Partners of the Tide

...By...

JOSEPH C. LINCOLN

Author of "Cap'n Eri"

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When the Lizzie, with the workers aboard, reached Ruth Ginn the next morning, Ira Sparrow, in the You and I, was there already, and the "chug, chug," of his naphtha engine was heard as he came rushing to meet them.

"Brad! Cap'n Ez!" he hailed, as soon as they were in shouting distance. "She's shifted like time in the night! I swan, I b'lieve we can git her off this tide!"

This was such unexpected good news, for they had figured on another week at least, that the partners could scarcely believe it.

They shot up to the wreck, to find the cable, that had been left tight and rigid, hanging loose. An inexperienced eye could see that the lumber schooner had changed her position. Her bow was now almost in a line with the edge of the shoal and, even in the slack water of the last of the ebb, she was rocking appreciably in the cradle her hull had made in the sand beneath it.

"Great scissors to grind!" shouted Captain Titcomb. "She'll do it as sure as I'm a foot high! Tumble aboard there, boys—lively!"

They clambered up the side and fell to work like sharks around a dead whale. Bradley got up steam in the donkey engine. As soon as possible they started the windlass and hauled the cable taut.

"She feels it, boy; she feels it!" cried the captain. "Give it to her, every pound she'll stand. Now, then," he added, "while we're waitin' for the tide to turn we might 's well roust out a little more of the cargo. No use to lay back and let Providence do it all. The Lord helps them that helps themselves, as the darky said when he found the hen house door unlocked. Hatches off, men. Dive into it there!"

They rigged the blocks and tackle and began swinging bundles of mahogany strips from the hold over the side. The tide turned, and the water on the shoal grew deeper. The Ruth Ginn rocked in her sand cradle. Every little while they hove taut on the cable in order to take up every inch of slack.

It was exhilarating, exciting work, this fight with old ocean, and Bradley and the captain gloried in the sheer joy of it. They were winning and winning not only a goodly sum of money, but the first big prize that would demonstrate their ability to carry through larger and more important contracts. The forenoon passed.

"Cap'n Ez!" suddenly bellowed Ira from the You and I. "She's movin'! Come up on your cable."

The captain jumped to the windlass and Bradley to his engine. The cable tightened and slowly, inch by inch, wound back over the windlass barrel. From beneath the Ruth Ginn came a sliding, grating sound, the most welcome sound in the world to the wreckers. Bearse, picking up a heavy coil of rope from the deck, tossed it to Ira.

"That's the stuff, Alvin!" roared the captain approvingly. "Make it fast in the bows. Now, Ira, put your power on to that line."

The You and I leaped out into deep water and, with her naphtha engine coughing furiously, pulled doggedly at the new tow line. The grating under the keel of the lumber schooner grew louder; she quivered from stem to stern; the cable crept inboard faster and faster.

Then there came a shake, a roll that caused Peleg Myrick to lose his footing and tumble into the scuppers, and, with a triumphant wallow, the Ruth Ginn slid off the shoal. And from her deck and from that of the You and I went up a yell that scared the gulls fishing away over on the Razorback.

They drew her into the channel, well out of danger, and anchored her firmly, bow and stern.

"There!" said the captain triumphantly. "She'll stay there till we can get a tug from Vineyard Haven. We'll go ashore and telephone from the life saving station for one this minute. No more work today, boys."

Bradley went that night to see Gus.

"Gus," he said, seizing her hand and holding it, "haven't you got anything to say to me?"

She did not look at him. "What shall I say?" she asked. "What do you want me to say?"

"Why, I thought you'd be glad that I've got the schooner off. I thought you'd say"—

"I am glad, very glad. And very proud. But I knew you would succeed. Hadn't we better go?"

But he would not let her go.

"I hoped you'd say more than that," he said disappointedly. "I was dreadfully blue the other night when Sam was here. I thought that, after all, perhaps I was making a fool of myself in giving up the city and trying to win out down here. It looked so small beside the great jobs Sam talked about. But when you spoke to me on the steps and told me you believed in me it all changed, and I swore to myself that I would win because you wanted me to. Gus, do you really care? Are you really glad?"

Then she turned to him, and he saw that her eyes were wet.

"What do you want me to say?" she whispered. "That I am more glad than I've ever been in my life before, and so proud of you, so proud because you were brave enough to make your fight and win it in the face of the whole village? And so ashamed of myself because I didn't encourage you as I ought when you first told me? I can say all that, Brad, and truly mean it."

"But Gus—oh, it's no use! That isn't enough. I haven't got any money, and I've only begun in my work, and I may fail, after all. But, Gus, will you wait for me? Do you care enough for me to wait and hope with me and marry me some day when I really win? Do you?"

He held her hand in both of his and waited, breathless, for the answer. But she did not give it; instead she looked at the window and through it at the waving beach grass and the blue sea beyond. And Bradley, gazing at her face, saw the tears overflow her eyelids and roll down her cheeks.

He turned white, and a great dread came over him. "Gus, don't you—can't you care for me?" he begged.

And then she turned and, leaning her head upon his shoulder, cried heartily and without restraint. "Why did you ask me? Why did you?" she sobbed.

"Because I had to, Gus, don't you love me?"

"Oh, Brad, I don't know. I think I do, but I'm not certain. I'm very, very proud of you, and I believe in you, but, oh, dear, I'm afraid of myself. I'm afraid of my temper; afraid I may change; afraid I don't really love you as much as I ought to."

"There isn't any one else, is there?"

She smiled tearfully. "No, Brad, there isn't any one else."

"Then won't you try to say yes? Perhaps you'll learn to care for me. Won't you say yes and try, dear?"

"Do you want me to say it, now that you understand just how I feel?"

"Yes."

"Do you want to take me just as I am—liking you better than anybody else in the world, but not—perhaps not really loving you as it seems to me a girl ought to love the man who is going to marry her?"

"Yes."

"I'm a queer girl, Brad. Grandma says I'm like her best china teacups—I must be handled carefully or there'll be a smash. I guess that's so. I don't trust myself. I change my mind five times a day. Do you want me to say yes in spite of all this?"

"I do."

"Then I will say it, and I will try to be what you would like to have me."

He bent his head and kissed her.

CHAPTER XII.

BRADLEY would have proclaimed his happiness through a speaking trumpet, but Gus begged that the engagement be kept secret for awhile. "Please let me feel a little surer of myself first," she pleaded, and Bradley agreed, as he would have agreed to climb Bunker Hill monument on the outside if she had asked him to.

The tug arrived the next forenoon, and the hull of the Ruth Ginn was towed up into Orham harbor. There she was anchored, where the getting out of the rest of her cargo would be a comparatively easy task.

They worked with might and main and, at the end of a month, the job was done. The last joist was laid upon the wharf. Obed Nickerson expressed himself as surprised and highly pleased.

Their share of the cargo's value amounted to $2,900, and, all expenses deducted, the profit to the partners was over $2,000.

"Not so mean for two greenhorns in a floatin' soup ladle," crowed the captain. "Brad, how's the Jeremiahs these days? Ain't anybody said 'I told you so' yit, have they?"

The underwriters' agent was their friend now, and, inside of another fortnight, he had put a job in their way that brought them in $400 more. She was a coasting schooner that had grounded off the Point, and her skipper had contemplated telegraphing to the salvage company, but, thanks to Obed's recommendation, the chance was given—for a much lower price, of course—to the Lizzie's owners. The vessel laid easy, with only her bows on the sand, and the anchors and cables got her clear in three days.

Then they went anchor dragging again and met with considerable success. All this was profitable, as well as good advertising, and the Lizzie's owners were doing well. But they were ambitious and yearned for the day when they might undertake bigger things. Captain Titcomb was for ordering a new and larger wrecking schooner immediately.

But Bradley, more conservative, counseled waiting a little longer. "No use saddling ourselves with a big debt to start with," he said. "'Dead horse' is the meanest animal to pay for that I know of."

But, although the captain agreed to wait a little longer before ordering the new vessel, he announced that he was going to keep his eyes open, and perhaps he'd strike a bargain some day or other.

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One evening a little later Bradley and the old maids were in the sitting room. Miss Prissy was much better and had, for the first time, donned a wrapper and come downstairs to sit in the big rocker. Miss Tempy was reading aloud to her, and Clara was in the kitchen washing the supper dishes.

"'The earl bent his proud head,'" read Miss Tempy, "'and gazed into the clear blue orbs that met his own. "Claire," he murmured in a deep, rich tone that vibrated through the heavy air of the gloomy cavern; "Claire, my beautiful, my own, poor and humble your station on earth may have been, but henceforth, if we escape from the lurid flames of yonder volcano and the cruel blades of the merciless buccaneers, you shall no longer be the peasant maid, but my bride, my wife, mistress of Castle Craggyknoll; the peerless"'"—

"What's that?" she exclaimed, breaking off suddenly.

"What's what?" asked her sister, drowsily.

"Seems to me I heard somebody in the kitchen."

"Clara is there, isn't she?" queried Bradley.

"Yes, but—I thought—yes, there's somebody else. I do b'lieve it's a man! You don't s'pose she's got a beau? I'm goin' to see."

And, before the others could remonstrate, she put "the Comforter" on the table and started for the kitchen. They heard her cross the dining room and open the door. Then came an exclamation.

"Why, why!" she cried; and then, "Well, I do declare!"

"What do you s'pose 'tis?" asked Miss Prissy, now thoroughly awake. The kitchen door had swung to, but there was a great clatter of voices behind it. Miss Tempy was exclaiming and arguing; Clara Hopkins, who was visiting the old maids during the absence of her folks from town, apparently, was saying very little, and a third person, in a deep bass rumble, was explaining something or other.

"Land of goodness," cried Miss Prissy, "I hope it ain't the minister, and me in this old wrapper!"

The kitchen door was opened, Miss Tempy appeared beaming, and there followed her into the sitting room no less a personage than Captain Ezra Titcomb. The captain's face was the least bit redder than usual, but he was otherwise as suave and unmoved as if the time of his previous call had been but yesterday instead of four years before.

"Well, Prissy," he said, shaking hands with the invalid, "how are you tonight? Most ready to come on deck and take command? No, don't git up. Evenin', Brad."

Poor Miss Prissy! She patted her tumbled hair into the most presentable shape possible, hurriedly pulled the red and white knitted "afghan" over the wrapper and managed to gasp that she was glad to see the captain. Then she sat still and stared reproachfully at Miss Tempy.

But that lady was too excited to notice her sister's agitation. She fluttered about the visitor like a hen with one chicken, trying to hang up his hat, dropping it, blushing violently as she collided with him in the attempt to pick it up and generally behaving, as Miss Prissy said afterward, like a born gump.

"Set right down, cap'n," she pleaded. "We're reel glad to see you. What made you come to the kitchen door? I couldn't think who 'twas, could you, Prissy? Oh, my sakes!"

In her nervous haste she had pushed forward the big armchair that had once been the throne of Captain Darius, but which, owing to the infirmities of age, had for some time been kept in the corner for show purposes only. It had a weak leg, and when Captain Titcomb planted himself on the worn black oilcloth cushion the infirm member promptly bent inward, and the captain slid gracefully to the floor.

"Tempy!" exclaimed Miss Prissy in a freezing tone. Bradley laughed and ran to assist the fallen one. Miss Tempy, now in a perfectly helpless state, wrung her hands and stuttered.

"The idea of givin' him father's chair!" cried Miss Prissy. "Tempy, have you gone loony? I hope you ain't hurt, Cap'n Ezra. We never use that chair now. It used to belong to father."

Miss Tempy was heard to remark, feebly, that it looked "so like him." She declared afterward that she didn't say it.

The captain made light of the accident and selected another seat, carefully testing it beforehand. He at once began to talk about the weather and Miss Prissy's illness. But the older sister interrupted him as soon as the opportunity offered.

"What made you come to the back door?" she asked.

There wasn't an instant's hesitancy in the captain's reply:

"Oh," he said lightly, "it's rainin' a little, and I thought I wouldn't muss up them floors of yours. I know them floors of old," he added, and laughed heartily. He continued to talk about the floors and seemed to think his fear of soiling them a great joke. Miss Tempy, who was a trifle more rational by this time, laughed with him, but Miss Prissy seemed still curious.

"You used to come to the dinin' room door, even when it snowed," she said.

"Yes, but I had on my sea boots this time, and they're so big I tote ha'f the road along with me. Reminds me," he added hastily, just in time to cut off another question, "of what the old man—my dad, I mean—said about a colored cook he had aboard his ship once. Dad said that darky's feet was the largest live things without lungs that he ever saw out of water."

Bradley thought he had never seen his partner so willing, even anxious, to monopolize the entire conversation as he was that evening. He cracked jokes and spun yarns without stopping to rest. Clara came in, after a little, and seated herself quietly on the sofa. She, too, seemed a trifle nervous, but the sisters did not notice it. They were hypnotized by their caller's lively tongue and laughed like girls. Miss Prissy grew more like herself every minute.

"Don't go, cap'n," she pleaded, as the visitor pulled out his watch and rose from the chair. "I declare, you're better'n the doctor!"

"Much obliged, Prissy, but 'twas too much of a good thing that busted the cider jug. Two opposition doctors in one house would be like the two Irishmen fightin' for the pig—'twas an 'elegant row' while it lasted, but it killed the pig. No, I must be gittin' on. I left my umbrella out in the kitchen. Clara, bring the lamp, will you, please?"

Clara rose and started for the kitchen, but Miss Tempy intercepted her.

"I'll git your umbrella, cap'n," she said.

"No, no, you set still! Clara knows just where 'tis; she put it away."

"Well, I guess I can find it. You needn't come, Clara. Yes, here 'tis. Good night, Cap'n Titcomb. I—I hope, now you've found the way, you'll call again some evenin'. Bradley 'll be glad to see you, and so will Prissy and—and I. Good night."

The captain walked briskly down to the gate. Then, as the door closed behind him, he paused, wiped his forehead with his coat sleeve and drew a long breath.

There was jubilation in the old maids' room that night.

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On Tuesday of the following week this telegram came:

Boston, Mass.

Bradley Nickerson, Orham, Mass.
Come my office immediately.
ALPHEUS COOK.

"Humph!" grunted Captain Titcomb. "Short and crisp, like the old woman's pie crust, ain't it? Well, Brad, I guess you'd better go."

Bradley agreed with him and hurried home to pack his grip. He took care to tell Gus. She rejoiced with him over the triumph they both felt sure was coming.

"You're succeeding, Brad," she said. "Everybody is talking about it. I'm prouder of you than ever."

"But when will you be willing to have me tell people that we're engaged? Mayn't I do that now, Gus?"

She paused, and his hopes rose, but then she shook her head. "It wouldn't be fair to you," she said. "Sometimes I feel that I almost—well, like you enough to be content to stay in Orham all my life and work for you and with you. I'm trying hard to feel that way. But at other times it seems as if I must get away to where the people talk of something besides their neighbors' affairs; where there are great things being done and where the world moves. You think I'm inconsistent, don't you?"

"No, it is dull down here, and most of the folks are rather narrow, I'm afraid. Gus, you know what my business means to me. Well, if it will please you and you will come with me, I'll give it all up, even now, and go back to the city and try it there."

She smiled tenderly. "You're a dear, good boy," she said, "but do you suppose I should ever be happy again if I let you do that?"

The railway journey to Boston had only one incident worth notice. At Buzzard's Bay the Boston train meets that bound down the cape. There was some delay at the station, and Bradley stepped out on the platform. He was walking up and down smoking when somebody shouted: "Hello, Brad Nickerson! What are you doing here?"

Brad turned and saw Sam Hammond.

"Well!" he exclaimed, shaking hands with his old seat mate. "Where are you bound—Orham?"

"Yup. How is the old graveyard anyway?"

"Pretty quiet just now. Most of the summer folks have gone home. You on another vacation?"

Sam laughed. "Kind of vacation a fellow hands out to himself," he answered. "The wrecking company and I had a row. They tried to put ten men's work on me, and I wouldn't stand for it. So I told 'em to go to the devil. It put 'em in a hole, all right, but nobody's going to walk on my neck if I know it. I'm going home to loaf for awhile. I need a rest anyway. Then I'll go back to New York and hook on with another crowd. There's plenty of 'em want me, but they can wait. How's all the girls? Gus Baker pretty well?"

They talked for a few minutes longer. Sam asked how the anchor dragging trust was getting on. Then the two trains started. Bradley leaned back in his seat in the smoker and meditated. Somehow a conversation with Sam always made him "blue." He wished the fellow was not going to Orham.

Next morning, bright and early, he walked into the "coal king's" office. An important young man with a pen behind his ear disdained to notice him.

"Who'd you wish to see?" he asked after a dignified interval.

"Mr. Cook—the older one," answered Bradley.

"He's busy now; likely to be busy all the morning. What do you want to see him for? Won't I do?"

"Don't know, I'm sure," replied the wrecker gravely. "I'll speak to Mr. Cook about it. You see, he was the one that sent for me, so"—

"He sent for you! Oh, excuse me. I wish you'd said so sooner. Sit down, please. What name, sir?"

"Nickerson, sir."

The young man, much less important, hurried into another room and returned at once.

"Mr. Cook 'll see you, sir," he said, opening the gate. "Step right into his private office, Mr. Nickerson."

The great Mr. Cook was seated behind his big carved desk. The whole outfit looked rather formidable. He stared at Bradley over his glasses.

"Sit down," he commanded. "Got my wire, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what's your lowest price for the anchor and chain of the Liberty, which I understand you have buoyed, delivered on the Orham wharf? Lowest, mind. No trimmings!"

"Five hundred dollars."

"All right, you may take it up. I'll give you four hundred cash for the job. Go ahead, and work quick. Good day, Nickerson; glad to have met you."

He swung around to the desk and picked up some papers. But Bradley did not go.

"Excuse me, Mr. Cook," he said. "Our figure was five hundred, not four."

"Humph! Well, five's robbery. Four's what I'll pay."

"All right, sir. Sorry we can't trade. Good morning."

"Hold on there!" shouted the owner of the Liberty. "Do you mean you won't raise the anchor?"

"Not for less than five hundred."

"Split the difference. Make it four-fifty?"

"No, sir."

"Oh, well, hang it, go ahead! Five hundred, then—only don't bother me any more."

But Bradley still hesitated. "There is just one thing more, Mr. Cook," he said. "That chain has sanded in every day since it has been on that bottom.

"Sit down," he commanded.

We may not be able to get up the whole of it. We warned your tugboat skipper who was down there to look matters over. We'll do our best, though."

"Oh, you'll get it. I'd be willing to bet that you'd get up the everlasting foundations if you made up your mind to. Say, Nickerson"—Mr. Cook put his hands in his pockets and looked quizzically at Bradley—"if you get sick of anchor dragging any time, come and see me. Have a cigar to smoke as you go along. Good day."

Bradley was happy. He felt that when Cook & Son should have future wrecking contracts to give out Titcomb & Nickerson might be considered as bidders to be reckoned with.

CHAPTER XIII.

"THERE!" exclaimed Captain Titcomb ten days later, when the last section of the Liberty's chain had been laid on Orham wharf. "There, that child's born, and his name's Adoniram! Now, then, Brad, what next—more anchor draggin'?"

Getting up that chain with a hand windlass was a tough proposition, but they had done it finally. The calm weather helped them here, for, though the heavy links had sanded somewhat, they managed to work the last one loose after a struggle. Again the partners had longed for the much talked of schooner with an engine, but this time it was Bradley who did most of the complaining. The captain merely looked wise and winked knowingly. "Keep your head to wind'ard, son," he remarked. "May be I'll have a s'prise party for you some of these days." Bradley didn't know what he meant, and the captain wouldn't explain.

In reply to the question concerning what was to be done next the junior partner, who was sitting on an overturned salt mackerel tub aboard the Lizzie, asked a question in his turn.

"Cap'n Ez," he said, "do you remember that schooner loaded with tar that foundered on the flats off Caleb's point last March? The one we located when we were dragging for Anderson's anchor that time?"

Captain Titcomb nodded. "Yup," he said. "She b'longed to a Boston firm, seems to me. Let's see—what was their names?"

"Colton, Lee & Co. They are on Commercial street. Well, I went in to see 'em when I was up to Boston."

"You did?"

"Yes. That tar has stuck in my mind ever since you told me about it. It was in barrels, you see, and it's harder than Pharaoh's heart naturally, so the salt water hasn't had time to hurt it any to speak of. Obed told me that the schooner was insured and the cargo wasn't. So I thought I'd go in and see the owners. Well, they'd pretty nearly forgotten about the tar. I suppose it had been charged to profit and loss long ago. We talked, and I told 'em that I might perhaps be able to save a few barrels—only a few, of course. The upshot of it all was that I bought the whole cargo, 840 barrels, just as it lies on the bottom, for $25 cash."

"You didn't?"

"I did. It was $25 more than they ever expected to get at that. Now, cap'n, our agreement was that no new move should be entered into without the consent of both partners. This deal was so 'all in the air,' as you might say, that I didn't say anything about it until I'd seen the owners. Now, if you feel that we can't raise enough of the stuff to pay for the trouble I'll let the twenty-five come out of my pocket and call it a fine for being too smart."

"You shan't do no such thing. We can git out enough of that tar to make that up twice over, even with the back number rig we've got. But if we had a divin' kit and a diver I'd be willin' to bet we could save two or three hundred barrels, maybe more."

"That's what I thought. So I spent nearly three hours cruising up and down Atlantic avenue and rummaging in ship stores and such places. And, Cap'n Ezra, I know where we can buy a complete fit out second hand—pumps, pipes, diver's suit and the whole business, in A1 shape, so far as I can see—for $850. Just for a flier I paid $10 and got an option on it for a week."

"No? You didn't? Brad Nickerson, here's where the old man takes his hat off. You've got me beat, hull down. I'll be askin' you for a mate's job yit. Three hundred and fifty! Dirt, dog cheap!"

"I'm glad you feel that way, cap'n. Of course a diver 'll be expensive. The salvage company will charge us anywhere from $15 to $20 a day for a good one. And there's where I'm afraid the whole speculation falls down. We don't know how that tar lies, whether the hull's broken up, whether the barrels are sanded over or not. It might take so long to get it out that we'd lose money."

The captain, with both hands jammed into his pockets—his beckets, he called them—was pacing up and down.

"I've got your diver, boy!" he cried. "That is, I've got him if you say the word. Five dollars a day, too, instead of fifteen."

"Where in the world"—

"Right here in Orham. And he's had plenty of experience. What's the matter with Sam Hammond?"

"Sam Hammond! Sam—why, Cap'n Ez, what are you talking about? Sam told me himself that he'd come home to rest. He's going back to New York in a little while. He wouldn't work for us!"

"Wouldn't, hey? Brad, 'twas the feller with one leg that was too religious to dance. Sam's out of a job. Maybe he fired the boss; maybe the boss fired him. All I know is that he told me last night he'd dive for us at $5 per. Course he'd only do it to help us out, but that's all right. I don't care if there's a hole in the bag so long's the cookies are inside."

And so that is how Samuel Hammond, late of the Metropolitan Wrecking company of New York, came to enter the employ of Titcomb & Nickerson, to whom he had contemptuously referred as "anchor draggers." But if Bradley supposed for a moment that Sam would change his patronizing attitude because of the move he was much mistaken. Mr. Hammond laughed when he boarded the Lizzie, asked facetiously if "this was the vessel or only the long boat?" and poked fun at the whole outfit generally. He gave each member of the crew to understand that he was only doing this for awhile to help out Brad. He said that puttering around this way was such a change for him that it was the best fun of his vacation.

He took pains to make his position plain in the minds of the townspeople. Captain Jabez Bailey told Bradley in a confidential whisper: "It's mighty good of Sam to turn to and help you and Ez out of a hole. I hope you appreciate it." Bradley said he appreciated it fully.

Even Gus was inclined to view the matter in that light. Sam saw to it that she did. He called at the Baker homestead pretty often, and when Bradley was there treated the latter in a jolly, good fellow sort of way that couldn't well be resented, but which had always in it that aggravating flavor of pitying patronage.

Bradley felt that he was placed in an awkward and humiliating position. He told Gus so plainly.

"Gus," he asked, "do you think it's fair to allow Sam to call here as he does?"

A more experienced ladies' man—Captain Titcomb, for instance—would not have selected this particular evening to bring up this particular subject. Gus was in one of her uncertain moods. She had refused to be serious before, and she was not serious now.

"Why, Bradley Nickerson!" she exclaimed, with a laugh, "I do believe you're jealous!"

"No, I'm not jealous exactly. But why do you let him come here?"

"Brad, don't you trust me?"

"Of course I trust you."

"Then why are you suspicious or what are you afraid of?"

This very direct question was embarrassing. Bradley felt certain that he had good reason to be suspicious of Hammond's intentions, but he knew he had no actual proof that would warrant his saying so. He stammered and could reply only that he didn't like the fellow's calling so often.

Bradley went home injured and resentful. He made up his mind that Gus shouldn't have another chance to call him "jealous." He could show her that there were others who didn't care.

He plunged into business deeper than ever. The diving outfit came from Boston and worked well. They visited the sunken tar schooner, and Sam made his first dive. Captain Titcomb, who understood the apparatus, worked the pump. Sam reported that the tar seemed to be in good condition, and that, for the present, they could get up a number of the barrels through the hatchway. Later they might have to blow away a part of the hull.

So every fair day they worked over the wreck. Sam, in the diver's suit, clambered down into the submerged vessel's hold and attached the barrels to the tackle. Then, by the aid of the windlass, they were hauled up and swung aboard the Lizzie. By the first of October they had already got out over 200 barrels, and Sam said that he saw no reason why all of the 800 might not be secured in the course of time. The tar speculation was already a very profitable one, and the credit belonged to Bradley.

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(To be continued)

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