opening notes of the "Sweet By and

By." Then she dropped the hook into

the staple, wound the leather strap

the slim lady fidgeted in front of him.

was aressed in some sort of black ma-

terial that rustled and wore a lace col-

lar, jet earrings and a breastpin with a

braided lock of hair in the center of it

-"Bradley, we're real glad to see you.

I'm Miss Priscilla; this is my sister,

Tempy," "we're real glad to see you."

She was the younger of the two and

was gowned in what the boy learned

later was her "brown poplin." Her

hair was not worn plain, like her sis-

ter's, but had a little bunch of curls

over each ear. She also wore a hair

breastpin, but her earrings were gold.

Bradley shook the extended hands,

Miss Prissy's red and dimpled and

Miss Tempy's thin and white, with

two old fashioned rings on the fingers.

it was at his shoes that Miss Prissy

glanced, and, oddly enough, their con-

Bradley reluctantly obeyed, stepping

gingerly across the spotless oilcloth

and taking as long strides as possible.

It did not add to his comfort to see

Miss Tempy shake the melting snow

into the center of the rope mat, fold

the latter carefully together and dis-

Miss Prissy piloted him to the chintz

covered rocker by the big "airtight"

stove. Then she proceeded to unlace

the patched brogans, commenting in an

undertone upon the condition of the

"I'm 'fraid," said Bradley fearfully,

"Don't say a word. Thank goodness

your feet ain't so wet as I thought they

was. Put 'em right on the rail of the

stove there while I go up to the gar-

ret and get those slippers of father's.

She hurried out of the room just as

"Now, set right still," said Miss Tem-

her sister entered it by the other door.

py, bustling about, with the steaming

teakettle in her hand. "I'm goin' to

make you some pepper tea. There's

nothin' in the world like pepper tea

"Pepper tea" was a new prescription

est while Miss Tempy turned some

ing water, added a spoonful of sugar

"There!" she said. "Now, drink that,

Bradley, with tears in his eyes, the

result of the first swallow of pepper

tea, gaspingly protested that he wasn't

hungry, not very. The sight and smell

of the loaded supper table were so

tempting that the denial was rather

"Not very! When did you have any-

"Mr. Bartlett-he's the s'lectman at

Bradley shook the extended hands.

Wellmouth-gave me a sandwich a

the depot 'fore I started, ma'am, and I

"My sakes! Prissy"-to her sister.

who came rustling in-"he hasn't et a

thing but a sandwich and a turnover

since morning. Now, come right over

As the boy ate he looked about the

room. It was a big room, with a low

ceiling, spotlessly whitewashed. The

were wonderful tinted pictures of cas-

the wall and looking as if it were glued

there. The sixth of the set he occu-

pied. Then there was the chintz cov-

sea on the back. There was another

to the table, Bradley, and set down."

bought a turnover at Harniss."

"that I've got some snow water on

appear with it into the kitchen.

dition served to break the formality.

They're soppin' wet through."

"Won't you-wen't you set down?"

"Yes, Bradley," coincided "Miss

Miss Temperance."

awkward pause.

this minute."

stockings beneath.

your floor, ma'am."

I'll be right back."

over the mess.

half hearted.

thing to eat last?"

Partners 9

CHAPTER I.

AS you cal'latin' to buy one of them turnovers, bub?" casually inquired Mr. Clark, ceasing to gaze at his steaming boots, which were planted against the bulging center of the station stove, and turning toward the boy at the lunch counter.

"Yes, sir," said the boy. He had taken off one worsted mitten and held a five cent piece clutched tightly in his red fist.

The station agent wrapped the pastry in a piece of newspaper and handed it to his customer.

The boy, a youngster of about twelve Years of age, with a freckled race and a pair of bright gray eyes, took his "turnover" to the settee in the corner of the waiting room and began to eat. He had on a worn cloth cap with an attachment that could be pulled down to cover the ears and a shabby overcoat of man's size, very much too large for him. As he munched the greasy crust and the thin layer of "evaporated" apple he looked around him with interest.

The station itself was like the average railway building on Cape Cod. Except for the sign "Harniss" that hung outside it might have been the station at Wellmouth, which he had Battered settees the walls; lithographs of steamers, time tables and year old ty fairs hung above them; big stove set in a box of sawdust-all these were the regulation fixtures. Regulation also were the "refreshments" on the counter at the side-"turnovers" arranged cobhouse fashion under a glass cover, with a dingy "Washington" pie under another cover and jars of striped stick candy, with boxes of "jawbreakers" and similar sweetmeats be-

It was snowing hard, and in the dusk of the winter evening the flakes rustled against the windows as if unseen old ladies in starched summer gowns were shivering in the storm and crowding to get a peep within. The air in the shut waiting room smelled of bot stove, sawdust, wet clothing and Mr. Clark's cigar. To this collection of perfumes was presently added the odor of kerosene as the station agent . Ilt the big lamps in their brackets on the wall. From outside came the sounds of

creaking wheels and stamping horses, the stamping muffled by the snow which covered the ground.

The door opened, and a big man with a face of which gray whiskers and red nose were the most prominent features came stamping and puffing into the room. He jerked off a pair of leather gloves, playfully shook the congealed moisture from them down Mr. Clark's neck inside his collar, tossed a long whip into the corner and, holding his spread angers over the stove, began to sing "Whoa, Emma!" with enthusiasm.

Mr. Clark, being toe busy clawing the melting snow from his neck to open a conversation, Mr. Bodkin observed: "Hello, Barney Small! How's the trav'lin'? Have a rough time drivin' over?" "Oh, middlin', middlin'," replied the

driver of the Orham stage, unbuttoning his overcoat and reaching for his pipe, "but this earth's a vale of tears anyhow, so what's the odds so long's you're happy. Hello, Dan!" The last a shouted greeting to the station agent in the little room, whose answer was a wave of the hand and a sidelong nod across the telegraph instrument. "What's doin' over in Orham, Bar-

ney?" inquired Mr. Clark. "Prissy and Tempy's adopted a boy." The agent evidently was interested. "The old maids?"

"Yup, the old maids. I s'pose they come to reelize that they needed a man 'round the house, but as there wa'n't no bids in that line they sort of compromised on a boy."

"You don't mean the Allen old maids that live down on the 'lower road,' do you?" asked Mr. Bodkin. "Sartin. I said the old maids, didn'

I? There's plenty of single women in Orham, but when you say 'the old maids' in our town everybody knows you mean Prissy and Tempy."

"What about the boy, Barney?" said the station agent, coming into the

waiting room. "Why." said Mr. Small, "it's this way: Seems that Prissy and Tempy's father, old Cap'n D'rius Allen-he's been dead six years or more now-had a niece name of Sophia, that married ·Cap'n Ben Nickerson over to Wellmouth. Cap'n Ben and his wife had one son. I think the boy's name's Bradley. Anyhow Cap'n Ben and his wife was drowned off the Portuguese coast two years ago when Ben's bark. was lost. Maybe you remember? Well, the boy was left at home that voyage with Ben's ha'f brother, Solon Nickerschool. When his folks was drownded in unison, that way the boy kept on livin' with Solon till 'bout three weeks ago Solon maids are pretty conscientious spite or tences with vigor. their bein' so everlastin' 'old maidy,' "Full cargo tonight?" he asked of and they fin'lly decided 'twas their Mr. Small, who was buttoning his duty to take the little feller to bring overcoat and pulling on his gloves. up. That's the way I heard the yarn. "Pretty nigh an empty hold," was They kept it a secret until yesterday, the reply. "Only bout one and a ha'f

it. You see, it's such a good joke for here's the ha'f. All aboard! Come on, them two to have a boy in the house. Brad. You and the cap'n git inside, Why, Prissy's been used to shooin' while me and Dan git the dunnage on smail change from a portentous black clock in the corner. This craft was every stray boy off the place as if he the rack." was a hen." Mr. Small laughed so heartily at this followed Mr. Small out to the rear

hilarity had subsided the station agent | coach, an old fashioned, dingy vehicle,

"When's the Nickerson boy comin"

"Why, today, come to think of it. He was to come up on the afternoon train from Wellmouth and go to Orham with me tonight. You ain't seen The old vehicle rocked and groaned

The station agent interrupted him with a sidelong movement of the head. "Huh?" queried Mr. Small. Then he. in company with Mr. Clark and Mr. Bodkin, turned toward the corner of the waiting room.

The boy who had bought the apple "turnover," having finished the last crumb of that viand, had turned to the window and was looking out through a hole he had scraped in the frost on the pane. He had shaded his face with his hands to shut out the lamplight, and, though he must have heard the conversation, his manner betrayed no interest in it.

Mr. Small interrogated the station agent by raising his eyebrows. The agent whispered, "Shouldn't wonder," and added, "He came on the up train

take a reef. She's rollin' consider'-"Hey, boy," said Mr. Clark, who never let consideration for other people interfere with his own curiosity, sir." "what's your name?"

The boy turned from the window and, blinking a little as the light struck his eyes, faced the group by the stove. His freckled cheeks glistened as the light shone upon them; but, as if he knew this, he pulled the big sleeve of the overcoat across his face and rubbed them dry. "What's your name, senny?" said

the stage driver kindly. "Nickerson," said the boy in a low

"I want to know. Your fust name ain't Bradley, is it?"

"Yes, sir." "Sho, well, there now! Guess you're goin' to ride over with me then. drive the Orham coach. Hum, well, I declare!" And Mr. Small pulled his beard in an embarrassed fashion.

"Come over to the stove and get warm, won't you?" asked the station

"I ain't cold," was the reply.

The trie by the stove fidgeted in silence for a few moments, and then Mr. Small said uneasily: "Ain't it 'most time for that train to be in She's a ha'f hour late now."

"She was twenty-five minutes late at Sandwich," said the station agent, "and she's prob'ly lost ten minutes or so since. She'll be along in a little while now."

But in spite of this cheerful prophecy a full fifteen minutes passed before the train, which had been started from



"What's your name, sonny?"

Boston with the vague idea that some time or other it might get to Provincetown, came coughing and panting round the curve and drew up at the station platform. Only one passenger got out at the Harniss station, and he, stopping for a moment to hand his trunk check to the station agent, walked briskly into the waiting room and slammed the door behind him. "Hello!" he hailed, pulling off a buck-

skin glove and holding out a big hand to the stage driver. "Barney, how's she headin'?'

Mr. Small grinned and took the proffered hand.

"Well, for the land's sake, Ez Titcomb!" he exclaimed. "Where'd you drop from? Thought you was somewheres off the coast between New York and Portland jest 'bout now."

"Got shore leave for a fortni't or so," said the newcomer, unbuttoning his overcoat with a smart jerk and throwing it wide open. "Schooner sprung a leak off Gay head last trip, and she's hauled up at East Boston for repairs. Dirty weather, ain't it? Hello, Lon! How are you, Ike?"

Mr. Clark and his friend grinned and son, so's the youngster could go to responded, "How are you, Cap'n Ez?"

The arrival was a short, thickset man with a sunburned face, sharp eyes, was took with pneumony and up and hair that was a reddish brown sprindied. Prissy and Tempy's the only re- kled with gray and a close clipped lations there was, you see, so it was mustache of the same color. He wore a left to them to say what should be blue overcoat over a blue suit and held done with the boy. I cal'late there a cigar firmly in one corner of his must have been some high old pow- mouth. His movements were quick wowin' in the old house, but the old and sharp and he snapped out his sen-

but now the whole town's talkin' 'bout goin' over. You're the one, and the boy

The boy picked up the carpet bag and gle. Like the boy, he had been very that the others joined in. When the platform of the station, where the

drawn by four sleepy horses, stood mornin'. Good night, Brad. Captain Titcomb followed, his over-

coat flapping in the wind. "Here, Barney," he observed, "have a cigar to smoke on the road. Have one, Dan? Here, Lon; here's a couple for Ike. Who's the little feller?" in a whisper to the station

Nickerson's boy from Wellmouth. He's comin' down to Orham to live with the old maids. They've adopt-

"The old maids? Not the old maids? Not Prissy and Tempy?" All right, Barney; I'm com-

The station agent hurried away to help the driver with the captain's sea chest, and its owner, apparently overcome with astonishment, climbed mutely into the coach, where his fellow passenger had preceded him.

as the heavy chest was strapped on the racks behind. Then it tipped again as Mr. Small climbed clumsily to the "All ashore that's goin' shore!" shout-

ed Mr. Small. "So long, Dan. Git dap, Two-forty!" The whip cracked, the coach reeled

on its springs, and the whole equipage disappeared in the snow and black-The boy, Bradley Nickerson, had nev-

er ridden in a stagecoach before, and after ten or fifteen minutes of jolt and roll he decided that he never wanted to ride in one again.

Suddenly Captain Titcomb, who had been silent so far, spoke. "Heavy sea on tonight," he observed. "'Pears to me Barney'd better

"Gein' all the way to Orham?" asked

"Yes, sir." "Got folks over there, I presume likely. Friends or nothin' but jest re-

"Relations, I-I guess."

the captain.

"So! Well, I've got a good many relations ever there myself. Fact is, I've got relations, seems to me, 'most everywheres. Father used to have so many of 'em that when he went visitin' he used to call it 'goin' cousinin'. My name's Titcomb. What do they call you when your back ain't turned?" The bey laughed again in a puzzled way-he scarcely knew what to make

of his questioner-and said that his name was Bradley Nickerson. "Nickerson, hey? - That settles it; you're a Cape Codder. Minute I meet anybody named Nickerson I always know they've got the same kind of

sand in their boots that I have. Is it Obed Nickerson's folks you're goin' to "No, sir. I'm goin' to live with Miss Priscilla Allen. Her and her sister. They was some of mother's people."

"Sho, well I swan!" muttered the captain. "Prissy and Tempy, hey? Then Dan wa'n't foolin'. And you're goin' to live with 'em?" "Yes, sir. Do you know 'em?"

"Who-me? Oh, yes! I know 'em. I'm a partic'lar friend of theirs-that is," he added cautiously, "I call on 'em once in awhile jest to say 'How are you?' Why? You didn't hear any of them fellers at the depot say anything bout me and them did you? No! Well, all right, I jest thought- Obe es! I when you're likely to catch cold." know 'em. Nice folks as ever as, but for the boy, and he watched with interwhat you might call a little mito set in their ways.' Do you always wipe milk into a bowl, flooded it with boilyour feet when you come into the

"Why-why-yes, sir, if I don't for and vigorously shook the pepper box

house?"

"All right. It's a good habit to git into, 'specially if you're goin' to walk every drop. Ain't you hungry?" on Prissy's floors. Sometimes I've wished I could manage to put my feet in my pocket when I've been there. wonder if I knew your father? What was his name?"

Bradley told his father's name and in response to the captain's tactful questioning a good deal more besides. In fact, before long Captain Titcomb knew all about the boy, where he came from, how he happened to come and all the rest. And Bradley for his part learned that his companion commanded the coasting schooner Thomas Doane, that he had been a sailor ever since he was fourteen, that he had a marvelous fund of sea yarns and knew how to spin them and that he (Bradley) liked him.

By and by the captain noticed that the boy's replies to his cheerful observations were growing rather incoherent, and, suspecting the reason, he ceased to talk. A few minutes later he leaned forward and smiled to find his fellow traveler, who had slipped down upon the cushion, fast asleep.

When Bradley awoke Captain Titcomb was standing on the ground by the open door of the coach.

"Good night, Brad," he said. "Here's where I'm bound for. You've got a five minute ride or so more 'fore you git to the old mai-that is, to Prissy and Tempy's. I'll see you tomorrer. You and me's goin' to be chums, you know.' The door was shut. Mr. Small struck

up "Camptown Races," and the stage bumped on again. This time the boy did not sleep, but, holding on to the strap, tried to peer through the snow crusted window. He saw a light here and there, but little else. After a short interval the coach turned a sharp corner, rolled on for perhaps twoce its length and then stopped.

Mr. Small opened the door, and Bradley, looking past him, saw the side of a large house and a lighted doorway, with two female figures, one plump and the other slender, standing in it. oilcloth on the floor was partially cov-From behind them the lamplight ered with braided rag mats with carstreamed warm and bright and sent pet centers. On the window shades their shadows almost to his feet. "Come on, bub," said the stage driv- tles and mountains. The table

er. "Here's where you git out. Miss black walnut, and there were five rush Prissy," he shouted, "here's your new seated chairs, each in its place against

CHAPTER IL HE plump woman, whom Mr. Small had addressed as "Miss Prissy," was counting into the stage driver's palm a sum in wallet that fastened with a strap. "Good night," said the driver, pecketing the money, with a grunt and a jin-

night, Miss Tempy. Snow's lettin' up a cluding a spatter work motto, a wreath little mite. Guess 'twill be clear by made of seashells under a glass and an engraving showing a boat filled with men, women and children rowed The plump lady closed the door sleeves, moving over a placid sheet of

water toward an unseen port. "Cap'n Titcomb," remarked Bradley, whose bashfulness was wearing off, carefully about the wallet, placed the "came over in the coach with me tolatter in a compartment of a tall chest of drawers in the corner, turned the The effect of this announcement was

key upon it and put the key under the remarkable. Miss Prissy looked at alabaster candlestick on the mantel. Miss Tempy, and the latter returned Then she turned to the boy, who, holdthe look. Strange to say, both colored. ing his carpet bag with both hands, "Cap'n Titcomb?" faltered Miss still stood uneasily on the mat, while Prissy. "Cap'n Ezra Titcomb?" "Yes, ma'am. He talked to me 'most "Bradley," said the plump lady-she

all the way. I liked him first rate." "Why-why, I do declare! I didn't know the cap'n was expected, did you, "No, I'm sure I didn't!" exclaimed

the flustered younger sister. "Did hedid he tell you why he was comin', "No, ma'am, but I heard him tell the man that drove the coach that he had shore leave for a week 'cause his schooner was laid up for repairs.

said he knew you, though, and that he was comin' round to see me tomorrer. This remark caused quite as much embarrassment and agitation as that concerning the captain's presence in the coach. The two ladies again glanced hurriedly at each other. "Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Miss Prissy. "And the settin' room not

swept and the windows not washed! ventered Miss Tempy after a rather I'll have to get up early tomorrer mornin'. I'm so glad I fixed that ruf-"Why, yes, of course," said Miss fle on my alpaca," she added in an ab-Prissy, "and take your things right off sentminded soliloguy. "And I must finish that tidy for the Bradley placed the carpetbag on the sofy," said Miss Tempy nervously. corner of the mat and pulled off the "I've only got a little more to do on it, shabby overcoat. The jacket and thank goodness! Prissy, I'm goin' to trousers beneath were also shabby, but

put an iron on. I want to press my

other collar. Did-did the cap'n say

anything more about me-us, I mean? she added, looking at the stove. "My goodness me!" she ejaculated. "No. ma'am, he didn't," replied the "Jest look at his poor feet, Tempy boy. "He jest asked about me and Allen! Come right over to the stove told stories and talked." this minute and take off those shoes. Miss Tempy seemed a little disap-

pointed and made no comment. Her "No, ma'am," protested the boy. sister, too, was silent. Presently "They ain't, honest. They only look Bradley yawned. He tried to hide it, but Miss Prissy, coming out of her "Don't tell me!" commanded Miss trance, saw him. Prissy. "Go right over to the stove "My sakes," she exclaimed, "what

are we thinkin' of, keepin' you up this way? It's after 9 o'clock. Let me get the lamp. Tempy, you do up that soapstone for his feet."

Bradley was up early the next morning, and his dressing was a sort of jig, for it was freezing cold. When he went downstairs it was evident that things had been going on. Miss Prissy came out of the sitting room, bearing a broom and with her "alpaca" gown covered with an apron. Miss Tempy, her curls done up in papers, was busy with the "tidy" for the sofa. Each of the sisters was nervous and excited.

Miss Prissy said a stiff little grace at the breakfast table. Miss Tempy had a large cup of "pepper tea" for herself and urged Bradley to partake, but the elder sister came to the rescue and gave him hot milk and water instead. After the meal was over and the dishes washed Miss Prissy went out to feed the hens, and Bradley went wit her. The house, seen by day, was a big, square building, badly in need of paint. The roof was four sided and sloped upward to a cupola in the center. From its closely shut front door snow covered box hedges in parallel lines defined the path to the front gate, also locked and fastened and, like the front door, only used on occasions. There was a large tumbledown barn, with an empty pigpen back of the house and a henhouse and yard in the

rear of the barn. Next door to the left-on the right was a vacant field-was a small story and a half cottage, separated from the Allen household by a board fence. One of the boards in this fence had fallen down, and as Bradley, wading in Miss J'rissy's wake, passed this opening he saw a girl, apparently about his own age open the back door of the house next door and look out at him. He wanted to ask who she was, but didn't feel well enough acquainted with his

guide to do so just yet. Just as the dozen hens and lonesome looking rooster were fed-Miss Prissy informed him that by and by looking after the poultry would be one of his duties-Miss Tempy's voice was heard calling excitedly from the kitchen door. "Prissy," she screamed-"Prissy, come in the house quick! He's comin'! The cap'n's comin'!"

"My land!" exclaimed the elder sister wildly, and, her dignity forgotten she almost ran to the house, followed by Bradley, who didn't understand the cause of the excitement. "Oh, my sakes," ejaculated Miss

Tempy as they entered the kitchen, "what made him come so early? You'll have to see him first, Prissy. I've got to fix my hair." Miss Prissy rushed into the sitting

room, wheeled a chair into place, set a tidy straight, laid the photograph album exactly in the center of the table instead of two inches from the edge and patted her own hair with her hands, dedging in front of the big Prissy carelessly. "Tell me what gilt framed mirror as she did so. Then, as a smart knock sounded on ly to receive the visitor. It was Captain Titcomb who had

frem his boots on the "scraper" he entered the house, bearing two packages wrapped in brown paper. "Well, Prissy," said the captain, lay-

me in this port jest now, did you?" your things off. Bradley said he rode per, blushing a little as she did so. down with you in the coach last night. "I know it's somethin' nice. Cap'n Dreadful storm we had, wasn't it? Ezra. You do buy the nicest things. How's your health nowadays? Walk It's real kind of you to remember me right into the sittin' room. You must this way. Oh, ain't that pretty!" excuse the looks of things. I've been The package contained a Japanese

ered rocker and another rocker painted black, with a worn picture of a ship at There was a good deal more, but tassel. Miss Prissy opened it and when Miss Prissy stopped for breath spread it out in her lap, exclaiming ship over the face of the tall wooden the captain, who had thrown his cap over its beauty, her face the color of and overcoat on a chair, replied that the tassel. the storm was bad, that his health was "Oh, it ain't nothin'," said the captain every time the clock ticked it rolled good and that the room looked "first "I did a favor for a friend of mine heavily behind a fence of tin waves, rate," so far as he could see. Then he that's skipper of a barkentine jest but didn't advance an inch. On the held out his hand to the boy, who had careful not to step off the mat. "Good walls were several works of art, in-

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seated himself on a chair close to the door, and said cheerily: "Mornin', Brad. Well, how are you

after your shake up last night? Wan't seasick after I got out, was you?" Bradley grinned bashfully and stammered that he was "all right." "Good! We had a rugged trip comin"

over, Prissy. The old coach rolled so I felt like goin' on deck and shortenin' sail. Your new boy here's goin' to make a good sailor, I can see that. Where's Tempy?" "Oh, she's upstairs for a minute. She'll be right down," answered Miss

brought you home so unexpected." "Sprung a leak and had to lay the the dining room door, she assumed her old hooker up for repairs. That's a "company" smile and marched sedate- specialty of my owners - repairs. They'd rather patch up for a hundred years than build new vessels. I-Iknocked, and after cleaning the snow Brad, fetch me them bundles out of the dinin' room."

Bradley obediently brought the brown paper parcels, and the captain handed one of them to Miss Prissy. ing down the packages to shake hands, saying: "Here's a little somethin' "how d'you do? Didn't expect to see | picked up over to New York, Prissy. I thought you might like it. I ain't "No, indeed, Cap'n Titcomb,' was the got much use for such things myself." reply. "But we're real glad to see you The lady took the package and began all the same. Come right in. Take to untie the string in a nervous man-

silk fan, with ivory sticks and a red

(Continued on Page 3.

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