

My name is John Holder. I was born and bred in Eastport, a seaport town once of great reputation in the whale fishery. My father, when I was eighteen, failed first in business, next in health, and finally died. My mother then "kept boarders" to support the family, and I kept her in a rack of anxiety until I was twenty-one, since she saw me growing up without trade or profession, and idling away my time with no apparent anxiety to be anything but a boy.

In some respects this was true. I did wish that boyhood and youth could remain forever, since all the manhood, or rather maturity, about me seemed a humdrum affair, full of care and vexation, and the older people grew the less "fun" they had in the world. I wished, and even for a time thought, that things would always remain as they were, that the "old men" of my youth would always remain about so old and no older, and when I heard that William Loper, the first playmate of my infancy, was engaged to be married to Fannie Lugar, it seemed to me a piece of audacity as well as a serious innovation on the established order of things.

Gradually it dawned upon me that I must cut loose from tops, marbles, kites and quail traps, march out into the world and do something for a living. I did so grudgingly. Indeed, I held on to my boyish ways and sports years after my companions had laid them aside forever, donned frock coats, high standing collars, gaudy neckties, tight boots, and deemed themselves proper little men—as they were.

I commenced "doing for myself" with a series of resolves to be something great, if not good. I was one week a general, the next an actor, the third an orator, finally a sea captain. I awoke from these dreams to find myself still in status quo, eating the bread of idleness, parent and sundry relatives meantime broadly hinting that it was high time I should do something.

I applied to certain solid men of the village as to the choice of a profession. I thought it might raise me in their estimation so to consult them. They might see that I was in earnest to set seriously to work about life's business. I knew that my reputation already was none of the best, because I was one of a set, perhaps the leader, whose pranks at night had gained with the staid villagers an unfavorable notoriety. We rung door bells, changed store signs, impounded stray horses in impromptu stables, built in the middle of the street at night of empty dry goods boxes, raised false alarms of fire, and did many other things in cases amounting to outrages on property which boys at a certain period consider it remarkably clever to do, and which may be the only means of venting their surplus energy.

In so applying to the influential men of the village I had also a fond hope they might help me to a situation. My father had been their peer in business. I was not a stranger. My family and theirs had long dwelt in the same town. The hope was natural. But there was no proffer of the help I craved. They talked well and wisely, gave me much good advice in a general way, and seemed to think that any occupation or calling I might adopt would be well for me if I "stuck to it."

I had then such a profound respect for the judgment of these men that I deemed they had, in telling me nothing, told me something valuable, and that I had done a good thing in consulting them. But, practically, I found myself exactly where I was before my interviews, to wit: nowhere.

In the midst of my tribulations as to the choice of a profession, the California gold fever of 1849 broke out. The problem was solved. I would go to California and become a gold digger. There was something fascinating in the idea of digging for gold, much more so than digging potatoes, though the difference between the two is not worth mentioning.

The fever seized most of the village youth of my own age. A ship was fitted out, a former whaling vessel. It was not so much of an undertaking for our people to make the long, dreary voyage around Cape Horn to California. Two-thirds of the crew and passengers of the Ann Mary Ann had made the trip before.

rough encounter with the world of the farthest west—who at their next attendance in that church would look in vain for the deacons or prominent church members now standing erect during prayer time, after the fashion which still lingered in the rural Presbyterian churches of that day. Other boys of that gathering, and of these the majority, were never to return. Their letters home, at first voluminous, were to lessen in size, while the lapses of time between each would increase. Searching for them ever receding further in the distance, they were to wander and become entirely lost to home and friends in the remotest regions of the west. Then unknown, unnamed, unthought of, discouraged, reckless, weary, their pride and spirit broken, they were to fill nameless graves on lone hillsides thousands of miles away, or else hurriedly buried in the crowded city, their bones would be as hurriedly turned up a few years after as the population extended its limits and dug and plowed its way through waste land and cemetery.

I, in company with several of my associates, were grouped that evening about the Seftons' front door. There were three of the Sefton sisters—Blanche, the eldest; Mary and Phoebe. The Seftons was a favorite resort for our "set" of young folk. The parents were plain, "easy-going" people, and allowed us more privileges at their house than we could find elsewhere. The sisters were always "at home" for company, and the old people allowed them pretty much their own way. Other parents were not so accommodating. Socially their houses were colder, and if we called "Ma" generally came and sat in the parlor while we were present, and "Ma," in the estimation of at least one person, if not two, at such times was very much out of place. The Sefton girls' parlor in winter and their front door "stoop" in summer were favorite resorts for all the girls of our "set," who, if they could not see their youthful admirers at home, were pretty sure of doing so at the Seftons'. There was a bit of front yard, shaded by tall sycamores, and fronting the door was a big unwhewn stone, serving as its single step and worn smooth by the tread of generations of Seftons. The little hallway and that stone often held large audiences on summer evenings—protracted meetings—even unto the going down of the full or bed moon at eleven, twelve, or one o'clock in the morning, or until Mother Sefton's night-capped head was seen and her good-humored voice from an upper window heard, saying "You young folks; it's time for you all to be home and bed."

Said Mary Sefton to me: "Now don't you be away five years, like Jerry Black." Jerry Black had sought fortune in China, and at the expiration of a five years' sojourn had returned without it. Our people were always driving to the ends of the earth seeking wealth. A seaport is an open door to foreign lands, and so induces the young to venture out earlier and oftener than from places more inland.

Three years was the longest most of our company expected to remain in California. The current idea then regarding the country ran thus: "Some of us will dig gold; some will go into trade. The profits will go into one common purse. At the end of a year or two there will be a dividend. We shall receive some thousands each. With this we may return home, marry and settle down."

I do not say this was my dream. On the whole, I do not think I had then any plans for the future. I was going away because it seemed to me everybody who cared for me at all cared most that I should go away. This being an opportunity, I embraced it. The current had come to me and sucked me in. I had not gone to it. The world would bask me about with it. I wished it would eat me alone.

CHAPTER II. BLANCHE.

Blanche and I strolled about the door yard. The gate was half open—its normal condition—and a proper one as indicative of the easy, happy-go-lucky disposition of the parent Seftons. Capt. Tommy, the father, ran a sloop to New York. His real home was on that craft, and it was a spying among the villagers that he could pilot her through Long Island sound and the East river with his eyes shut. His daughters made frequent trips with him to the city. The "old man" was most at home when it blew and blew hard, to the consternation of Mary and Phoebe, who would implore him at such times to put in at some of the sound harbors on the north shore of Long Island. But no wind blew too hard for Blanche, though so far as outward seeming went, her's was an equal placidity in storm or calm. As a boy, I had looked upon Blanche as one of the "older girls"—girls already treading the shore of womanhood, real girls soon to consummate the great aim and end of life—as life was regarded in our village—marriage.

Recently, I had finally ventured Blanche some attentions, and was pleased and surprised to find that she had accepted them with apparent pleasure. She had a quantity of my own money, which I had given her, when I was in my own private opinion, a "big" sum. I had called her "Blanche" and often as I saw her walking the street, did I lament that such a beautiful form should ever be so common and wedded with the labors and cares of the everyday commonplace life attendant on it.

"Blanche is the gem of our family," was Mother Sefton's frequent remark. She seemed to stand in some awe of this daughter. Blanche was not superior or arrogant; yet something about her kept every one at the distance she desired to keep them. It was not so much what she said or did, but something she made you feel, and rebel against it as much as you might, you could not break through the barrier she chose to put up at any distance she pleased. For this reason Blanche was not a general favorite. People said she was "set up" and "put on airs." Her real offense lay in her leaving her own counsel. She did not tell all she knew regularly every day to half a dozen friends, leaving with each one the idea that they were honored with her special confidences. I had admired this girl all my life. When I say "all my life," I mean the life of a boy who worships a queen at a distance—the boy of fifteen, who sees that queen surrounded by older courtiers. This I had seen—felt is the better word—when I was navigating mud puddles barefooted and barelegged. Her world seemed as one never to be reached by me. Yet within the last year an unpremeditated acquaintance and friendship had grown up between myself and Blanche Sefton. How it commenced I could hardly tell. I found my-

self talking with her on subjects which seemed of little interest to my other companions. I was surprised to find that I could talk with her at all. I had imagined that the thought and conversation of these "grown-up young women" lay on topics I could not comprehend. All women over a certain age seemed as possessors of some secret not yet revealed to me.

We walked for some time in silence through the main street of the village, its sidewalks shaded by the great sycamores, reached the outskirts, crossed the bridge leading over Pond creek, and reached a wooded promontory jutting into the Cove. The moon shed a glittering, tremulous mark far over the beautiful expanse of water, and the katyids were filling the warm August night with their calls. It was one of the enchanted nights of our North American summer.

"Well, John," said Blanche, "you are going away with the rest. What are you going for?" "I don't know," I replied, "and I don't care." "Do you really want to go?" she asked. "I do and I don't. There's no home for me here. That's why I leave it." "But you will come home rich and take care of your mother, and marry—"

"Marry, marry, marry!" I exclaimed impatiently. "It seems to me that's all people think of in this world."

"She laughed in her own pleasant way and said, 'Why, John, you take a gloomy view of things to-night. You need cheering up. What a pity I'm not going to California with you.'"

"What a pity you are not," I ventured at last to say, and I said it very seriously; I had little idea of badinage or saying daring things in a sportive way. Finally I added, "Would you go if you could?" "I would," she replied decisively. Her manner and bearing seemed suddenly to change.

"What! all by yourself in the Ann Mary Ann, with seventy men on board?" "I'd go all by myself in the Ann Mary Ann with 500 men on board." "Why, what do you want to go for?" "To see the world," she replied. "Wasn't it made for women as well as men?" "I suppose so," was my rather doubtful reply. "But what would you do in California?"

"I'd find something to do. See here, John," said she, with an access of energy; "here's thousands of men and boys going there from all parts of the country. Don't you think you'll need money? Who is to do your cooking and washing and mending? It's just the mistake you're all making not taking women along with you. Why, women will be worth their weight in gold out there. Do you think you can live without them? If I was able I'd send out two or three on shares myself, just as Judge Gardner is sending that thick-headed Bill Roper, with the idea that Roper will ever send a cent back. Now, if I had my way I'd fit out Louise Bird and Mary Talmadge and Sophronia Stedbins, bright, lively girls, who have hands to work with and wits in their heads, and I'd go myself along with them."

"Well," said I, after a pause, "I think Blanche, that you and I ought to change places. You to go, I to stay behind." "John, I certainly think we ought. Anyway, I wish I had your chance. I've got the fever as bad as any of you—much worse than you. I plan it all out in my mind, sometimes, how I'll disguise myself as a man—a boy, rather—and serve as cabin boy on some ship bound out there. But there are other ways of getting there," added she, reflectively. Then, resuming her former tone, she added: "I'd go to take care of you, too," accompanying the remark with one of her smiles, which left one in complete doubt as to the sentiment which prompted it.

"You think, then, I need some one to take care of me?" I asked. "Yes; I do, indeed. You're fit now only for a victim. You trust everybody who smiles on you, believe everybody who speaks fair, and would give your head away, if you could, to any one who asked for it." "Well," I said, showing possibly in my tone some annoyance, "you're frank enough, anyway. Why don't you call me a goose and be done with it?" "Forgive me, John," said the girl, her manner suddenly shading to tenderness. "I know it's not pleasant for you to hear this. I don't want to pain you. But you're going away—going out in the world among men, hard, merciless men—yes, and women, too—wolves who'll devour you alive."

She advanced and laid her hand on my shoulder. The movement seemed almost unconsciously done, nor had I ever before seen her show such feeling. For a moment her reserve and habitual control vanished. She continued:

"John, the real reason I said this is because it was forced out of me. It is because you are going away from me, perhaps forever, and I—"

Then she did what none had ever before seen grown-up Blanche Sefton do. She turned aside. I knew she was weeping.



"You are going away from me, perhaps forever." Here was a pretty go. Why, the girl loved me! And, of course, I loved her—had loved her for years, had looked on her as among the impossibles, unconquerables, unattainables. Here was the "Empress," the majestic iceberg, melted into tears. Here was the heaven I had never dared aspire come to earth—my earth. Here was the last drop in the cup of bliss to make Eastport more desirable than ever to me—and the Ann Mary Ann to sail to-morrow morning.

traps all on board, my chest stowed with clothes, and the interstices filled with tracts and devotional books, gifts from my numerous aunts—I was wealthy in aunts then—all of whom were glad I was going away.

I did not act in the conventional lover style. There was no kissing nor clasping. I was astonished—more, I had sense enough to respect the girl's emotion. I felt intuitively that she had herself never dreamed of being betrayed into such an avowal. There seem times, conditions, circumstances occasionally coming into combination to more human natures in deeper and lower depths than those who are moved ever dream exist in them.

Blanche's hand had dropped from my shoulder. We stood a little apart. I felt I must say something, and so I made that stupid and commonplace remark:

"Why, Blanche?" The tears were being forced back, and I could feel the Blanche of old also coming again and resuming her former self, and away over self.

"John, let's go home," said she. She took my arm. We walked back through the now quiet and deserted street in silence, and passed through the ever half-opened gate. We waited on the old door-step but for a moment. Her eyes and mine met, but in a half-averted glance. I took her hand, and, venturing a timid pressure, said: "Good night, Blanche."

"Good night, John." I passed out of the gate, and in the thick foliage above hung the incessant affirmation and contradiction: "Katy did! Katy didn't!"

CHAPTER III. SEPARATION.

All Eastport was astir next morning to see the Ann Mary Ann off. Eastport's single long wharf was crowded with relatives and friends of those departing—relatives is the most proper term, for this was a long settled community, dating its first planting but twenty years after the landing at Plymouth. The names of the first settlers were still the predominant ones, both in our village and the "towns," as we called the exclusively agricultural villages a few miles back in the

country. Eastport was the harbor for these, their commercial city on a very small scale. Every old family could trace some degree of consanguinity mere or less remote with every other family through marriage, perhaps, in this country or the one preceding.

It was no idle throng upon that wharf, attracted by mere curiosity. There were fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles, first, second and third cousins, grandfathers and grandmothers, sweethearts and wives. The sailing of a whaler with a score of town-people on board was no new thing, but the mission of those leaving in this case was different, and the seventy on board resembled, as to life and enterprise, the very elite of the place, myself excepted.

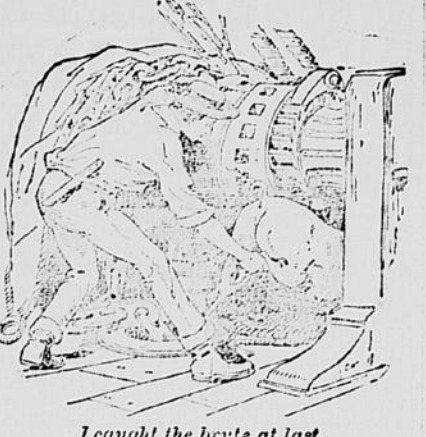
I had slipped before the mast, and coming on board about nine in the morning, dressed in my best, had been immediately possessed upon by Mr. Pell, our second mate, and ordered to "take off the mudders and turn to in my working toggery." So I laid down my broadcloth suit in my chest, bade it adieu, and, making my appearance on deck in white duck trousers and a flannel red flannel shirt, was ordered by Mr. Pell to catch the ship's pig, bounding then at will about decks, and "clap him in his pen."

Mr. Pell was a tall, gaunt, tough, hard-boiled man, with one eye, and a hand and arm tanned by exposure to tropic suns to the color of mahogany. He seemed all bones—working bones, and the one impossible thing for Mr. Pell to do, while awake, was to sit still, and the next impossibility with him was to allow others to sit still, if it was in his power to prevent them.

Mr. Pell belonged to one of our second-class families. There were first and second-class families in and about Eastport, and a certain unmarked, untalked distinction always existed between them, and had so done for generations. More than one of the older families could produce well attested evidences of lineage with the aristocracy of the motherland, and no change of fortune or station could ever rid them of a certain bearing savored of blood and pedigree. They might go before the mast, serve as boat steers, learn the trade of cooper, the principal mechanical calling of the place, but the hammer ever clung to them.

Now Mr. Pell was not one of these. He prided himself on being a common man—a very common man. Anything in the least degree bespeaking "buntin' on airs," as Mr. Pell expressed it, was very repugnant to him. The Pells had always lived in an unpainted frame house on the "back street," and in their study back yard "pig weed" seemed to grow more luxuriantly than elsewhere. The sea Pells would rise to the position of second mate, seldom any higher. As boys the Pells learned almost in their infancy to chew tobacco. At the district school they received the hardest whippings with the most uniformity.

This was Sam Pell, second mate of the Ann Mary Ann, and I was one of the ancient boys of Hobbler, scurrying under his orders after an obstinate pig, and all this in full view of curious members of the proud Holder family—and not only the Holders, but the Talmadges, the Stedbins, the Westons, the Gillies, the Carrys, the Wickhams and the Rysons! I can, to this hour, at last by the hind legs, which he worked to and fro



I caught the brute at last, with the vigor and regularity of a piston rod, setting up at the same time a squadding that rose far above the rest of the clamor and directed every eye upon myself. Mr. Pell, I think, enjoyed this, and to prolong it took no notice of me and sent no one to my assistance, though a short time previous he had found time and opportunity every few minutes to give additional directions regarding

the marine course. In the midst of this ridiculous situation my eye fell on Blanche Sefton, standing by a wharf post, a little apart from the crowd. Her face wore an expression of sadness. There was some laughing and guffawing among the crowd, and occasionally mock directions were cried out to me in nautical phraseology regarding the proper navigation of the unruly animal. One ancient salt advised me to "luff," another "to put her helm hard down," while a third told me to "haul aft the spanker, wear ship and run for the caboose." The climax was reached when a jovial mariner raised the whaler's heart-stirring cry, "There she blows!"

The boys bred in Eastport were in a sense half sailors, without having ever been to sea. The atmosphere and sentiment of a sea life penetrated every family and permeated every life. None of us were in the strictest sense "greenhorns." We came to "know the ropes" sometimes earlier than we could read. Our principal sport was that of going aloft on the ships as they lay at the wharf. We knew also of the strictness of the sea discipline, and that from the moment the fore-mast hand went over the vessel's side he was the slave of the officers.

I knew this full well. Indeed, I was afraid of Sam Pell. I had heard stories of his hardness and cruelty to sailors. He was one of your "knock down and drag out" mates, and he reveled in this reputation. I felt in his present treatment of me a foretaste of what was in store during the voyage. He might not beat me, but an officer who is "down on" a sailor can make his life uncomfortable in a hundred ways; and I felt that Pell was "down on me."

Mr. Pell on this occasion had, it seemed to me, heaped the cup of indignity upon me to overflowing. That is, from my point of view. From that of a sailor and an officer the case was entirely different. As to maritime law, custom, usage, all the right lay on his side. It was his place to order, mine to obey. I was in a temper—not the temper of cool bravery, which, having counted all costs, determines what to do and adheres to such determination. Mine was the temper of a lunatic.

I let go the pig's legs and walked toward the gang plank. "Go back to your duty!" roared Pell. All Eastport was looking at me. In theatrical parlance, I had the whole stage to myself. I said nothing and stepped upon the gang plank.

"Go back to your duty," again roared Pell. He stepped between me and the gangway and laid his hand on my shoulder. I brushed it off contemptuously. He grabbed my hair and swung me half round. I struck him in the face. Mr. Pell knocked me down. At that moment Capt. Lawring came out of the cabin.

"What's all this about?" he demanded, as his eyes fell on the situation then presenting itself. Mr. Pell had been struck a pretty hard

blow. It was new to his experience to be struck by a forecast hand. He was as much astonished as myself.

"That whelp there," said he, "refuses duty and has struck me."

"What! Refuse duty and strike an officer before the ship's clear of the dock?" cried the captain. "Holder, take your chest and traps ashore. You can't go on this ship."

"I don't want to," was my reply. "No words back, young man, so long as you're on this deck," replied the captain. "Mr. Pell, see that this man's things are put on the wharf directly."

I walked ashore and my luggage soon followed me. So I left the Ann Mary Ann, in full view of my townspeople. I did not remain upon the wharf. I walked and kept on walking. I knew not, cared not, whether I left the village and went into the forest, with which Eastport is thickly surrounded. I found myself going past the two beautiful lakes—our skating ponds in winter—then over a salt water creek crossed by a bit of bridge. Mile after mile so I traveled on, reckless, angry, ashamed, discouraged, despairing, flitting from mood to mood, from resolution to resolution. Oh, if I could but live in these woods—live on walnuts, bark, leaves, anything—sleep under the trees, without discomfort, that I were not fettered and a slave to a house, a table, three meals a day and the thousand necessities with which man has burdened himself. That I were as independent of these people about me as were the ducks I started from the salt water ponds near the beach.

I found myself upon a high point of land at the harbor's entrance—full six miles from the wharf in my unnoted wandering and turning. I must have traveled twelve. I looked up. The Ann Mary Ann was before me, about half a mile distant in the main channel, with every sail set that would draw, and as the watch "blowed away" on the mainmast, I heard coming over the water the strains of the old sea song with which I was familiar:

"Oh, the bully boat's a counder, Don't you leave her sails a hummer!" The Ann Mary Ann was a pretty sight in her cloud of white canvas, and the life, animation and joyousness apparent on board might have mocked me, but for a thought which suddenly flashed upon me. I said aloud to the departing vessel: "I'll be there before you, my true love!" and I knew I should.

But how?

Advertisement for Scientific American magazine, featuring the text 'ESTABLISHED 1845', 'The most popular Weekly magazine devoted to science, mechanics, engineering, etc.', and 'PATENTS' section.