

THE YOUNG ENGINEERS



WALTER AND THE WIRELESS



JOIN WALTER AS HE DISCOVERS
THE INVENTION THAT MADE GLOBAL
COMMUNICATION POSSIBLE.



SARA WARE BASSETT



Also by Sara Ware Bassett

THE YOUNG ENGINEERS

Carl and the Cotton Gin
Christopher and the
Clockmakers
Paul and the Printing Press
Steve and the Steam Engine
Ted and the Telephone
Walter and the Wireless

THE STORY OF

The Story of Glass
The Story of Leather
The Story of Silk
The Story of Sugar
The Story of Porcelain
The Story of Lumber
The Story of Wool

This edition published 2026
by Living Book Press
Copyright © Living Book Press, 2026

ISBN: 978-1-76153-454-6 (hardcover)
978-1-76153-456-0 (softcover)

First published in 1923.

This edition is based on the Little, Brown, and Company printing by 1923.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any other form or means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner and the publisher or as provided by Australian law.



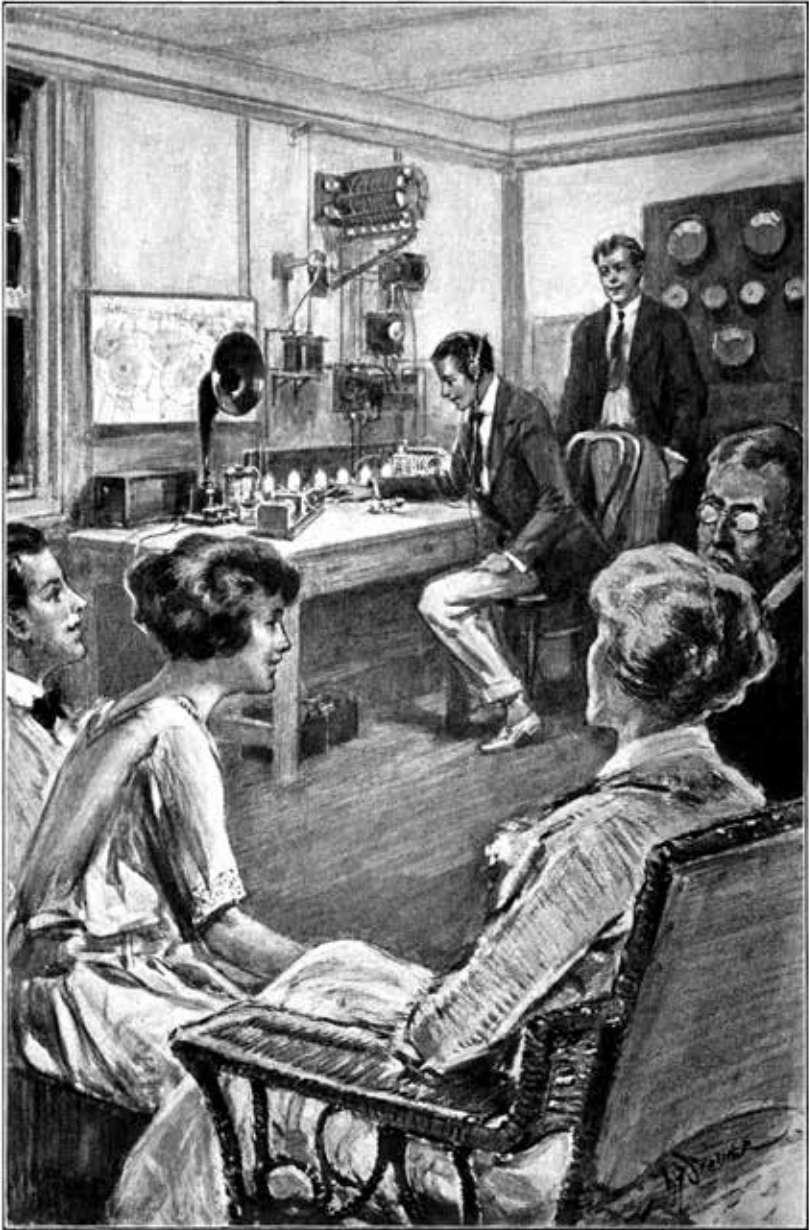
A catalogue record for this
book is available from the
National Library of Australia

WALTER AND THE WIRELESS

by

SARA WARE BASSETT





“K Y W CHICAGO, ILLINOIS. STAND BY FIFTEEN MINUTES FOR——.”

CONTENTS

1.	HIS HIGHNESS	1
2.	THE NEW JOB	14
3.	WHAT WORRIED MRS. KING	30
4.	WALTER MAKES HIS BOW TO HIS EMPLOYER	42
5.	THE CONQUEST OF ACHILLES	54
6.	HIS HIGHNESS IN A NEW ROLE	63
7.	THE PURSUIT OF LOLA	78
8.	A BLUNDER AND WHAT CAME OF IT	88
9.	MORE CLUES	98
10.	BOB	107
11.	THE DECISION	116
12.	LESSONS	124
13.	INFORMATION FROM A NEW SOURCE	138
14.	BOB AS PEDAGOGUE	144
15.	TIDINGS	156
16.	MIRACLES	168
17.	THE LAWS OF THE AIR	179
18.	THE NET TIGHTENS	193
19.	WALTER STEPS INTO THE BREACH	201
20.	THE RETURN OF THE WANDERERS	211

CHAPTER I

HIS HIGHNESS

His Highness came by the nickname honestly enough and yet those who heard it for the first time had difficulty in repressing a smile at the incongruity of the title. In fact perhaps no term could have been found that would have been less appropriate. For Walter King possessed neither dignity of rank nor of stature. On the contrary he was a short, snub-nosed boy of fifteen, the epitome of good humor and democracy.

His hair was red and tousled, his face spangled with great golden freckles which sea winds and sunshine had multiplied until there was scarce room for another on his beaming countenance. Hands and arms were freckled too, for when one lives in a bathing suit six months of the year and is either in the water or on it most of the time the skin fails to retain its pristine whiteness of hue. But His Highness did not care a fig for that. He was far too busy baiting eel and lobster traps, mending fish nets, untangling lines, and painting boats to give a thought to his personal beauty.

Indeed his mother often bewailed the fact that he was not more interested in his appearance and there were times when it seemed as if she were right. Certainly when her son ambled home at dusk with every rebellious hair standing upended upon

his head and a string of flounders dripping salt from the tips of their slimy tails she was justified to a degree in wishing he had more regard for the niceties of life.

“Look at the mess you’re making!” she would pipe indignantly. “I’ve just mopped this floor, Walter.”

“You have? Now isn’t that the dickens! Well, no matter, Ma; I’ll swab the place down again when I’ve finished cleaning these fish. They’re beauties, aren’t they? A batch of them fried won’t go bad for supper to-night. I’m hungry as a bear. Shouldn’t think I’d eaten anything in ten years. Say, Ma, what do you s’pose? Dave Corbett was out in the *Nancy* three hours and never got a bite. What do you think of that? The wind died down, his engine got stalled, and he and Hosey Talbot had to row home from the Bell Reef Shoals. Haw, haw! Maybe I didn’t roar when I saw them come pulling in against the tide, mad as two man-eating sharks. Fit to harpoon the first person they met, they were. I sung out and asked them were they practicing for the Harvard and Yale boat race and Dave was that peeved he shied an oarlock after me. Haw, haw, haw!”

“You ought not to provoke Dave, Walter.”

“Provoke him? But he was provoked already, Ma. There’s no harm putting an extra stick on the fire when it’s burning, anyhow. Besides, Dave is never in earnest when he bawls me out. He just likes to hear himself scold.”

“He has a terrible temper.”

“Oh, I know half the town is scart to death of him. But he always will take a jolly from me. We understand each other, Dave and I. Say, Ma, these rubber boots leak. Did you know that? Yes, siree! They leak like sieves. I might as well be without ‘em.”

Mrs. King sighed.

“I don’t see,” murmured she, “how you manage to go through

everything you have so quickly, Walter. Nothing you wear lasts you more than a week.”

“Oh, I say, make it a month. Do, now!”

He saw his mother smile faintly.

“Well, a month then.”

“You couldn’t stretch it to two?”

“Not possibly. Four weeks seems to be your limit.”

The sharpness of her tone, however, had weakened.

“Four weeks, eh? I did think I’d had these rubber boots longer than that. It is amazing how attached you can get to things even in a little while.”

Holding aloft the knife with which he was preparing to behead the unlucky flounders, His Highness gazed reflectively down at his feet.

“It’s awful that I have to keep having so many things, isn’t it? I hate to be costing you money all the time. Now if you’d only let me ship for the Grand Banks when the *Katie B.* goes out——”

“Walter! What is the use of digging up that old bone again? I never shall let you ship for the Grand Banks or any other Banks so long as I live. We’ve had this out hundreds of times before. You know you and Bob are all I’ve got in the world. Do you suppose I want you lost in a fog and never heard from again?”

“Oh, Great Scott, Ma! They don’t lose fishing boats now as they used to. They carry wireless, and the fleet keeps in touch every minute.”

“The dories have no wireless aboard them,” observed Mrs. King grimly.

“I suppose not, no, probably they don’t,” His Highness admitted reluctantly.

“Anyway, wireless or no wireless, you are not going on a fishing cruise to the Grand Banks.”

"I hear you, Ma," grinned the boy.

"There is plenty of work right here on the land if you're looking for it. Why must you always be wanting to go to sea to earn money?"

"Faith, Mother, I don't know," laughed Walter. "I expect it's because I see chores to do when I'm afloat that I can't see ashore. It is the way I was born."

"A poor way."

"Maybe it is. At any rate I can't help it."

"I'm afraid you do not try to help it very hard."

The lad shrugged his shoulders.

"There's that chance you have to hire out at the Crowninshields' for the summer."

"Those snobs."

"Beggars cannot be choosers. Besides, they may not be snobs at all. What makes you think they are?"

"Oh, I don't mind the lugs they put on," protested Walter, evading the issue. "I suppose all New York swells do that. It's what they want me for that gets my goat." Again the knife he held was tragically upraised. "How would you like to be nursemaid to six or eight brainless little pups no bigger than rats? Not but what I like dogs. I'd like nothing better than to own a fine dog of some spirit. But those imitations! Why, before a week was out, I'd have their necks wrung."

"Mr. Crowninshield promised to pay you well."

"What's money if all the kids in town are going to josh you?"

"Money is a good deal when you need it." His mother shook her head gravely. "Have you ever considered how badly we are in want of money, Walter?"

"What do you mean, Ma?" The boy wheeled about, startled.

"I haven't said anything about it, dear, because I could not

bear to have you boys bothered," was the quiet answer. "But lately things have not been going well and I have been pretty much worried. The money your Uncle Henry invested for us isn't paying any dividends; there seems to be something the matter with the company's affairs. As for your Uncle Mark Miller, I've heard nothing from him in months. His ship was to put in at Shanghai for cargo and I ought to have had a letter by now; but none has come and I am afraid something must be the trouble. He is a good brother and never fails to send me money. I can ill afford to be without help now when the mortgage is coming due and I have so many bills to meet. It takes a deal of money to live nowadays. You boys do not realize that."

"Why, I had no idea you were fussed, Mother, and I'm sure Bob hadn't either," declared Walter soberly.

"Then I have done better than I thought I had," returned his mother, with the shadow of a smile. "I wanted to keep it secret if I could."

"But you shouldn't have tried to keep it a secret, Mater dear," Walter replied. "I'm sure we'd rather know—at least I would."

"But what use is it?"

"Use? Why, all the use in the world, Ma. I shall go ahead and take Mr. Crowninshield's job for one thing."

"But you said——"

"Shucks! I was only fooling about the dogs, Mother. I shan't really mind exercising and taking care of them at all. Of course, I won't deny I'd rather they were Great Danes or police dogs; I'd even prefer Airedales or Cockers. Still I suppose these little mopsey Pekingese must have some brains or the Lord would not have made them. No doubt I shall get used to them in time."

"It is only for the summer vacation anyway, you know,"

ventured his mother. "The Crowninshields go back to New York in October."

"I certainly ought to be able to bear up a few months," laughed Walter, with a ludicrously wry twist of his mouth. "I hate to think you've been bothered and have been keeping it all to yourself."

"Misery does like company," Mrs. King returned with an unsteady laugh. "I believe I feel better already for having told you. But you must not worry, dear. We shall pull through all right, I guess. How I came to speak of it I don't know. It was only that it seemed such a pity to toss the Crowninshield offer aside without even considering it. Nobody knows where it might end. The village people say Mr. Crowninshield is a very generous man, especially if he takes a fancy to anybody."

"But he may not take a fancy to me."

"He must have done so already to be asking you to help with the dogs."

"Nonsense, Ma! Did you think Mr. Crowninshield picked me out himself? Why, he's never laid eyes on me. That great privilege is still in store for him. No, he simply told Jerry Thomas, the caretaker, to find somebody for the job before the family arrived. He doesn't care a darn who it is so long as he has a person who can be trusted with his priceless pups. Why, I heard the other day that a dealer from New York had offered five thousand dollars for the smallest one."

"Walter!"

"Straight goods!"

"Five thousand dollars for a dog!" gasped Mrs. King.

Her son chuckled at her incredulity.

"Sure!"

"But it's a fortune," murmured she. "I had no idea there was a dog on earth worth that much."

“All of them are not.”

“But five thousand dollars!” she repeated. “Why, Walter, I wouldn’t have you responsible for a creature like that for anything in the world. You might as well attempt to be custodian of a lot of gold bonds. I shouldn’t have a happy moment or sleep a wink thinking of it. Suppose some of the little wretches were to run away and get lost? Or suppose they were to be stolen? Or they might get sick and die on your hands.”

“That is why they want a responsible person to keep an eye on them.”

His Highness squared his shoulders and threw out his chest.

“But you are not a responsible person,” burst out Mrs. King with unflattering candor.

“Mother!”

“Well—are you?” she insisted.

The boy’s figure shriveled.

“No,” he confessed frankly, “I’m afraid I’m not.”

“Of course you’re not,” continued his mother with the same brutal truthfulness. “It isn’t that you do not mean to be, sonny,” added she kindly. “But your mind wanders off on all sorts of things instead of the thing you’re doing. That is why you do not get on better in school. All your teachers say you are bright enough if you only had some concentration to back it up. What you can be thinking of all the time I cannot imagine; but certainly it isn’t your lessons.”

“I know,” nodded Walter without resentment. “My mind does flop about like a kite. I think of everything but what I ought to. It’s a rotten habit.”

“Well, all I can say is you’d be an almighty poor one to look after a lot of valuable dogs,” sniffed his mother.

“I’ll bet I could do it if I set out to.”

“But would you set out to—that is the question? Would you really put your entire attention on those dogs so that other people could drop them from their minds? That is what taking care means.”

“I couldn’t promise. I could only try.”

“I should never dare to have you undertake it.”

“That settles it, Ma,” announced His Highness. “I’ve evidently got to prove to you that you are wrong. I’m going up to Crowninshields’ this minute to tell Jerry he can count on me from July until October.”

“You’re crazy.”

“Wait and see.”

“I know what I’ll see,” was the sharp retort. “I shall see all those puppies kicking up their heels and racing off to Provincetown, and Mr. Crowninshield insisting that you either find them and bring them back or pay him what they cost him.”

“Don’t you believe it.”

“That is what will happen,” was the solemn prophecy.

“But you were keen for me to take the job.”

“That was before I knew what the little rats were worth.”

“You just thought it was a cheap sort of a position and that I was to race round and make it pleasant for a lot of ordinary curs, didn’t you?” interrogated the lad with mock indignation.

In spite of herself his mother smiled.

“Well, you see you were wrong,” went on Walter. “It is not that sort of thing at all. It is a job for a trustworthy man, Jerry Thomas said, and will bring in good wages.”

“It ought to,” replied his mother sarcastically, “if a person must spend every day for three months sitting with his eyes glued on those mites watching every breath they draw.”

“It isn’t just days, Mother; I’d have to be there nights as well.”

“*What!*”

“That’s what Jerry told me. I’d have to sleep on the place. Mr. Crowninshield wants some one there all the time.”

“But Walter——!” Mrs. King broke off in dismay.

“I know that would mean leaving you alone now that Bob has a regular position at the Seaver Bay Wireless station. Still, why should you mind? I have always been gone all day, anyhow; and at night I sleep so soundly that you yourself have often said burglars might carry away the bed from under me and I not know it.”

“You are not much protection, that’s a fact,” confessed Mrs. King. “Fortunately, though, I am not a timid person. It is not that I am afraid to stay here alone. My chief objection is that it seems foolish to run a great house like this simply for myself.”

“Couldn’t you get some one to come and keep you company?”

“Who, I should like to know?”

“Why—why—well, I haven’t thought about it. Of course there’s Aunt Marcia King.”

“Mercy on us!” exclaimed his mother, instantly flaring up. “I’d rather see the evil one himself put in an appearance than your Aunt Marcia. Of all the fault-finding, critical, sharp-tongued creatures in the world she is the worst. Why, I’d let burglars carry away every stick and stone I possess and myself thrown in before I would ask her here to board.”

“My, Mother! I’d no idea you had such a temper. You’re as bad as Dave Corbett,” asserted Walter teasingly.

His mother tossed her head but he saw her flush uncomfortably.

“I suppose you wouldn’t want a regular boarder,” suggested the boy in order to turn the conversation.

“A boarder!” There was less disapproval than surprise in the ejaculation, however.

“Lots of people in the town do take summer boarders,” added he.

“The thought never entered my head before,” reflected his mother aloud. “There certainly is plenty of room in the house, and we have a royal view of the water. Besides, there’s the garden. Strangers are always coming here in vacation time and asking if they may look at it or sketch it. It never seemed anything very remarkable to me for most of the flowers have sown themselves and grow like weeds, but of course there’s no denying the hollyhocks, poppies, and larkspur are pretty. But visitors always call it wonderful.”

“Most likely you could get a big price if you were to rent rooms.”

“I’m sure I could,” replied Mrs. King thoughtfully. “It would help toward the mortgage and the other bills, too. I’ve half a mind to try it, Walter.”

“It would mean extra work for you.”

“Pooh! What do I care for that? Not a fig! In fact, with both of you boys away I’d rather be busy than not,” was the quick retort.

“Do you suppose Bob would mind?”

“Bob? Why, he’s seldom at home nowadays. Why should he care?”

“Aunt Marcia might think——” began the boy mischievously. But the comment was cut short.

“Oh, I know what your Aunt Marcia would say,” broke in Mrs. King. “She’d hold up her hands in horror and announce that it was beneath the dignity of the family to take boarders.”

They both laughed.

“I believe the very notion of scandalizing her will be what

will decide me,” concluded his mother with finality. “I’ll put an advertisement in the Boston paper to-morrow and see what luck I have. If the right people do not turn up, why I don’t have to take them.”

“Sure you don’t.”

“It’s a good plan, a splendid plan, Walter. Boarders will give me company and money too. I wonder it never occurred to me to do it before.” Then she patted the lad’s shoulder, adding playfully, “I guess if you have brains in one direction you must have them in another. Still, as I said before, I do not fancy your being responsible for those dogs.”

“Pooh! You quit worrying, Ma, or I shall be sorry I told you they were blue ribbon pups.”

“I should have heard of it, never fear. You hear of everything in this town. You can’t help it. Like as not everybody in the place will know by to-morrow morning that I am going to take boarders. Luckily I don’t care—that’s one good thing. And as to the dogs, if you are resolved to accept that position all I can say is that you must keep a head on your shoulders. You cannot hire out for a job unless you are prepared to give a full return for the money paid you. It is not honest. So think carefully what you mean to do before you embark. And remember, if you get into some careless scrape you cannot come back on me for money for I haven’t any to hand over.”

“I shall shoulder my own blame,” responded Walter, drawing in his chin.

“Well and good then. If you are ready to do that, it is your affair and I have nothing more to say,” announced Mrs. King, preparing to leave the room.

But Walter stayed her on the threshold.

“I don’t see,” he began, “why you always seem to expect I’m

going to get into a scrape. You are never looking for trouble with Bob.”

“Bob! Bless your heart I never have to! You know that as well as I do. Any one could trust Bob until the Day of Judgment. He never forgets a word you tell him. Ask him to do an errand and it is as good as done. You can drop it from your mind. From a little child he was dependable like that. His teachers couldn’t say enough about him. Wasn’t he always at the head of his class? The way he’s turned out is no surprise. Think of his picking up wireless enough outside school hours to get a radio job during the war, and afterward that fine position at Seaver Bay! Few lads his age could have done it. And think of the messages he’s entrusted with—government work, and sinking ships, and goodness knows what not!”

The proud mother ceased for lack of breath.

“I wish I was like Bob,” sighed Walter gloomily.

“Nonsense!” was the instant exclamation. “You’re yourself, and scatter-brain as you are, I’d want you no different. You’re but a lad yet. When you are Bob’s age you may be like him. Who knows?”

“I’m afraid not,” came dismally from Walter. “I haven’t started out as Bob did.”

“What if you haven’t? There’s time enough to catch up if you hurry. And anyway, I do not want my children all alike. Variety is the spice of life. I wouldn’t have you patterned after Bob if I could speak the word.”

“You wouldn’t?” the boy brightened.

“Indeed I wouldn’t! Who would I be patching torn trousers or darning ripped sweaters for if you were like Bob, I’d like to know? Who’d be pestering me to hunt up his cap and mittens? And who would I be frying clams for?”

“Bob never could abide clam fritters, could he?” put in the younger brother.

“Bob never had any frivolities,” mused Mrs. King, shaking her head. “Sometimes I’ve almost wished he had if only to keep the rest of us in countenance. Many’s the time I’ve feared lest he was going to die he was that near perfect.”

“Well, Ma, you haven’t had to lie awake worrying because I was too good for this world, have you?” chuckled His Highness, breaking into a grin.

His mother regarded him affectionately.

“Oh, you’ll make your way too, sonny, some day. It won’t be as Bob has done it; but you’ll make it nevertheless. Folks are going to do things for you simply because they cannot help it.”

The boy studied her with a puzzled expression.

“What do you mean, Mater?”

As if coming out of a reverie Mrs. King started, the mistiness that had softened her eyes vanishing.

“There! Look at the way you’ve splashed up my nice clean sink!” complained she tartly. “Did any one ever see such a child—always messing up everything! Come, clear out of here and take your fish with you. It does seem as if you needed four nursemaids and a valet at your heels to pick up after you. Be off this minute.”

With a cloth in one hand and a bar of soap in the other, she elbowed him away from the dishpan.

“You’ll fry these flounders for supper, won’t you, Ma?” called the lad as he disappeared into the shed.

“Fry ‘em? I reckon I’ll have to. It’s wicked to catch fish and not use ‘em.”

But he saw his mother’s eyes twinkle and her grumbling assent did not trouble him.

CHAPTER II
THE NEW JOB

May at Lovell's Harbor was one of the most beautiful seasons of the year. In fact the inhabitants of the town often remarked that they put up with the winters the small isolated village offered for the sake of its springs and summers. Certain it was that when easterly storms swept the marshes and lashed the harbor into foam; when every boat that struggled out of the channel returned whitened to the gunwale with ice, there was little to induce anybody to take up residence in the hamlet. How cold and blue the water looked! How the surf boomed up on the lonely beach and the winds howled and whined around the eaves of the low cottages!

One buttoned himself tightly into a greatcoat then, twisted a muffler many times about his neck, pulled his cap over his ears, and rushed for school with a velocity that almost equaled the scudding schooners whose sails billowed large against the horizon. At least that was what His Highness, Walter King, invariably did.

But from the instant the breath of spring stole into the air,—ah, then Lovell's Harbor became a different place altogether. The stems of the willows fringing the small fresh-water ponds mellowed to bronze before one's very eyes; the dull reaches of salt grass turned emerald; the steely tint of the sea softened to azure

and glinted golden in the sun. How shrill sounded the cries of the redwings in the marsh! How jolly the frogs' twilight chorus!

The miracle went on with amazing rapidity. Soon you were scouring the hollows in the woods for arbutus or splashing bare-legged into the bogs for cowslips. You even ventured knee-deep into the sea which although still chill was no longer frigid. And then, before you knew it, you were hauling out your fishing tackle and looking over your flies; inspecting the old dory and calking her seams with a coat of fresh paint. Then came the raking of the leaves, the uncovering of the hollyhocks, and the burning of brush; and through the mists of smoke that rose high in the air you could hear the resonant chee-ee of the blackbirds swinging on the reeds along the margin of the creek.

And afterward, when summer had really made its appearance, what days of blue and gold followed! Was ever sky so cloudless, grass so vividly green, or ocean so sparkling? Ah, a boy never lacked amusement now! He wriggled into his bathing suit directly after breakfast and was off to the shore to swim, fish, or sail, or do any of the thousand-and-one alluring things that turned up. And things always did turn up in that small horseshoe where the boats made in. It was the club of Lovell's Harbor.

Here all the men of the village congregated daily to smoke, swap jokes, and heckle those who worked.

"That's no way to mend a net, Eph," one of the spectators would protest. "Where was you fetched up, man? Tote the darn thing over here and I'll show you how they do it off the Horn."

Or another member of the audience would call:

"Was you reckonin' you'd have enough paint in that keg to finish your yawl, Eddie? Never in the world! What are you so scrimpin' of it for? Slither it on good and thick and let it trickle down into the cracks. 'Twill keep 'em tight."

Oh, one learned to curb his temper and bend to the higher criticism if he carried his work down to the beach. He got an abundance of advice whether he asked for it or not and for the most part the counsel was sound and helpful. There you heard also tales of tempests, wrecks, strange ports, and sea serpents,—weird tales that chilled your blood; and sometimes the piping note of an old chanty was raised by one whose sailing days were now only a memory.

What marvel that to be a boy at Lovell's Harbor was a boon to be coveted even if along with the distinction went a throng of homely tasks such as shucking clams, cleaning cod, baiting lobster pots, and running errands? No cake is all frosting and no chowder all broth. You had to take the bad along with the good if you lived at Lovell's Harbor. And while you were sandwiching in work and fun what an education you got! Why, it was better than a dozen schools. Not only did you learn to swim like a spaniel, pull a strong oar, hoist a sail, and gain an understanding of winds and tides, but also you came to handle tools with an ease no manual training school could teach you. You made a wooden pin do if you had no nail; and a bit of rope serve if the whittled pin were lacking. Instead of hurrying to a shop to purchase new you patched up the old, and the triumph of doing it afforded a satisfaction very pleasant to experience.

Moreover, as a result, you had more pennies in your pocket and more brains in your head. Both Bob and Walter King, as well as most of the other village lads, outranked the town-bred boy in all-round practical skill. They may not have cut such a fine figure at golf or dancing; perhaps they did not excel at Latin or French; but they had at the tips of their tongues numberless useful facts which they had tried out and proven workable and which no city dweller could possibly have gleaned.

His Highness might be freckled and trowsled and, as his mother affirmed, forgetful and careless, but like a sponge his active young mind had soaked up a deal no books could have given him. You would best beware how you jollied Walter King or put him down for a "Rube." More than likely you would later regret your snap judgment.

No doubt it was this realization that had stimulated Jerry Thomas to ask him to come to Surfside, the Crowninshields' big summer estate, and look after the dogs. Jerry was an old resident of Lovell's Harbor, and having watched the boy grow up, he unquestionably knew what he was about. That there were plenty of other boys at the Harbor to choose from was certain. If the honor descended to His Highness, rest assured it was not without reason.

Hence Jerry was not only pleased but immensely gratified when on the morning following Walter rounded the corner of the great barn and appeared in the doorway.

"I've come to say Yes to that job you offered me the other day," announced he, without wasting words on preliminaries.

"Good, youngster!"

"When shall you want me?"

"When can you come?" grinned Jerry.

He was a lank, sharp-featured man with china blue eyes that narrowed to a mere slit when he smiled, and from the corners of which crowsfeet, like fan-shaped streaks of light from the rising sun, radiated across his temples. His skin was tanned to the hue of old hickory and deep down in its furrows were lines of white. He had a big nose that was always sunburned, powerful hands with a reddish fuzz on their backs, and gnarled fingers that bore the scars of innumerable nautical disasters. But the chief glory he possessed was a neatly tattooed schooner that

sailed under full canvas upon his forearm and bore beneath it the inscription:

The Mollie D. The finest ship afloat.

The words had been intended as a tribute rather than a challenge for Jerry was a peaceful soul, but unfortunately they had proved provocative of many a brawl, and had the truth been known a certain odd slant of Jerry's chin could have been traced back to this apparently harmless assertion. Possibly had this mate of the *Mollie D.* foreseen into what straits his boast was to lead him he might not have expressed it so baldly in all the naked glory of blue ink; but with the sentiment once immortalized what choice had he but to defend it? Therefore, being no coward but a sturdy seaman with a swinging undercut, he had in times past delivered many a blow in order to uphold the *Mollie D.*'s nautical reputation, after which encounters his challengers were wont to emerge with a more profound respect not only for the bark but for Jerry Thomas as well.

All that, however, was long ago. Since the great storm of 1890 when so many ships had perished and the *Mollie D.*, bound from Norfolk to Fairhaven, had gone down with the rest, Jerry had abandoned the sea. It was not the perils of the deep, nevertheless, that had driven him landward, or the fear of future disasters; it was only that since his first love was lost he could not bring himself to ship on any other vessel.

Accordingly he took to the shore and for a time a very strange misfit he was there. How he fumed and fidgeted and roamed from one place to another, searching for some spot in which his restless spirit would find peace! And then one day he had wandered into Lovell's Harbor and there he had stayed ever since. For several seasons he had taken out sailing parties of summer boarders or piloted amateur fishermen out to the

Ledges; but the timidity and lack of sophistication of these city patrons at length so rasped his nerves that he gave up the task and was about to betake himself to pastures new when he fell beneath the eye of Mr. Glenmore Archibald Crowninshield, a New York banker, who had bought the strip of land forming one arm of the bay and was on the point of erecting there a diminutive summer palace.

From that instant Jerry's fortune was made. Mr. Crowninshield was a keen student of human nature and was immediately attracted to the sailor with his ambling gait and twinkling blue eyes. Moreover, the New Yorker happened to be in search of just such a man to look out for his interests when he was not at Lovell's Harbor. Hence Jerry was elevated to the post of caretaker and delegated to keep guard over the edifice that was about to be erected.

In view of the fact that up to the moment Jerry had been the most care-free mortal alive and had never from day to day been able to remember the whereabouts of his sou'wester or his rubber boots, his ensuing transformation was nothing short of a miracle. Promptly settling down with doglike fidelity he began mildly to urge on the lagging carpenters; but presently, magnificent in his wrath, he rose above them, whiplash in hand, and drove them forward. His watery blue eyes followed every stick of timber, every foot of piping, every nail that was placed. There was no escaping his watchfulness. If corners were not true or moldings did not meet he saw and called attention to it. Many a time a slipshod workman was ready to throw him over the cliff into the sea and perhaps might have done so had he not been conscious of the justice of the criticism.

In consequence the Crowninshield house was built on honor; and when the bills began to come in and showed a marked fall-