were two corresponding rooms, the front one being my father's library or office, and the rear one his sleeping room. My room was the hall chamber over the front entry. A door connected it with the office, as Milton Brooks preferred to call it, though it was kept locked all the time.

"Is he very sick, Mrs. Falgood?" I inquired.

"He complains a great deal, and has gone to bed," answered the housekeeper, in a surly tone; and she seemed to think she had said too much to me.

"I will go up and see him," I remarked, as I moved toward the door.

"Don't go near him," she said, almost fiercely.

"I shall see him," I repeated quietly; for Maddy had carefully schooled me in the necessity of keeping

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entirely cool, and had advised me to assert myself in the house, even if I quarreled with Mrs. Falgood.

"I tell you not to go near him."

And she spoke as one having authority.

I made no reply, but hastened upstairs. What a godsend it would be to this spy's employers if Milton Brooks would only die! P. Grantham would gladly compensate her for the loss of her place as housekeeper. The event would quiet all the fears of the conspirators in England. I was still to regard Milton Brooks as my father, and I felt that it would be criminal to leave him to the tender mercies of such a wretch as Mrs. Falgood.

I went into my room to get my slippers. As I passed the door of the rear chamber, I heard groans, indicating that the sick man was in great pain. I put on my slippers, so that I could walk without noise, and then went out into the hall. The office door was locked as usual. At the rear door stood Mrs. Falgood, ready to dispute my passage into the chamber.

"You can't go into this room," said Mrs. Falgood, when I went out into the entry.

"My father is sick, and I shall see him," I answered, as calmly as before.

"You shall not see him."

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The housekeeper was of medium stature, but she was strong and active. I walked up to the door, and easily crowded her away from it, for she evidently did not expect any physical resistance to her commands; but she had locked the door and put the key in her pocket.

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CHAPTER V.

WAR IN THE HOUSE.

My active treatment of her opposition threw Mrs. Falgood in a violent passion. As I tried to open the door of my father's chamber, and found it locked, she began to storm at me in the most savage manner.

"My father is sick and in pain, and it seems quite proper that his son should see him," I began, as cool as I had been all along. "I will thank you for the key of his room.

"You shall not have it!" she replied firmly.

"I will not make a disturbance at the door of my father's room by taking it from you by force; but that is what we will come to if you don't give me the key," I replied, as I retreated to my own chamber and locked the door as I entered it.

I had said enough to enable her to understand me. I had never quarreled with her or resisted her commands before, and no doubt she was confounded to find that the lamb had suddenly become a lion.

My conduct was in accordance with Maddy's advice. What I was doing was not so much for what I might

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directly accomplish as it was to compel the woman to "unmask her batteries."

My object was to have her know that I meant to assert myself; to convince her at once that I was no longer a passive being.

In a word, while my father (as I shall still call him) was ill, I desired to quarrel with her, so that she should take some decided action, which I should not fail to observe, now that my eyes had been opened. I had given her the first lesson, and I was satisfied so far as Mrs. Falgood was concerned.

If Milton Brooks was the only available person who could prove my identity, and who knew my real name and connections, it would certainly be a calamity to have him die. Such an event would exactly suit P. Grantham & Co.; but it would not suit me.

Villain as the sick man had been proved to be by the London letter, I was not willing to have him die without proper medical attention and nursing, whatever the consequences to me personally.

My decided action would soon enable me to prove whether the housekeeper was a spy or not. I intended to call in a physician and a nurse, if necessary.

The new order of things had begun, for I felt sure that I should accomplish whatever I undertook, in spite of Mrs. Falgood.

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After these demonstrations—in other words, after I had taken possession of the house—she would be likely to write a letter reporting the situation to her employers.

If she wrote a letter—as I was confident she would—I intended to see the outside of it at least. But my present business was to see my father. His groans indicated that he needed active treatment. Certainly Mrs. Falgood was doing nothing for him. It was her policy to do nothing.

Doubtless the woman believed that she had won a victory over me and driven me from the field by locking the chamber door and taking away the key. I turned my attention to the door which opened from my room into the office, which also connected with the sick man's chamber.

Just then I happened to think of the letter from London, which was still in my pocket. Maddy had insisted that it should be given to Milton Brooks. We had made two copies of it in the cabin of the *Sleeper*, one of which was to be kept by each of us.

I had taken some interest in chemistry while I was at school, and I had a few of the implements used in illustrating the science. Among them was a blowpipe. I lighted the gas, and with the aid of the pipe, softened the wax with which the letter had been sealed,

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accurately adjusted the two parts of the seal, and stuck them together so that nothing but the closest examination would show that it had been broken.

I put the letter on the table, and again applied myself to the problem of opening the door into the office. The house was an old-fashioned one, and the locks were not of modern construction. I had hung my handkerchief on the knob of the entry door, so that it covered the keyhole, for I knew that Mrs. Falgood had an eye that would fit any keyhole in the house.

The key was in the office door, on the inside. The end of it protruded into my chamber. With a pair of gas tongs I used in fitting up my chemical apparatus, I readily turned it so that I could push it out of the lock on the floor. I heard it fall upon the carpet.

The blowpipe was the most convenient picklock I had among my few tools. I inserted it in the lock, and working it very carefully, I finally succeeded in shoving the bolt of the lock. I fancied the housekeeper was at my door listening for sounds. I spent full five minutes in getting that door open without noise. I used my oil can as soon as I had swung it far enough to get at the hinges.

Taking the London letter in my hand, I went into the office, and laid it on the desk. The moans of my father were more audible than before, and I concluded

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that he was growing worse rather than better. Very carefully I crept into his chamber. I walked up to his bed. He looked very sick, and I had no doubt he was suffering from the effects of alcoholism.

"How do you feel, father?" I inquired. And I could not help pitying one who was enduring such agony.

"Very bad, Gay. I have got bilious colic again, and I am going to die. Can't something be done for me?"

"Shall I do what I can for you, father?" I asked. "Mrs. Falgood would not let me come into the room, and I had to force my way in. She doesn't care whether you live or die, father."

"No, she doesn't," groaned the sick man. "I told her to get the doctor; but she would not. Do what you can, Gay."

"I shall have to fight with Mrs. Falgood if I do anything," I added, preferring to act with his sanction.

"Turn her out of the house if you like, but do what you can for me," gasped my father. "Call in the doctor."

"You need a nurse as much as a doctor, though I will do the best I can."

"Get a nurse."

I hastened back to my chamber. I didn't care

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whether Mrs. Falgood heard me or not now. I had authority to do what I thought best. In the winter I had had a severe attack of neuralgia, so that I could not sleep nights. I went to the doctor, and he gave me half a dozen little morphine pills, of one-eighth of a grain each. I had taken only two of them, and I had the other four.

I returned to the bedside with this medicine. I gave my father two of the pills, and in a few minutes he was a little better.

He then insisted that I should go for the doctor at once.

I locked the office door, and left the key on my side. I fastened the entry door when I went out, and put the key in my pocket. Mrs. Falgood retreated from my door as soon as she heard me coming out.

"Gay Brooks, you have been in your father's room, contrary to my directions!" she exclaimed, as soon as she saw me.

"I don't care a straw for your directions. I want you to understand one thing: I am master of this house while my father is sick. If you interfere with me, I will turn you out of the house, if I have to call in a policeman to do it for me. That is all I have to say at present, Mrs. Falgood," I replied, as I rushed down the stairs as fast as my legs would carry me.

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She followed me.

"Where are you going now, Gay?" she asked, evidently confounded by what I had just said.

"That does not concern you," I answered, as mildly as ever.

I took the big key and the night key from the door when I went out, so that she could not fasten the door upon me. The doctor lived in the next block. My father had had him several times before, but he always went to him at his house for his ailments.

I found the physician at home, and was shown into his office. He was talking with a woman, but he immediately gave his attention to me.

I told him I wanted him to see my father without a moment's delay.

"I will see you when I return, Mrs. Castleton; and I know of a place where they want a first-class nurse," said Doctor Webb, as he seized his hat.

"If this lady is a nurse, we want her at once," I interposed.

"She is the best nurse in New York City. Come with us, Mrs. Castleton," added the active and prompt physician. "What is the matter with your father, Gay?"

"He says it is bilious colic, and he is in very great pain. I gave him a couple of those little morphine

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pills you ordered for me last winter," I answered, as we hurried up the street.

"Quite right, Gay."

By this time we had reached the door of our house. I applied one of the keys, and then the other. I could not open the door.

I understood what this meant well enough. One of the dining-room windows in the basement was open at the top. I sprang through the opening, and in a moment more had removed the board Mrs. Falgood had placed under the lock and against the lower stair.

She appeared at once to dispute the passage of the doctor and the nurse. It looked like war. When she attempted to prevent me from removing the board, I hurled her from me, and she fell upon the floor.

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CHAPTER VI.

A DECIDED VICTORY.

I took no further notice of the housekeeper, and allowed her to pick herself up in her own good time. She was boiling over with wrath and began to abuse me.

The servant girl came up from the kitchen, wondering what had happened.

"This way, doctor; this way, Mrs. Castleton," I said, as I led the way up the front stairs.

"But what's the meaning of all this? Was the door locked to keep me out? If I am not wanted, I don't wish to intrude," said Doctor Webb.

"It is simply a quarrel between the housekeeper on one side and my father and myself on the other. The woman did not want my father to have a doctor. That's all. I can't stop to explain any more at present," I answered, as I reached the second floor.

I found the door of my father's chamber was still locked. I conducted the physician and the nurse through my own room and the office to the apartment of the sick man.

The doctor immediately ordered hot applications to

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be applied to the seat of the pain. The nurse went to work without delay.

Mrs. Castleton went to the kitchen with me, and I directed the servant girl to supply whatever she wanted.

Mrs. Falgood was nursing her wrath in the back parlor, and did not follow me to the basement. Possibly she had enough of my kind of discipline.

The doctor stayed half an hour, and when he left, my father was quite comfortable. In the office the physician told me what had caused the attack, though I knew as well as he did. I asked him to tell his patient the simple truth, and he promised to do so at his next visit. The doctor had hardly left the house when the doorbell rang.

I had gone upstairs after parting with the doctor. I looked down the stairway and saw Mollie admit Mr. Pallingrove. The gentleman was shown to the front parlor, and the servant started to go upstairs to call me. Mrs. Falgood stopped her and went into the front parlor herself. I was rather astonished at this move on the part of the housekeeper.

My father was now free from pain, though very weak and exhausted from the agonies he had suffered.

I learned from him that he had been taken sick about three o'clock in the afternoon. Mrs. Falgood

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had done nothing for him beyond giving him a dose of peppermint.

Everything looked so well in the sick room that I decided to go down and see Mr. Pallingrove for a few moments.

When I reached a point on the stairs where I could see into the front parlor, I saw that Mr. Pallingrove and the housekeeper were engaged in what appeared to me to be a very earnest and interesting conversation.

I did not know that Mrs. Falgood had ever seen my gushing friend before, and they seemed to have got ahead very rapidly in their acquaintance.

I stopped a moment on the stairs; but I could not hear a word of the talk between them, it was conducted in so low a tone.

But Mrs. Falgood saw me at this moment, and changed her demeanor on the instant I went into the room. The housekeeper bestowed a glance of hatred upon me and then sailed out of the parlor.

Mr. Pallingrove rushed toward me, both hands extended, as usual, and the sweetest of smiles on his animated face.

"I am delighted to see you, my dear Gay. But I am sorry to learn from Mrs. Falgood that your father is

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very sick," said he, pressing my hands with affectionate warmth.

"He is much better now. But you seem to be well acquainted with Mrs. Falgood, Mr. Pallingrove. I was not aware that you had met before," I continued, wishing to sound my visitor.

"You didn't know it? Why, bless you, my boy, she was my father's housekeeper for seven years," exclaimed Mr. Pallingrove, with his usual enthusiasm.

"Where was that?" I asked.

"Down in Maryland, where I was raised."

"I didn't know that before," I replied quietly.

"Mrs. Falgood is one of the best women that ever walked this earthly sphere. I owe my life to her, for she took care of me when I had a fever. I assure you she is an angel, if there ever was one in this world."

"She is quite a different woman now, for we are about to turn her out of the house, knowing her to be a very undesirable person to have in it. She would have let my father die if I had not interfered. She is more virago than angel," I replied bluntly.

"You surprise me. It is not possible that you would be willing to dispense with her services," protested Mr. Pallingrove, and he looked as though he was very much astonished.

I said what I had because I thought it likely that

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the housekeeper had said something to him about me. I suspected treachery, but I could not put my finger on it.

"I never had a particle of trouble with her till this afternoon, but she has always regarded me as a cipher in the family. She does not take proper care of my father," I explained.

"She is the best woman I ever knew, and I think you will make a great mistake if you allow her to leave you," replied Mr. Pallingrove. "She is high-minded, moral, and religious, and all that sort of thing. The only fault I ever found with her was because she would preach to me."

He continued for some time longer to speak in praise of Mrs. Falgood. He only left when I told him that I must go to my father's room. He had said everything he could to induce me to retain the housekeeper.

As I was coming out of the parlor, Mrs. Falgood appeared again in the hall. She invited Mr. Pallingrove into the back parlor. I did not quite like this action, and I concluded not to go upstairs, as my father was doing very well under the care of Mrs. Castleton.

Mrs. Falgood looked daggers at me as I entered the room.

"By the way, Charley, I think you said you were

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born and brought up in Hagerstown, in Maryland?" I began, as I seated myself.

"That's what I said. Mrs. Falgood can tell you all about the place," he replied, with refreshing promptness.

He had not said anything of the kind. I had merely mentioned the first town outside of Baltimore that came to my mind. He had been amusing me with falsehoods, and making lies out of whole cloth. The housekeeper had come from England three years before, according to her own statements, and I had met her on board of the steamer on her arrival.

To Pallingrove's appeal Mrs. Falgood replied that she had lived at Hagerstown, but she was not very well acquainted there, and had forgotten about it, for she had gone from Hagerstown to England.

She saw the trap into which Pallingrove had led her, and she had the tact to crawl out of it. But I was satisfied, and I knew that I had made another point against the conspirators. I flattered myself that I was not the green boy for whom Mr. Pallingrove had taken me.

His sickness at the opera house, his frequent visits to our house, without a particle of encouragement, his gushing and devotion to me were all explained.

Charley Pallingrove was another spy.

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"How is your father now, my dear Gay?" asked Mr. Pallingrove.

The question was to remind me that I ought to go upstairs and attend to him.

"He is quite comfortable. He has an excellent nurse, and is doing very well," I replied, as though I had just come from his chamber.

"I am very glad to hear it. But I think you have not seen him for half an hour or more," he added, with one of his most taking smiles. "I really cannot leave you until I have heard the latest news from him. You have all my sympathy, and I don't believe I shall sleep a wink to-night for thinking of you."

This was very considerate of him, but he had something more to say to Mrs. Falgood. He could not help seeing that the arrangements of the conspirators had been knocked out of gear by Mrs. Falgood, who had overdone her part.

I thought I knew just what he wanted to say to her. He wished to tell her that she had gone too far, and that she must conciliate me, in order to retain her place in the house. I was so confident I was right that I decided to go up and obtain the latest news in regard to my father.

When I went into the room, Mrs. Castleton said he was asleep. He was under the influence of mor-

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phine, but he had been entirely relieved from pain, and his repose was as quiet as that of a child. The doctor and the nurse had performed a miracle, for my father would certainly have died if he had not obtained relief. Doctor Webb said as much to me the next day.

I went into the office, for I wished to give Pallingrove time to instruct Mrs. Falgood in regard to her future course. I knew what that course was to be. The housekeeper was to remain at any sacrifice of her own will and inclination. I was sure she would come to me with a humble apology as soon as she had the opportunity.

I seated myself in the office. I was undecided as to my future conduct in regard to the housekeeper. I was considering the subject, when I saw that the key of my father's desk was in the lock. He had evidently been overcome by pain, and had not secured his papers with his usual care.

I raised the lid, and saw a bundle of letters, which had evidently been hastily thrown into the desk. I took out the package. The letters were still in their envelopes, and were all directed in the same handwriting as the one I had opened that day by accident. I determined to examine these letters at my leisure. I took them to my room, and locked them up in a drawer of my bureau.

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CHAPTER VII.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

I put the key of the desk in my pocket, so that I could return the letters when I had done with them, and so that Mrs. Falgood might not suspect anything from the fact that the key was in the lock. I heard the supper bell ring, and I started to go down stairs. The housekeeper heard my approach, and Pallingrove came out into the hall.

"How is he, my dear fellow? I tremble while I ask the question," said the visitor, looking at me with anxious interest.

"He is asleep, and he will get along now, without any doubt," I replied.

"I am exceedingly glad to hear it. You have lifted a load of anxiety from my mind."

"My father will be all right in a few days, though he is very weak."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Pallingrove, as he moved toward the door. "By the way, my dear Gay, you must excuse me for meddling with what is none of my business, but I want to say a word more to you

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about Mrs. Falgood, whom I look upon as an excellent woman."

None of his business! I had no doubt he was handsomely paid to reside in New York and do the very business he apologized for doing.

"What you said about Mrs. Falgood surprised me so greatly that I spoke to her about her conduct. She is our old housekeeper and nurse, you know, and we were always quite familiar. I take the liberty of saying anything I please to her."

"So do I, though I only began to do so to-day," I replied.

"Quite right, and the good soul doesn't blame you a particle for what you have said and done. Pardon me for meddling, but you were a little too hasty, my dear Gay, with this lady, and that has caused all the trouble. She thought your father was asleep, and she did not wish you to disturb him."

"Does she think a man sleeps when he is groaning and howling with pain?" I demanded.

"She thought so, at any rate. Your answer excited her anger, and you may blame yourself for all that happened after that. But she was doubly wrong to get angry and attempt to oppose you by force. She sees it herself now, and she is willing to make an

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ample apology, and to regard your wishes as commands in the future. She will say so to you herself."

I had no doubt she would.

Pallingrove continued to extol Mrs. Falgood, and pleaded to have me try her once more. I made no promises, and permitted him to depart, though he did his best to induce me to commit myself in her favor.

I went down to supper. As I seated myself at the table, Mrs. Falgood made the most abject apology. She had no will of her own; she would obey me as a child. In fact, she overdid the apology business as badly as she had her opposition to me.

"I have always regarded you as a child, and I hope you will forgive me for not realizing that you are now almost a man," she continued.

"So far as I am concerned, I freely forgive you. I bear no malice," I replied; and I could not say less after so humble an apology. "I interfered only for my father's sake. He was sick, very sick, and you were doing nothing for him."

"I had done all that I thought was necessary. You spoke to me about his failing. I supposed he had drunk too much, and would get over it in a few hours. It is generally best to let him alone at such times," she explained.

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"But he would have died if he had not obtained relief."

"Perhaps I mistook the case. At any rate, I did what I thought was best. There is no occasion for the nurse you have called in."

"The nurse must remain for the present," I said.

And I saw that she had a good deal of feeling in regard to her.

"Very well," she replied, biting her lips.

Mrs. Falgood was very attentive to me at the table, and seemed to be trying to play the part of the angel Pallingrove said she was.

I told her that my father must settle the whole business as soon as he was able to consider it. I left the table in something of a hurry, for I had to make two appearances at an entertainment that evening.

I received a weekly salary, but my engagement terminated on Saturday. I had decided not to renew it.

When I went upstairs, I found that my father was still sleeping. Mrs. Falgood brought the key and opened the door in the entry. She was polite, but very stiff with Mrs. Castleton, and stayed with the patient while she went down to supper.

I went out, as usual, without saying anything to the housekeeper; but I returned before eleven o'clock. Mrs. Falgood had retired, and the nurse was still on

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duty. I told her to call me if my father waked and was in condition to see me. I went to my room, but not to my bed.

I locked the door and took out the bundle of letters. I covered the keyhole of the door and proceeded to examine the documents. I was very much agitated, for I expected to find something that would inform me who and what I was.

The letters were all signed by P. Grantham, and were all in the same handwriting as the one I had read on board of the *Sleeper*. Most of them had contained bills of exchange for five hundred pounds. This was the half-yearly payment to Milton Brooks for keeping me out of the way.

In one of the oldest letters I found this sentence:

"Address P. Grantham, 19 Little Queen Street."

This was all I found in twenty letters that was of the least use to me. There was no allusion in any of them to any person which would afford me a clue to the employers of P. Grantham. I was terribly disappointed at the result of my examination. But it was stupid for me to expect to find anything. If the conspirators were living on my property, they would not be likely to give any hint of their identity. I should not have expected to find anything if Mr. P. Gran-

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tham had not been so inexpressibly foolish as to write the letter that had opened my eyes.

But I had the address of P. Grantham in London, and that was something to start upon. There was no allusion to Maldrake.

The letter I had accidentally opened was evidently the only one relating to the demand of Milton Brooks for fifty thousand pounds.

At the end of the two latest letters in the package, I found the warning which Mr. Grantham had repeated in the letter received that day.

I tied up the package of letters just as I had found them and returned them to the desk. I looked over the other papers it contained; but there was nothing that could be of service to me. I knew of no other place where my father kept any papers, and I wondered why he had preserved all these letters.

I went to bed and slept till seven in the morning, when a knock at my door awoke me. It was the nurse. She told me her patient had asked her for some brandy, and she was afraid to give it to him without the doctor's consent.

I hastened into the chamber. My father looked as though he had been sick for a month, and was very pale and shaky.

He must have some brandy, he said, and I took

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the responsibility of giving it to him. Of course, his nerves were very much disordered by hard drinking, and I knew that liquor was almost the only thing that would quiet him.

My father spoke to me in German. He asked me then about Mrs. Falgood. I told him about my several encounters with her; that she had refused to let me see him, and had barred the door against me when I came with the doctor and the nurse.

"She did nothing for me, and I believe she meant to let me die," said my father, looking me closely in the face.

"I think you are right, father; she meant to let you die without assistance," I added; for I thought it was better that his eyes should be opened in regard to the woman.

"How did you get into my room, if she locked the door?" he asked, deeply interested.

I explained in what manner I had opened the door into the office. My father praised me for what I had done. In spite of the warnings given him, I don't think he suspected that she was a spy upon him.

"Discharge her! Send her off at once!" said he angrily.

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CHAPTER VIII.

A SMALL FIRE.

I told my father all that had happened in the house since my return from the trip in the *Sleeper*, including the apology of Mrs. Falgood.

"No matter for the apology! Discharge her at once. Pay her wages to the end of the month—twenty dollars. Take the money from my pocket."

I did as he told me, and I dropped the key of his desk into his pocket when I took out his wallet. I counted out the sum he had mentioned.

"The postman brought a letter for you yesterday," I added, "and I laid it on your desk."

"Bring it to me."

I brought the letter I had read, and handed it to him.

"Shall I open it for you, father?" I asked, as I picked it up from the bed, where he had laid it.

Without waiting for the permission, I snapped the seal and threw open the flap.

"No! Give it to me at once! You know that I never allow any one to read my letters," he interposed sharply.

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I handed it back to him, but I had prevented him from seeing that the seal had been broken before. That was all I wanted, and I was satisfied.

He asked for his spectacles, and read the letter. The contents seemed to disturb him. He tore the letter and the envelope into a thousand pieces, and then cast them upon the floor.

"Discharge that woman at once," said he vigorously, for a sick man, and turned over in the bed so that his back was toward me.

I left the room. As I went down the stairs Mrs. Falgood came out of the back parlor.

"How is your father this morning, Gay?" she asked, as though it were a vital question with her; and perhaps it was.

"He slept all night, and is quite comfortable this morning. Here is something for you, Mrs. Falgood," I replied, handing her the money I had taken from my father's wallet.

"What is this for?" she asked, as she took the bills.

"It is your wages till the end of the month. My father directed me to discharge you at once."

"Discharge me! Does your father say that, Gay?" she demanded, starting back with proper dramatic effect.

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"My father said that, and said it very earnestly," I added.

"I thought my apology would satisfy you, and you said as much as that," she replied, biting her lips, as she always did when vexed or angry.

"It was quite sufficient, so far as I was concerned, and I cheerfully accepted it."

"I must see your father."

"Not without his consent."

"I do not believe that your father ordered my discharge," she continued. "I must have it from his own mouth. He sent to England for me, and he would not dismiss me."

"I will tell him what you say, and if he is willing to see you, of course, I shall not object."

I went up and told my father what had passed, and he consented to see Mrs. Falgood for a few minutes. I went up with her.

"I discharge you, Mrs. Falgood, and I want you to go at once," said my father, with all the energy he could command in his feeble state. "You intended to let me die yesterday, and I don't want to see your face again."

Very mildly, for her, she went over the same explanation she had made to me. It did not satisfy my father any more than it had satisfied me.

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"I won't live in my own house and call in vain for help when I am sick, or have my son locked out of my room. I don't want you. Leave my house at once."

"I have no place to go to in the whole country," she pleaded.

"But you have money to pay for a place. If you are not satisfied, I will pay your passage back to England."

"But you will allow me to stay in the house until the steamer of next Wednesday sails?" she asked, wiping the tears from her eyes; but they were manufactured for the occasion.

"Stay, if you like, but don't let me see you here again," replied my father impatiently.

"No more, if you please, Mrs. Falgood," I interposed.

I opened the door, and she went out.

"I did not expect such treatment as this," said she, when I had closed the door behind her, still wiping away her tears. "I came from England to act as your father's housekeeper, and now he turns me out of his house."

"I think you gave him abundant provocation for doing so. But I have nothing more to say about it. I will get your ticket for the next steamer, if you wish," I answered.

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"Give me the money, and I will get it myself," she replied.

"My father will not object to doing that."

She went back to the parlor, and I returned to my father's chamber. He had evidently taken a fancy to Mrs. Castleton, and I found that he had been talking to her about taking the place made vacant by the discharge of Mrs. Falgood.

Mrs. Castleton was a widow and the mother of a boy of ten. She had no means, and, not being a trained nurse, she had found it difficult to obtain employment to pay her own and her son's board. She simply lacked the hospital certificate and experience.

"I will give you twenty dollars a month, and board you and your boy," said my father, soon after I came in. "But the boy must do errands and help about the house when he is not at school."

The nurse eagerly accepted the offer, and I stayed with my father while she went to her boarding house for her trunk and her boy. Before noon she was installed in her new position, and I introduced her to Mollie as her new mistress.

Mrs. Falgood had been writing all the forenoon in the back parlor. I had no doubt she had a letter ready to mail for Mr. P. Grantham; but she did not allow me to see even the outside of her letters. Coming

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down the stairs, I saw that she was just directing one, and two others lay upon the table in front of her. Before I could reach the foot of the stairs, I heard Mollie scream loudly in the basement hall. I quickened my pace.

"The house is on fire!" yelled the girl, in mortal terror.

Before I could get to the basement stairs, Mrs. Falgood had darted down them. It flashed upon my mind that Mrs. Falgood had kindled the fire. I followed her down the steps, nearly upsetting her in my rapid movements.

I found a basket of shavings in the furnace room in a light blaze. I kicked it over and trampled out the fire. I acquitted the discharged housekeeper of the charge in my mind.

Mollie said she had lighted a match to enable her to find a dustpan she had left in the furnace room. She had thrown it on the brick floor. This explained the fire.

I thought my father might be alarmed in his helpless condition, and I hastened upstairs to assure him there was no further danger, leaving Mrs. Falgood talking with Mollie in regard to the fire.

Mrs. Castleton was coming down to ascertain the

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cause of the alarm. As I told her about the matter, I walked into the back parlor.

On the table were three letters Mrs. Falgood had written. One, which was sealed with wax, was directed to Mr. P. Grantham, 19 Little Queen Street, W. C.; another to a lady, Mrs. Harriet Shrimp, Midford, Somerset, England, and the third to Mr. John Tremble, Brevoort House, New York. I fixed the last two addresses in my mind.

I heard Mrs. Falgood coming up the stairs, and I followed Mrs. Castleton to my father's chamber. I was talking all the time, as though I was excited by the fire, as, indeed, I had been.

"Mollie was careless to throw a match on the pavement near a basket of shavings; but there was no woodwork near it, and it could not possibly have set the house on fire," I said, as I passed Mrs. Falgood.

She was moving in a hurry, as though she had just thought of the letters she had left on the table. My belief that she was a spy in the employ of the conspirators in England was now fully confirmed. I had been satisfied before; now I was absolutely sure.

Before I went to my father's chamber, I visited my own, and wrote down the addresses I had read upon the spy's letters. I felt that I was getting ahead bravely. I had the address of P. Grantham and Mrs.

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Shrimp, whoever these persons might prove to be. The former did the business with my father, and the other was doubtless some connection of Mrs. Falgood.

Through either of these persons I could probably trace out something that would give me a clue to the conspiracy. Both of them were in England; but I had talked so much about England with my father that I thought I should feel quite at home there. Besides, I was born there, though I could never ascertain the name of the town in which I had first drawn the breath of life.

It seemed to me, as I looked at the addresses I had written, that my business was in England about this time. Who was Mr. John Tremble, the New York correspondent of Mrs. Falgood? The Brevoort House was a first-class establishment. Professor De Marchena had taken me there once to see a distinguished Italian, and as I looked over the register, I had seen the names of a good many guests hailing from London and other parts of England.

John Tremble must be a person of some standing and means, or he would not make his home at the Brevoort House.

My first business was to learn something about Mr. John Tremble, and I hastened to the Brevoort House, on Fifth Avenue.

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I looked into the reading room of the hotel, where I saw Mr. Pallingrove reading the London *Times*. I withdrew at once, for I did not care to meet him. He was the only person in the room at the time.

I spent half an hour in looking over the register. Several weeks back I found the name of "John Tremble, London," but I could not find the signature of Charles Pallingrove.

"Is Mr. John Tremble, of London, in?" I inquired of the clerk.

"Yes, sir; I saw him in the reading room a minute ago," replied the clerk. "He is the only person there."

"But he is not the person I desire to see. I had some doubts about the address," I stammered.

"Mr. Tremble was the only person in the room a minute ago, and if you don't know him by sight, you can't make any mistake," replied the clerk, with professional indifference.

"He is not the gentleman I wish to see, and I have made a mistake."

The clerk took no further notice of me, and I retreated from the house.

Mr. Tremble's case was settled. Pallingrove was a fiction.

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CHAPTER IX.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CRUISE.

Mrs. Falgood and Charley Pallingrove were the spies employed to watch my father and me. I thought I had done wonderfully well in discovering both of them in less than twenty-four hours. But I should never have suspected that I was not the son of Milton Brooks if I had not accidentally opened that letter. Without that I should not have known anything about any spies. I did not, therefore, consider myself entitled to much credit for my penetration.

My father gave me the money to pay Mrs. Falgood's passage to England, and I handed it to her. She went out to mail her letters before I left; but I found her in the house when I returned.

Letters came to her from England, and I had no doubt she was fully posted in regard to all the transactions between the London agent and my father.

By this time she had heard of the demand for fifty thousand pounds. This may have caused her to feel that my father had lived long enough, and bilious colic might do what it was not safe for her or her associate in the city to do.

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Doctor Webb was leaving the house as I came in, after my visit to the Brevoort House. He told me he had talked to my father about his drinking habits, and warned him that he was not likely to live long unless he renounced them. This he had promised to do, and that very day, all the bottles were removed from his apartments with his consent and locked up in the dining room.

The patient said Mrs. Falgood had encouraged him to drink brandy, and had always brought it to him in liberal doses when he was ailing.

Just before noon, Maddy Fayrthorne called upon me. I took him to my room, where we could not be overheard, and told him all that had happened since we parted. He rubbed his hands with delight as he listened to the conclusion of the whole story.

"You are a Napoleon, Gay!" exclaimed he. "You have done wonders for one day."

"But I have got about as far as I can go, Maddy," I replied. "I have found out all there is to know on this side of the ocean. I am ready now for the cruise in the *Sleeper* across the Atlantic. I have business in England."

"You seem to forget that the man you call your father knows all about the conspiracy, and is one of

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the conspirators," said Maddy. "He could set you right in five minutes if he were so disposed."

"Of course he knows all about it; but what could he do if he were willing to do anything?" I asked, deeply interested in the suggestion of my friend.

"Grantham says 'the boy' can never get possession of the property."

"Of course he would say that to Milton Brooks; but it is nothing but bluff. Why can't he obtain possession if the property belongs to him?" argued Maddy.

"Because we cannot procure the evidence to establish my identity as the heir of the unknown estate," I replied, for I had gone over all this ground before. "The testimony of Milton Brooks, even if he were willing to take sides with me, would not be accepted as conclusive. Who knows Milton Brooks in England now, after he has been in this country seventeen years?"

"I rather think you are right, Gay. Milton Brooks would be your only witness."

"He could bring forward all the letters of P. Grantham to prove that he received a remittance from him every six months."

"Very likely the name of P. Grantham is a fiction,

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like that of your friend Pallingrove, whom I always looked upon as a fraud."

"But he gives his address."

"No matter if he does. He knows that you cannot look up the matter of his address on this side of the ocean."

"For that reason I want to spend a week or two in England."

"All right; the *Sleeper* shall take you over there inside of thirty days. When shall you be ready to start, Gay?"

"As soon as my father is in condition to be left. By the first of June, I think."

"You have not mentioned that little cruise, have you?" asked Maddy, with some anxiety.

"Not to a soul, Maddy. Secrecy is ten times as necessary for me as for you. If my father knew that I intended to go to England, he would prevent my departure. Of course, Mr. John Tremble would not consent to my crossing the Atlantic," I added, laughing.

"But you won't ask his consent?"

"No; but he is employed and paid to watch father and me, and he seems to devote most of his time and attention to me."

At this moment Mrs. Falgood crossed the hall to-

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ward the front door, dressed for the street. In a moment I heard the door close behind her.

"There is work for me. I must follow her," I said, rising from my chair.

"But I wanted you to take a trip in the *Sleeper* this afternoon," said Maddy.

"If I am not on board by three o'clock I can't go," I replied.

"I will wait till that time for you."

"By the way, you have never asked Pallingrove to sail with you, Maddy?" I continued.

"I should as soon think of taking a blackleg or a known thief on board of the yacht," he answered.

"Suppose, in doing the business in hand, I should bring him on board with me?" I suggested.

"That's another thing. Bring him any time when it will help your cause along," replied Maddy.

By this time we were in the street, for I did not mean to lose sight of Mrs. Falgood. Maddy had followed me, and had got on the track of the spy. She finally reached the Bowery and walked to Canal Street, where she took a crosstown car. Maddy and I occupied the front platform of the one next behind. At Wooster Street she got out, and took a University Place car.

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"That settles it," said I, as we left our car. "She is going to the Brevoort House to see John Tremble, alias Pallingrove."

"Let us be sure of it," rejoined Maddy, as he jumped upon the next car.

Mrs. Falgood went to the Brevoort House, as I was confident she would.

"It will be useless to follow her any more. She is going to tell John Tremble that she has been discharged, if she did not tell him in her letter," I said, when our mission in this direction was ended.

"That is so, Gay. We can take a run in the yacht now. All we have to do is to make our preparation for the voyage over the ocean," replied Maddy.

We ran down to the Narrows, and returned early. That evening I closed my engagement as a singer and mimic. I saw little of Mrs. Falgood; in fact, I did not care what she did. I had cautioned Mrs. Castleton to look out for her, for she was a very wicked woman. My father continued to improve, and on Sunday he went into his office.

On Monday Mrs. Falgood left the house, "bag and baggage," without the formality of bidding any one good-by. I did not believe that she intended to take the steamer to England. Doubtless Mr. Tremble had

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told her what to do. I followed the carriage that bore her away, and it left her at the Brevoort House.

My father gained every day; but as he grew better, he took less notice of me; in fact, he became as he was before he was sick. Why he changed his manner I have no means of knowing.

One day I told him I was going off on a yachting trip with Maddy Fayrthorne. He made no objection, or even a reply of any kind.

When he was able to go down to his meals in about a week, he talked with the new housekeeper, but said not a word to me.

Maddy made all his preparations for his voyage. I talked with Mrs. Castleton about a yachting excursion, and thought we might be gone four months, perhaps longer. We had been off for two months the year before.

She declared that there was nothing to keep me at home; she could manage my father without my assistance. He had improved so much that he rode out every day, and really seemed to be enjoying life.

On the last day of May I put all my clothes and valuables on board of the *Sleeper*, and drew my money from the bank. I was ready for a start.

I said good-by to my father early the next morning.

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He took my offered hand, though rather reluctantly. By nine in the forenoon I was on board.

Since the exciting events attending the discharge of Mrs. Falgood I had not spoken to Pallingrove, as I shall still call him, because he called himself by this name.

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CHAPTER X.

CAPTAIN MADDY FAYRTHORNE.

Maddy Fayrthorne had fully explained his plan for a European cruise in the *Sleeper* to his father and mother. As may well be supposed, they objected to it most strenuously. But the son insisted, and he was finally persuaded to wait a week before his parents gave him a definite answer.

He had the grace to say that he should not go if they did not consent.

Maddy was an only son, and, of course, his father and mother had done the best they could to spoil him. The boy had the reputation of being an "odd stick." Perhaps this was the reason why his parents miraculously failed to spoil him.

At the age of twelve Maddy was in poor health, and this was an additional incentive for spoiling him. He was not fond of society, and had a taste for books.

At fourteen he was quite feeble, and a great many anxious consultations between the parents and the family physician were had.

The doctor studied the case very faithfully, and

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finally ordered the parents to take up their residence on the south coast of Long Island. Maddy was to be provided with such boats as he wanted.

This treatment made a new man of the patient. The boating pleased him, and for four years he had followed it all summer in the North, and all winter in the South.

At eighteen he was as tough and rugged as the son of a Vermont farmer. The physician's prescriptions had been entirely successful, and his mother thought there was more danger of his being drowned at sea than of dying of disease.

From a rowboat he had gone to a sailboat, and then to a yacht of larger size. He wanted a new one every year, of increased tonnage, until the *Sleeper* was built for him the season before he projected his trip across the Atlantic. He had taken her to Florida the fall previous, and returned in the spring.

The builder of the schooner had been ordered to spare no expense upon the craft. He was to provide first for safety, second for comfort, and third for speed. Probably the skillful builder followed his instructions, though he appeared to have got the speed in first, while the vessel was not lacking in the other qualities, as Maddy had fully proved by actual trial.

As Maddy was an "odd stick," he would not join

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any yacht club, or take part in any regatta. With no intention of racing, he had passed some of the fastest yachts in the New York waters, and beaten them in a run to windward.

Four years had accustomed Mrs. Fayrthorne to her son's yacht cruises, but when the youth intimated that he should like to sail in a yacht of a hundred tons, old measurement, the devoted mother had many doubts and anxieties. She talked with her husband about the matter. The result of these consultations was that General Fayrthorne told his son that he would give him the yacht if he would allow him to appoint his mate.

After some discussion, Maddy consented to the proposition, and the yacht was built. The father appointed a Mr. Waxall as mate, and his nominal pay on the ship's books was one hundred dollars a month. General Fayrthorne paid him twice as much more.

Captain Waxall had commanded steamships, Indiamen and Liverpool liners. He had sailed in the employ of the general's brother for twenty years, though Maddy had never seen or heard of him till he was presented to him as the mate of the *Sleeper*. He readily consented to drop his title as captain and become "Mr. Waxall" for the salary the millionaire was willing to pay him.

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Mr. Waxall was a man of great tact, with pleasant manners and a genial disposition. He fully understood that he was to play second fiddle on board the *Sleeper*, but, at the same time, he was expected to establish his influence over the boy captain, and thus prevent him from running into needless peril.

Thus far the mate had succeeded admirably in his mission. Maddy was very much attached to him. He was honest, plain-spoken, while he was entirely respectful. He treated Maddy as captain, and when he thought it necessary to change the course or shorten sail, he skillfully contrived to make Maddy see the need of the step and give the proper orders. Maddy was not so blind or conceited that he could not understand the situation on board.

The week of delay his parents had asked before they consented to the foreign voyage of the *Sleeper* was for the purpose of consulting Captain Waxall, as he was everywhere except on board of the yacht. He laughingly declared that there was no sort of danger in such a summer trip in a yacht as large as the *Sleeper*. The general and his wife consented then.

The preparations were made. The *Sleeper* was provisioned for two months, but the destination of the vessel was a carefully guarded secret. Maddy had no idea that his mate knew where they were going. Mr.

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Waxall never gave even a hint that he was any wiser than the rest of the ship's company.

Maddy and I had been pupils together at a celebrated private school. With no event or obligation on the part of either to give it birth, a very strong friendship had grown up between us. I had sailed with him a great deal before the *Sleeper* was built, and I became as competent to sail a yacht as he was. His father remained at his house in the city till July.

We had spent two months on the coast of Maine the year before in the *Sleeper*. I did not go to Florida in her, for I could not leave my professional engagements.

On her return from the South, the second mate left her, and I was appointed in his place at the same wages. At sea I had the captain's watch.

When I went on board of the *Sleeper*, hauled up at the pier, I saw the hands bringing fresh meat out of the vessel and putting it in a wagon. This looked very strange to me.

Mr. Waxall was on deck, and I walked up to him.

"Good morning, Mr. Brooks," said he. "It appears that we don't sail to-day, after all."

"We don't sail to-day!" I exclaimed.

"Captain Fayrthorne was taken sick yesterday. He is not very ill; but his mother did not like to have him

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sail when he was not well," explained the mate. "He directed me to send the fresh meats back to the butcher. I had a note from him, and there is another for you on the cabin table."

"I hope the captain is not going to be sick," I replied, as I walked toward the companionway.

"A gentleman called to see you yesterday. Mr.—I forget his name; but I put his card on the cabin table," continued Mr. Waxall. "He asked me a great many questions as to where we were bound, for we were taking in stores at the time. Captain Fayrthorne has not informed me where we were bound, and I could not tell him."

"You don't remember his name?"

"It was an odd name, and I have forgotten it. He was on board over an hour, and I saw that he was trying to pump the crew as to our destination; but as they are no wiser than I am, he could not get anything out of them. But he was very anxious to see you."

Who could it be? I hastened to the cabin to solve the question.

"Charles Pallingrove" was the name on an engraved card. I threw it upon the table in disgust, and turned my attention to the note of Maddy. The spy wanted to know where I was going in the yacht.

Maddy would have called his note one of his serious

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efforts, for it was full of fun. He had "eaten too much French cookery," he said, and his stomach had been turning somersaults. His mother would not let him go unless he was entirely well. He thought he should be in a salubrious condition by the next Wednesday.

It was Monday morning, and I had not long to wait. I decided to remain on board the yacht.

I did not think my father wanted to see me, though I intended to call at the house every day.

I went on deck and joined Mr. Waxall.

"The gentleman who called was Mr. Pallingrove," I informed him.

"Pallingrove! That was it," replied the mate. "He is a friend of yours, I suppose?"

"Hardly a friend," I answered.

"He had more curiosity to the square inch than any other man I ever met. He wanted to look the yacht over, and I showed her to him, as he had mentioned your name."

"In future you need not bestow any attentions upon him on my account. He forced himself upon me, and I dislike him exceedingly."

"All right, Mr. Brooks. But there he comes again," replied the mate, laughing.

I was not at all surprised to see him. He was paid

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for keeping watch of my father and me, and he seemed disposed to earn his money. But he had kept away from me for three weeks, since Mrs. Falgood left our house. Very likely he had dogged my steps since that time.

Pallingrove came on deck with both hands extended and a flood of smiles on his face.

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CHAPTER XI.

MR. PALLINGROVE'S VISIT.

"I am delighted to see you, my dear Gay!" exclaimed Pallingrove, as he rushed upon me in the waist of the *Sleeper*. "I have been looking for you every day for three weeks."

"Have you, indeed?" I replied, wondering how he could have the face to indulge in such needless lies.

"I have called at the house, but you were never at home," he continued, still pressing my hands. "I asked for Mrs. Falgood, and was told that she was not in the house."

"How many times do you think you have called at the house?" I asked. But I felt as though I was tempting him to tell needless falsehoods.

"Perhaps twenty times, but certainly not less than a dozen," he answered, as promptly as though he had been telling the truth.

"Who went to the door when you called?"

"Sometimes the servant girl, and sometimes a woman who was a stranger to me. I always inquired for Mrs. Falgood, but was simply told she was not in the house. They couldn't tell where she was."

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"It's very odd," I remarked, for the sake of saying something.

"Very odd, indeed. Yesterday I had a bright thought, and was astonished that it had not come to my mind before. After a deal of inquiry I found that Mr. Fayrthorne's yacht was at the foot of Rivington Street. I came here and got track of you. I learned from one of the hands that the yacht was to sail on a cruise to-day."

"Captain Fayrthorne is sick, and we don't go to-day," I said.

"Where are you going, my dear Gay?"

"On a cruise."

"That's rather indefinite."

"Yacht cruises are always rather indefinite."

"But yachtsmen usually have some idea where they are bound," persisted Pallingrove.

"The owner has some idea of his destination, and for any further information I shall have to refer you to Captain Fayrthorne," I answered. "Last year we cruised for two months on the coast of Maine, but the captain had no idea where he was going when we left New York harbor."

"But there was a ton of fresh beef and mutton put on board of this yacht early this morning," said Pallingrove.

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"Did you weigh it?" I asked lightly; but I saw that he had been watching the yacht for some days, if not for weeks.

"I reckon there was a ton, for I came down to see you early this morning when they were putting it on board."

"I don't know how much there was; and, if you desire to know, I will introduce you to Barber, the steward."

"Of course I don't care how much meat you took in. It is not my affair, you know."

"I thought it was from the interest you seem to have in the matter."

"I haven't a bit of interest in it, and I was only thinking of it in connection with the fact that not even the captain of the yacht knows where she is bound," he responded; and he was always ready with an explanation more or less plausible.

"I will tell you about that in confidence, Charley, for the skipper does not allow us to talk out loud about the affairs of the yacht, even when we know anything about them," I continued.

"I have heard you say that young Mr. Fayrthorne was a very singular person, and as odd as a boot without a mate. But you may trust me to keep anything you may tell me to myself. I am not a leaky vessel."

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"Be sure that you don't mention it, for it would make the skipper very angry."

"Not a word, my dear Gay! I would rather die than betray a friend by telling his secrets," replied Pallingrove. "You may tell me where you are going without the least fear of its getting out."

"I was speaking of the ton of beef and mutton," I replied. "Last year, on the coast of Maine, we had a great deal of difficulty in getting good beef and mutton. The skipper is very particular, and can eat only meats of the finest quality. For this reason he had a very large refrigerator built in the vessel. We can keep fresh meats in it for three months. That explains the ton of beef and mutton, doesn't it?"

"Quite clearly, but it doesn't suggest where the yacht is bound," he replied, with manifest disappointment.

"She is bound on a cruise. After we have been out three days, the skipper may take a notion to return. Last year we went from port to port without knowing one day where we should go the next. There is no knowing where Captain Fayrthorne is going, or even if he is going anywhere."

"But this is a magnificent yacht," he continued, suddenly brightening up, as though he felt that he had displayed too much anxiety in regard to the destina-

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