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A FAR COUNTRY

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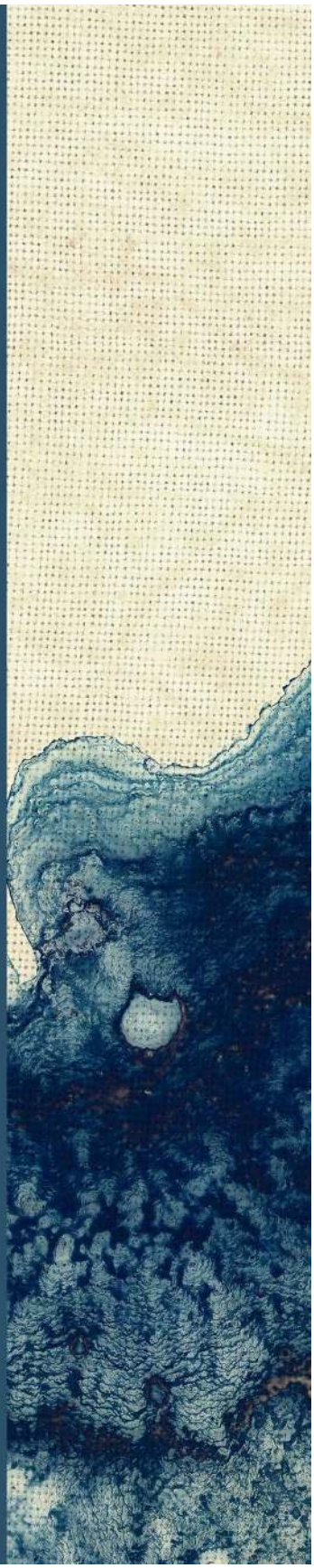

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WINSTON CHURCHILL

A Far Country

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Contents

I

Part One

I

My name is Hugh Paret. I was a corporation lawyer, but by no means a typical one, the choice of my profession being merely incidental, and due, as will be seen, to the accident of environment. The book I am about to write might aptly be called The Autobiography of a Romanticist. In that sense, if in no other, I have been a typical American, regarding my country as the happy hunting-ground of enlightened self-interest, as a function of my desires. Whether or not I have completely got rid of this romantic virus I must leave to those the aim of whose existence is to eradicate it from our literature and our life. A somewhat Augean task!

I have been impelled therefore to make an attempt at setting forth, with what frankness and sincerity I may, with those powers of selection of which I am capable, the life I have lived in this modern America; the passions I have known, the evils I have done. I endeavour to write a biography of the inner life; but in order to do this I shall have to relate those causal experiences of the outer existence that take place in the world of space and time, in the four walls of the home, in the school and university, in the noisy streets, in the realm of business and politics. I shall try to set down, impartially, the motives that have impelled my actions, to reveal in some degree the amazing mixture of good and evil which has made me what I am to-day: to avoid the tricks of memory and resist the inherent desire to present myself other and better than I am. Your American romanticist is a sentimental spoiled child who believes in

miracles, whose needs are mostly baubles, whose desires are dreams. Expediency is his motto. Innocent of a knowledge of the principles of the universe, he lives in a state of ceaseless activity, admitting no limitations, impatient of all restrictions. What he wants, he wants very badly indeed. This wanting things was the corner-stone of my character, and I believe that the science of the future will bear me out when I say that it might have been differently built upon. Certain it is that the system of education in vogue in the 70's and 80's never contemplated the search for natural corner-stones.

At all events, when I look back upon the boy I was, I see the beginnings of a real person who fades little by little as manhood arrives and advances, until suddenly I am aware that a stranger has taken his place….

I lived in a city which is now some twelve hours distant from the Atlantic seaboard. A very different city, too, it was in youth, in my grandfather's day and my father's, even in my own boyhood, from what it has since become in this most material of ages.

There is a book of my photographs, preserved by my mother, which I have been looking over lately. First is presented a plump child of two, gazing in smiling trustfulness upon a world of sunshine; later on a lean boy in plaided kilts, whose wavy, chestnut-brown hair has been most carefully parted on the side by Norah, his nurse. The face is still childish. Then appears a youth of fourteen or thereabout in long trousers and the queerest of short jackets, standing beside a marble table against a classic background; he is smiling still in undiminished hope and trust, despite increasing vexations and crossings, meaningless lessons which had to be learned, disciplines to rack an aspiring soul, and long, uncomfortable hours in the stiff pew of the First Presbyterian Church. Associated with this torture is a peculiar Sunday smell and the faint

rustling of silk dresses. I can see the stern black figure of Dr. Pound, who made interminable statements to the Lord.

"Oh, Lord," I can hear him say, "thou knowest…"

These pictures, though yellowed and faded, suggest vividly the being I once was, the feelings that possessed and animated me, love for my playmates, vague impulses struggling for expression in a world forever thwarting them. I recall, too, innocent dreams of a future unidentified, dreams from which I emerged vibrating with an energy that was lost for lack of a definite objective: yet it was constantly being renewed. I often wonder what I might have become if it could have been harnessed, directed! Speculations are vain. Calvinism, though it had begun to make compromises, was still a force in those days, inimical to spontaneity and human instincts. And when I think of Calvinism I see, not Dr. Pound, who preached it, but my father, who practised and embodied it. I loved him, but he made of righteousness a stern and terrible thing implying not joy, but punishment, the, suppression rather than the expansion of aspirations. His religion seemed woven all of austerity, contained no shining threads to catch my eye. Dreams, to him, were matters for suspicion and distrust.

I sometimes ask myself, as I gaze upon his portrait now, the duplicate of the one painted for the Bar Association, whether he ever could have felt the secret, hot thrills I knew and did not identify with religion. His religion was real to him, though he failed utterly to make it comprehensible to me. The apparent calmness, evenness of his life awed me. A successful lawyer, a respected and trusted citizen, was he lacking somewhat in virility, vitality? I cannot judge him, even to-day. I never knew him. There were times in my youth when the curtain of his unfamiliar spirit was withdrawn a little: and once, after I had passed the crisis of some childhood disease, I awoke to find

him bending over my bed with a tender expression that surprised and puzzled me.

He was well educated, and from his portrait a shrewd observer might divine in him a genteel taste for literature. The fine features bear witness to the influence of an American environment, yet suggest the intellectual Englishman of Matthew Arnold's time. The face is distinguished, ascetic, the chestnut hair lighter and thinner than my own; the side whiskers are not too obtrusive, the eyes blue-grey. There is a large black cravat crossed and held by a cameo pin, and the coat has odd, narrow lapels. His habits of mind were English, although he harmonized well enough with the manners and traditions of a city whose inheritance was Scotch-Irish; and he invariably drank tea for breakfast. One of my earliest recollections is of the silver breakfast service and egg-cups which my great-grandfather brought with him from Sheffield to Philadelphia shortly after the Revolution. His son, Dr. Hugh Moreton Paret, after whom I was named, was the best known physician of the city in the decorous, Second Bank days.

My mother was Sarah Breck. Hers was my Scotch-Irish side. Old Benjamin Breck, her grandfather, undaunted by sea or wilderness, had come straight from Belfast to the little log settlement by the great river that mirrored then the mantle of primeval forest on the hills. So much for chance. He kept a store with a side porch and square-paned windows, where hams and sides of bacon and sugar loaves in blue glazed paper hung beside ploughs and calico prints, barrels of flour, of molasses and rum, all of which had been somehow marvellously transported over the passes of those forbidding mountains,—passes we blithely thread to-day in dining cars and compartment sleepers. Behind the store were moored the barges that floated down on the swift

current to the Ohio, carrying goods to even remoter settlements in the western wilderness.

Benjamin, in addition to his emigrant's leather box, brought with him some of that pigment that was to dye the locality for generations a deep blue. I refer, of course, to his Presbyterianism. And in order the better to ensure to his progeny the fastness of this dye, he married the granddaughter of a famous divine, celebrated in the annals of New England,—no doubt with some injustice,—as a staunch advocate on the doctrine of infant damnation. My cousin Robert Breck had old Benjamin's portrait, which has since gone to the Kinley's. Heaven knows who painted it, though no great art were needed to suggest on canvas the tough fabric of that sitter, who was more Irish than Scotch. The heavy stick he holds might, with a slight stretch of the imagination, be a blackthorn; his head looks capable of withstanding many blows; his hand of giving many. And, as I gazed the other day at this picture hanging in the shabby suburban parlour, I could only contrast him with his anaemic descendants who possessed the likeness. Between the children of poor Mary Kinley,— Cousin Robert's daughter, and the hardy stock of the old country there is a gap indeed!

Benjamin Breck made the foundation of a fortune. It was his son who built on the Second Bank the wide, corniced mansion in which to house comfortably his eight children. There, two tiers above the river, lived my paternal grandfather, Dr. Paret, the Breck's physician and friend; the Durretts and the Hambletons, iron-masters; the Hollisters, Sherwins, the McAlerys and Ewanses,—Breck connections,—the Willetts and Ogilvys; in short, everyone of importance in the days between the 'thirties and the Civil War. Theirs were generous houses surrounded by shade trees, with glorious back yards—I have been told—where apricots and pears and peaches and even nectarines grew.

The business of Breck and Company, wholesale grocers, descended to my mother's first cousin, Robert Breck, who lived at Claremore. The very sound of that word once sufficed to give me a shiver of delight; but the Claremore I knew has disappeared as completely as Atlantis, and the place is now a suburb (hateful word!) cut up into building lots and connected with Boyne Street and the business section of the city by trolley lines. Then it was "the country," and fairly saturated with romance. Cousin Robert, when he came into town to spend his days at the store, brought with him some of this romance, I had almost said of this aroma. He was no suburbanite, but rural to the backbone, professing a most proper contempt for dwellers in towns.

Every summer day that dawned held Claremore as a possibility. And such was my capacity for joy that my appetite would depart completely when I heard my mother say, questioningly and with proper wifely respect

"If you're really going off on a business trip for a day or two, Mr. Paret" (she generally addressed my father thus formally), "I think I'll go to Robert's and take Hugh."

"Shall I tell Norah to pack, mother," I would exclaim, starting up.

"We'll see what your father thinks, my dear."

"Remain at the table until you are excused, Hugh," he would say.

Released at length, I would rush to Norah, who always rejoiced with me, and then to the wire fence which marked the boundary of the Peters domain next door, eager, with the refreshing lack of consideration characteristic of youth, to announce to the Peterses—who were to remain at home the news of my good fortune. There would be Tom and Alfred and Russell and Julia and little Myra with her grass-stained knees, faring forth to seek the adventures of a new day in the shady western yard. Myra was too young not to look wistful at my news, but the others pretended indifference, seeking to lessen my

triumph. And it was Julia who invariably retorted "We can go out to Uncle Jake's farm whenever we want to. Can't we, Tom?"…

No journey ever taken since has equalled in ecstasy that leisurely trip of thirteen miles in the narrow-gauge railroad that wound through hot fields of nodding corn tassels and between delicious, acrid-smelling woods to Claremore. No silent palace "sleeping in the sun," no edifice decreed by Kubla Khan could have worn more glamour than the house of Cousin Robert Breck.

It stood half a mile from the drowsy village, deep in its own grounds amidst lawns splashed with shadows, with gravel paths edged—in barbarous fashion, if you please with shells. There were flower beds of equally barbarous design; and two iron deer, which, like the figures on Keats's Grecian urn, were ever ready poised to flee,—and yet never fled. For Cousin Robert was rich, as riches went in those days: not only rich, but comfortable. Stretching behind the house were sweet meadows of hay and red clover basking in the heat, orchards where the cows cropped beneath the trees, arbours where purple clusters of Concords hung beneath warm leaves: there were woods beyond, into which, under the guidance of Willie Breck, I made adventurous excursions, and in the autumn gathered hickories and walnuts. The house was a rambling, wooden mansion painted grey, with red scroll-work on its porches and horsehair furniture inside. Oh, the smell of its darkened interior on a midsummer day! Like the flavour of that choicest of tropical fruits, the mangosteen, it baffles analysis, and the nearest I can come to it is a mixture of matting and corn-bread, with another element too subtle to define.

The hospitality of that house! One would have thought we had arrived, my mother and I, from the ends of the earth, such was the welcome we got from Cousin Jenny, Cousin Robert's wife, from Mary and Helen with the flaxen pig-tails, from Willie, whom I recall as permanently without shoes or stockings.

Met and embraced by Cousin Jenny at the station and driven to the house in the squeaky surrey, the moment we arrived she and my mother would put on the dressing-sacks I associated with hot weather, and sit sewing all day long in rocking-chairs at the coolest end of the piazza. The women of that day scorned lying down, except at night, and as evening came on they donned starched dresses; I recall in particular one my mother wore, with little vertical stripes of black and white, and a full skirt. And how they talked, from the beginning of the visit until the end! I have often since wondered where the topics came from.

It was not until nearly seven o'clock that the train arrived which brought home my Cousin Robert. He was a big man; his features and even his ample moustache gave a disconcerting impression of rugged integrity, and I remember him chiefly in an alpaca or seersucker coat. Though much less formal, more democratic—in a word—than my father, I stood in awe of him for a different reason, and this I know now was because he possessed the penetration to discern the flaws in my youthful character, —flaws that persisted in manhood. None so quick as Cousin Robert to detect deceptions which were hidden from my mother.

His hobby was carpentering, and he had a little shop beside the stable filled with shining tools which Willie and I, in spite of their attractions, were forbidden to touch. Willie, by dire experience, had learned to keep the law; but on one occasion I stole in alone, and promptly cut my finger with a chisel. My mother and Cousin Jenny accepted the fiction that the injury had been done with a flint arrowhead that Willie had given me, but when Cousin Robert came home and saw my bound hand and heard the story, he gave me a certain look which sticks in my mind.

"Wonderful people, those Indians were!" he observed. "They could make arrowheads as sharp as chisels."

I was most uncomfortable….

He had a strong voice, and spoke with a rising inflection and a marked accent that still remains peculiar to our locality, although it was much modified in my mother and not at all noticeable in my father; with an odd nasal alteration of the burr our Scotch-Irish ancestors had brought with them across the seas. For instance, he always called my father Mr. Par- r-ret. He had an admiration and respect for him that seemed to forbid the informality of "Matthew." It was shared by others of my father's friends and relations.

"Sarah," Cousin Robert would say to my mother, "you're coddling that boy, you ought to lam him oftener. Hand him over to me for a couple of months—I'll put him through his paces…. So you're going to send him to college, are you? He's too good for old Benjamin's grocery business."

He was very fond of my mother, though he lectured her soundly for her weakness in indulging me. I can see him as he sat at the head of the supper table, carving liberal helpings which Mary and Helen and Willie devoured with country appetites, watching our plates.

"What's the matter, Hugh? You haven't eaten all your lamb."

"He doesn't like fat, Robert," my mother explained.

"I'd teach him to like it if he were my boy."

"Well, Robert, he isn't your boy," Cousin Jenny would remind him…. His bark was worse than his bite. Like many kind people he made use of brusqueness to hide an inner tenderness, and on the train he was hail fellow well met with every Tom, Dick and Harry that commuted,—although the word was not invented in those days,—and the conductor and brakeman too. But he had his standards, and held to them….

Mine was not a questioning childhood, and I was willing to accept the scheme of things as presented to me entire. In my tenderer years, when I had broken one of the commandments on my father's tablet (there were more than ten), and had, on his home-coming, been sent to bed, my mother would come softly upstairs after supper with a book in her hand; a book of selected Bible stories on which Dr. Pound had set the seal of his approval, with a glazed picture cover, representing Daniel in the lions' den and an angel standing beside him. On the somewhat specious plea that Holy Writ might have a chastening effect, she was permitted to minister to me in my shame. The amazing adventure of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego particularly appealed to an imagination needing little stimulation. It never occurred to me to doubt that these gentlemen had triumphed over caloric laws. But out of my window, at the back of the second storey, I often saw a sudden, crimson glow in the sky to the southward, as though that part of the city had caught fire. There were the big steel-works, my mother told me, belonging to Mr. Durrett and Mr. Hambleton, the father of Ralph Hambleton and the grandfather of Hambleton Durrett, my schoolmates at Miss Caroline's. I invariably connected the glow, not with Hambleton and Ralph, but with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego! Later on, when my father took me to the steel-works, and I beheld with awe a huge pot filled with molten metal that ran out of it like water, I asked him—if I leaped into that stream, could God save me? He was shocked. Miracles, he told me, didn't happen any more.

"When did they stop?" I demanded.

"About two thousand years ago, my son," he replied gravely.

"Then," said I, "no matter how much I believed in God, he wouldn't save me if I jumped into the big kettle for his sake?"

For this I was properly rebuked and silenced.

My boyhood was filled with obsessing desires. If God, for example, had cast down, out of his abundant store, manna and quail in the desert, why couldn't he fling me a little pocket money? A paltry quarter of a dollar, let us say, which to me represented wealth. To avoid the reproach of the Pharisees, I went into the closet of my bed-chamber to pray, requesting that the quarter should be dropped on the north side of Lyme Street, between Stamford and Tryon; in short, as conveniently near home as possible. Then I issued forth, not feeling overconfident, but hoping. Tom Peters, leaning over the ornamental cast-iron fence which separated his front yard from the street, presently spied me scanning the sidewalk.

"What are you looking for, Hugh?" he demanded with interest.

"Oh, something I dropped," I answered uneasily.

"What?"

Naturally, I refused to tell. It was a broiling, midsummer day; Julia and Russell, who had been warned to stay in the shade, but who were engaged in the experiment of throwing the yellow cat from the top of the lattice fence to see if she would alight on her feet, were presently attracted, and joined in the search. The mystery which I threw around it added to its interest, and I was not inconsiderably annoyed. Suppose one of them were to find the quarter which God had intended for me? Would that be justice?

"It's nothing," I said, and pretended to abandon the quest—to be renewed later. But this ruse failed; they continued obstinately to search; and after a few minutes Tom, with a shout, picked out of a hot crevice between the bricks—a nickel!

"It's mine!" I cried fiercely.

"Did you lose it?" demanded Julia, the canny one, as Tom was about to give it up.

My lying was generally reserved for my elders.

"N-no," I said hesitatingly, "but it's mine all the same. It was—sent to me."

"Sent to you!" they exclaimed, in a chorus of protest and derision. And how, indeed, was I to make good my claim? The Peterses, when assembled, were a clan, led by Julia and in matters of controversy, moved as one. How was I to tell them that in answer to my prayers for twenty-five cents, God had deemed five all that was good for me?

"Some—somebody dropped it there for me."

"Who?" demanded the chorus. "Say, that's a good one!"

Tears suddenly blinded me. Overcome by chagrin, I turned and flew into the house and upstairs into my room, locking the door behind me. An interval ensued, during which I nursed my sense of wrong, and it pleased me to think that the money would bring a curse on the Peters family. At length there came a knock on the door, and a voice calling my name.

"Hugh! Hugh!"

It was Tom.

"Hughie, won't you let me in? I want to give you the nickel."

"Keep it!" I shouted back. "You found it."

Another interval, and then more knocking.

"Open up," he said coaxingly. "I—I want to talk to you."

I relented, and let him in. He pressed the coin into my hand. I refused; he pleaded.

"You found it," I said, "it's yours."

"But—but you were looking for it."

"That makes no difference," I declared magnanimously.

Curiosity overcame him.

"Say, Hughie, if you didn't drop it, who on earth did?"

"Nobody on earth," I replied cryptically….

Naturally, I declined to reveal the secret. Nor was this by any means the only secret I held over the Peters family, who never quite knew what to make of me. They were not troubled with imaginations. Julia was a little older than Tom and had a sharp tongue, but over him I exercised a distinct fascination, and I knew it. Literal himself, good-natured and warm-hearted, the gift I had of tingeing life with romance (to put the thing optimistically), of creating kingdoms out of back yards—at which Julia and Russell sniffed—held his allegiance firm.

II

I must have been about twelve years of age when I realized that I was possessed of the bard's inheritance. A momentous journey I made with my parents to Boston about this time not only stimulated this gift, but gave me the advantage of which other travellers before me have likewise availed themselves —of being able to take certain poetic liberties with a distant land that my friends at home had never seen. Often during the heat of summer noons when we were assembled under the big maple beside the lattice fence in the Peters' yard, the spirit would move me to relate the most amazing of adventures. Our train, for instance, had been held up in the night by a band of robbers in black masks, and rescued by a traveller who bore a striking resemblance to my Cousin Robert Breck. He had shot two of the robbers. These fabrications, once started, flowed from me with ridiculous ease. I experienced an unwonted exhilaration, exaltation; I began to believe that they had actually occurred. In vain the astute Julia asserted that there were no train robbers in the east. What had my father done? Well, he had been very brave, but he had had no pistol. Had I been frightened? No, not at all; I, too, had wished for a pistol. Why hadn't I spoken of this before? Well, so many things had happened to me I couldn't tell them all at once. It was plain that Julia, though often fascinated against her will, deemed this sort of thing distinctly immoral.

I was a boy divided in two. One part of me dwelt in a fanciful realm of his own weaving, and the other part was a commonplace and protesting

inhabitant of a world of lessons, disappointments and discipline. My instincts were not vicious. Ideas bubbled up within me continually from an apparently inexhaustible spring, and the very strength of the longings they set in motion puzzled and troubled my parents: what I seem to see most distinctly now is a young mind engaged in a ceaseless struggle for self-expression, for self-development, against the inertia of a tradition of which my father was the embodiment. He was an enigma to me then. He sincerely loved me, he cherished ambitions concerning me, yet thwarted every natural, budding growth, until I grew unconsciously to regard him as my enemy, although I had an affection for him and a pride in him that flared up at times. Instead of confiding to him my aspirations, vague though they were, I became more and more secretive as I grew older. I knew instinctively that he regarded these aspirations as evidences in my character of serious moral flaws. And I would sooner have suffered many afternoons of his favourite punishment—solitary confinement in my room— than reveal to him those occasional fits of creative fancy which caused me to neglect my lessons in order to put them on paper. Loving literature, in his way, he was characteristically incapable of recognizing the literary instinct, and the symptoms of its early stages he mistook for inherent frivolity, for lack of respect for the truth; in brief, for original sin. At the age of fourteen I had begun secretly (alas, how many things I did secretly!) to write stories of a sort, stories that never were finished.

He regarded reading as duty, not pleasure. He laid out books for me, which I neglected. He was part and parcel of that American environment in which literary ambition was regarded as sheer madness. And no one who has not experienced that environment can have any conception of the pressure it exerted to stifle originality, to thrust the new generation into its religious and commercial moulds. Shall we ever, I wonder, develop the enlightened

education that will know how to take advantage of such initiative as was mine? that will be on the watch for it, sympathize with it and guide it to fruition?

I was conscious of still another creative need, that of dramatizing my ideas, of converting them into action. And this need was to lead me farther than ever afield from the path of righteousness. The concrete realization of ideas, as many geniuses will testify, is an expensive undertaking, requiring a little pocket money; and I have already touched upon that subject. My father did not believe in pocket money. A sea story that my Cousin Donald Ewan gave me at Christmas inspired me to compose one of a somewhat different nature; incidentally, I deemed it a vast improvement on Cousin Donald's book. Now, if I only had a boat, with the assistance of Ham Durrett and Tom Peters, Gene Hollister and Perry Blackwood and other friends, this story of mine might be staged. There were, however, as usual, certain seemingly insuperable difficulties: in the first place, it was winter time; in the second, no facilities existed in the city for operations of a nautical character; and, lastly, my Christmas money amounted only to five dollars. It was my father who pointed out these and other objections. For, after a careful perusal of the price lists I had sent for, I had been forced to appeal to him to supply additional funds with which to purchase a row- boat. Incidentally, he read me a lecture on extravagance, referred to my last month's report at the Academy, and finished by declaring that he would not permit me to have a boat even in the highly improbable case of somebody's presenting me with one. Let it not be imagined that my ardour or my determination were extinguished. Shortly after I had retired from his presence it occurred to me that he had said nothing to forbid my making a boat, and the first thing I did after school that day was to procure, for twenty-five cents, a second-hand book on boat construction. The woodshed was chosen as a shipbuilding establishment. It was convenient—and

my father never went into the back yard in cold weather. Inquiries of lumber-yards developing the disconcerting fact that four dollars and seventy-five cents was inadequate to buy the material itself, to say nothing of the cost of steaming and bending the ribs, I reluctantly abandoned the ideal of the graceful craft I had sketched, and compromised on a flat bottom. Observe how the ways of deception lead to transgression: I recalled the cast-off lumber pile of Jarvis, the carpenter, a good-natured Englishman, coarse and fat: in our neighbourhood his reputation for obscenity was so well known to mothers that I had been forbidden to go near him or his shop. Grits Jarvis, his son, who had inherited the talent, was also contraband. I can see now the huge bulk of the elder Jarvis as he stood in the melting, soot- powdered snow in front of his shop, and hear his comments on my pertinacity.

"If you ever wants another man's missus when you grows up, my lad, Gawd 'elp 'im!"

"Why should I want another man's wife when I don't want one of my own?" I demanded, indignant.

He laughed with his customary lack of moderation.

"You mind what old Jarvis says," he cried. "What you wants, you gets."

I did get his boards, by sheer insistence. No doubt they were not very valuable, and without question he more than made up for them in my mother's bill. I also got something else of equal value to me at the moment,—the assistance of Grits, the contraband; daily, after school, I smuggled him into the shed through the alley, acquiring likewise the services of Tom Peters, which was more of a triumph than it would seem. Tom always had to be "worked up" to participation in my ideas, but in the end he almost invariably succumbed. The notion of building a boat in the dead of winter, and so far from her native element, naturally struck him at first as ridiculous. Where in Jehoshaphat was I

going to sail it if I ever got it made? He much preferred to throw snowballs at innocent wagon drivers.

All that Tom saw, at first, was a dirty, coal-spattered shed with dim recesses, for it was lighted on one side only, and its temperature was somewhere below freezing. Surely he could not be blamed for a tempered enthusiasm! But for me, all the dirt and cold and discomfort were blotted out, and I beheld a gallant craft manned by sturdy seamen forging her way across blue water in the South Seas. Treasure Island, alas, was as yet unwritten; but among my father's books were two old volumes in which I had hitherto taken no interest, with crude engravings of palms and coral reefs, of naked savages and tropical mountains covered with jungle, the adventures, in brief, of one Captain Cook. I also discovered a book by a later traveller. Spurred on by a mysterious motive power, and to the great neglect of the pons asinorum and the staple products of the Southern States, I gathered an amazing amount of information concerning a remote portion of the globe, of head-hunters and poisoned stakes, of typhoons, of queer war-craft that crept up on you while you were dismantling galleons, when desperate hand-to-hand encounters ensued. Little by little as I wove all this into personal adventures soon to be realized, Tom forgot the snowballs and the maddened grocery-men who chased him around the block; while Grits would occasionally stop sawing and cry out:—

"Ah, s'y!" frequently adding that he would be G—d—d.

The cold woodshed became a chantry on the New England coast, the alley the wintry sea soon to embrace our ship, the saw-horses—which stood between a coal-bin on one side and unused stalls filled with rubbish and kindling on the other—the ways; the yard behind the lattice fence became a backwater, the flapping clothes the sails of ships that took refuge there—on

Mondays and Tuesdays. Even my father was symbolized with unparalleled audacity as a watchful government which had, up to the present, no inkling of our semi-piratical intentions! The cook and the housemaid, though remonstrating against the presence of Grits, were friendly confederates; likewise old Cephas, the darkey who, from my earliest memory, carried coal and wood and blacked the shoes, washed the windows and scrubbed the steps.

One afternoon Tom went to work….

The history of the building of the good ship Petrel is similar to that of all created things, a story of trial and error and waste. At last, one March day she stood ready for launching. She had even been caulked; for Grits, from an unknown and unquestionably dubious source, had procured a bucket of tar, which we heated over afire in the alley and smeared into every crack. It was natural that the news of such a feat as we were accomplishing should have leaked out, that the "yard" should have been visited from time to time by interested friends, some of whom came to admire, some to scoff, and all to speculate. Among the scoffers, of course, was Ralph Hambleton, who stood with his hands in his pockets and cheerfully predicted all sorts of dire calamities. Ralph was always a superior boy, tall and a trifle saturnine and cynical, with an amazing self-confidence not wholly due to the wealth of his father, the iron- master. He was older than I.

"She won't float five minutes, if you ever get her to the water," was his comment, and in this he was supported on general principles by Julia and Russell Peters. Ralph would have none of the Petrel, or of the South Seas either; but he wanted,—so he said,—"to be in at the death." The Hambletons were one of the few families who at that time went to the sea for the summer, and from a practical knowledge of craft in general Ralph was not slow to point out the defects of ours. Tom and I defended her passionately.

Ralph was not a romanticist. He was a born leader, excelling at organized games, exercising over boys the sort of fascination that comes from doing everything better and more easily than others. It was only during the progress of such enterprises as this affair of the Petrel that I succeeded in winning their allegiance; bit by bit, as Tom's had been won, fanning their enthusiasm by impersonating at once Achilles and Homer, recruiting while relating the Odyssey of the expedition in glowing colours. Ralph always scoffed, and when I had no scheme on foot they went back to him. Having surveyed the boat and predicted calamity, he departed, leaving a circle of quaint and youthful figures around the Petrel in the shed: Gene Hollister, romantically inclined, yet somewhat hampered by a strict parental supervision; Ralph's cousin Ham Durrett, who was even then a rather fat boy, good-natured but selfish; Don and Harry Ewan, my second cousins; Mac and Nancy Willett and Sam and Sophy McAlery. Nancy was a tomboy, not to be denied, and Sophy her shadow. We held a council, the all-important question of which was how to get the Petrel to the water, and what water to get her to. The river was not to be thought of, and Blackstone Lake some six miles from town. Finally, Logan's mill-pond was decided on,—a muddy sheet on the outskirts of the city. But how to get her to Logan's mill-pond? Cephas was at length consulted. It turned out that he had a coloured friend who went by the impressive name of Thomas Jefferson Taliaferro (pronounced Tolliver), who was in the express business; and who, after surveying the boat with some misgivings,—for she was ten feet long,—finally consented to transport her to "tide-water" for the sum of two dollars. But it proved that our combined resources only amounted to a dollar and seventy-five cents. Ham Durrett never contributed to anything. On this sum Thomas Jefferson compromised.