

"Clever Jacky!" he screamed, wildly excited. "Clever lad! My partner, my little partner!"

But the wind carried the cry away. Jacky did not hear—did not know, even, that his partner had been a spectator of his brave faithfulness. He was beating out, to make sea-room for the run with the wind to harbor; and the boat was dipping her gunwale in a way that kept every faculty alert to keep her afloat. Eli watched him until he rounded and stood in for the tuckle. Then the man sighed happily and went home.

"Us'll grapple for that net the morrow," he said, when Jacky came in.

Jacky opened his eyes. "Aye?" he said. "'Tis safe on the bottom. I thought I'd best cut it adrift t' save it."

"I seed you," said Eli, "from the Knob. 'Twas well done, lad! You're a true partner."

"The knife come in handy," said Jacky, smiling. "'Tis a good knife."

"Aye," said Eli, with a shake of the head. "I bought un' for a good one."

And that was all.

Eli set about rearing young Jacky in a fashion as wise as he knew. He exposed the lad to wet and weather, as judiciously as he could, to make him hardy; he took him to sea in high winds, to fix his courage and teach him to sail; he taught him the weather signs, the fish-lore of the coast, the "marks" for the fishing grounds, the whereabouts of shallows and reefs and currents; he took him to church and sent him to Sunday-school. And he taught him to swim.

On the fine days of that summer, when there were no fish to be caught, the man and the lad went together to the Wash-tub—a deep, little cove of the sea, clear, quiet, bottomed with smooth rock and sheltered from the wind by high cliffs; but cold—almost as cold as ice-water. Here Jacky delighted to watch Eli dive, leap from the cliff, float on his back, swim far out to sea; here he gazed with "admiration not unmixed with awe" on the man's rugged body—broad shoulders, bulging muscles, great arms and legs. And here, too, he learned to swim.

When the warmest summer days were gone, Jacky could paddle about the Wash-tub in promising fashion. He was confident when Eli was at hand—sure, then, that he could keep afloat. But he was not yet sure enough of his power when Eli had gone on the long swim to sea. Eli said that he had done well; and Jacky, himself, often said that he could swim a deal better than a stone. In an emergency, both agreed, Jacky's new accomplishment would be sure to serve him well.

"Sure, if the punt turned over," Jacky innocently boasted, "I'd be able t' swim 'til you righted her."

That was to be proved.

"Eli, b'y," said old James Blunt, one day in the fall of the year, "do you take my new dory t' the grounds t'-day. Sure, I'd like t' know how you likes it."

Old James had built his boat after a south-coast model. She was a dory, a flat-bottomed craft, as distinguished from a punt, which has a round bottom and keel. He was proud of her; but somewhat timid; and he wanted Eli's opinion of her quality.

"'Tis a queer lookin' thing!" said Eli. "But me an' my partner'll try she, James, just for luck."

That afternoon a fall gale caught the dory on the Farthest Grounds—far out beyond the Wolf's Teeth Reef. It came from the shore so suddenly that Eli could not escape it. So it was a beat to harbor, with the wind and sea rising fast. Off the Valley, which is

half a mile from the narrows, a gust came out between the hills—came strong and swift. It heeled the dory over—still over—down—down until the water poured in over the gunwale. Eli let go the main-sheet, expecting the sail to fall away from the wind and thus ease the boat. But the line caught in the block. Down went the dory—still down. And of a sudden it capsized.

When Jacky came to the surface, he began frantically to splash the water, momentarily losing strength, breath and self-possession. Eli was waiting for him, with head and shoulders out of the water, like an eager dog as he waits for the stick his master is about to throw. He swam close; but hung off for a moment—until, indeed, he perceived that Jacky would never of himself regain his self-possession—for he did not want the boy to be too soon beholden to him for aid. Then he slipped his hand under Jacky's breast and buoyed him up.

"Partner!" he said, quietly. "Partner!" Jacky's panic-stricken struggles at once ceased; for he had been used to giving instant obedience to Eli's commands. He looked in Eli's dripping face.

"Easy, partner," said Eli, still quietly. "Strike out, now."

Jacky smiled, and struck out, as directed. In a

water, and strong anywhere. Moreover, it was a trick he had learned.

"Come, Jacky, b'y!" he called.

Jacky swam toward the boat. Eli swam to meet him, and helped him over the last few yards of choppy sea, for the lad was almost exhausted. Jacky laid a hand on the bow of the dory. Then Eli pulled off one of his long boots, and swam to the stern, where he began cautiously to bail the boat. When she was light enough in the water, he helped Jacky aboard—and Jacky bailed her dry.

"Ha, lad!" Eli ejaculated, with a grin that made his face shine. "You is safe aboard. How is you, b'y?"

"Tired, Eli," Jacky answered.

"You bide quiet where you is," said Eli. "I'll find the paddles; an' I'll soon have you home."

Eli's great concern had been to get the boy out of the water. He had cared for little else than that—to get him out of the reach of the sea. And now he was confronted by the problem of making harbor. The boat was slowly drifting out with the wind; the dusk was approaching; and every moment it was growing more difficult to swim in the choppy sea. It took him a long time to find the paddles.

"Steady the boat, Jacky," he said, when the boy had taken the paddles into the dory; "I'm comin' aboard."

Eli attempted to board the dory over the bow. She was tossing about in a choppy sea; and he was not used to her ways. Had she been a punt—his punt—he would have been aboard in a trice. But she was not his punt—not a punt, at all; she was a new boat, a dory, a flat-bottomed craft; he was not used to her ways. Jacky tried desperately to steady her while Eli lifted himself out of the water.

"Take care, Eli!" he screamed. "She'll be over!"

Eli got his knee on the gunwale—no more than that. A wave tipped the boat; she lurched; she capsized. And again Eli waited for Jacky to come to the surface of the water; again buoyed him up; again gave him courage; again helped him to the boat; again bailed the boat—this time with one of Jacky's boots—and again helped Jacky aboard.

"I'm wonderful tired, Eli," said Jacky, when the paddles were handed over the side for the second time. "I'm fair' done out."

"'Twill be over soon, lad. I'll have you home by the kitchen fire in half an hour. Come, now, partner! Steady the boat. I'll try again."

Even more cautiously Eli attempted to clamber aboard. Inch by inch he raised himself out of the water. When the greater waves ran under the boat, he paused; when she rode on an even keel, he came faster. Inch by inch, humoring the cranky boat all the time, he lifted his right leg. But he could not get aboard. Again, when his knee was on the gunwale, the dory capsized.

For the third time the little partner was helped aboard and given a boot with which to bail. His strength was then near gone. He threw water over the side until he could no longer lift his arms.

"Eli," he gasped, "I can do no more!"

Eli put his hand on the bow, as though about to attempt to clamber aboard again. But he withdrew it.

"Jacky, b'y," he said, "could you not manage t' pull a bit with the paddles. I'll swim alongside."

Jacky stared stupidly at him.

Again Eli put his hand on the bow. He was in terror of losing Jacky's life. Never before had he known such dread and fear. He did not dare risk overturning the boat again; for he knew that Jacky would not survive for the fourth time. What could he do? He could not get aboard, and Jacky could not row. How was he to get the boy ashore? His hand touched the painter—the long rope by which the boat was moored to the stage. That gave him an idea: he would tow the boat ashore!

So he took the rope in his teeth, and struck out for the tuckle to the harbor.

"'Twas a close call, b'y," said Eli, when he and Jacky sat by the kitchen fire.

"An' 'twas too bad," said Jacky, "t' lose the gear." Eli laughed.

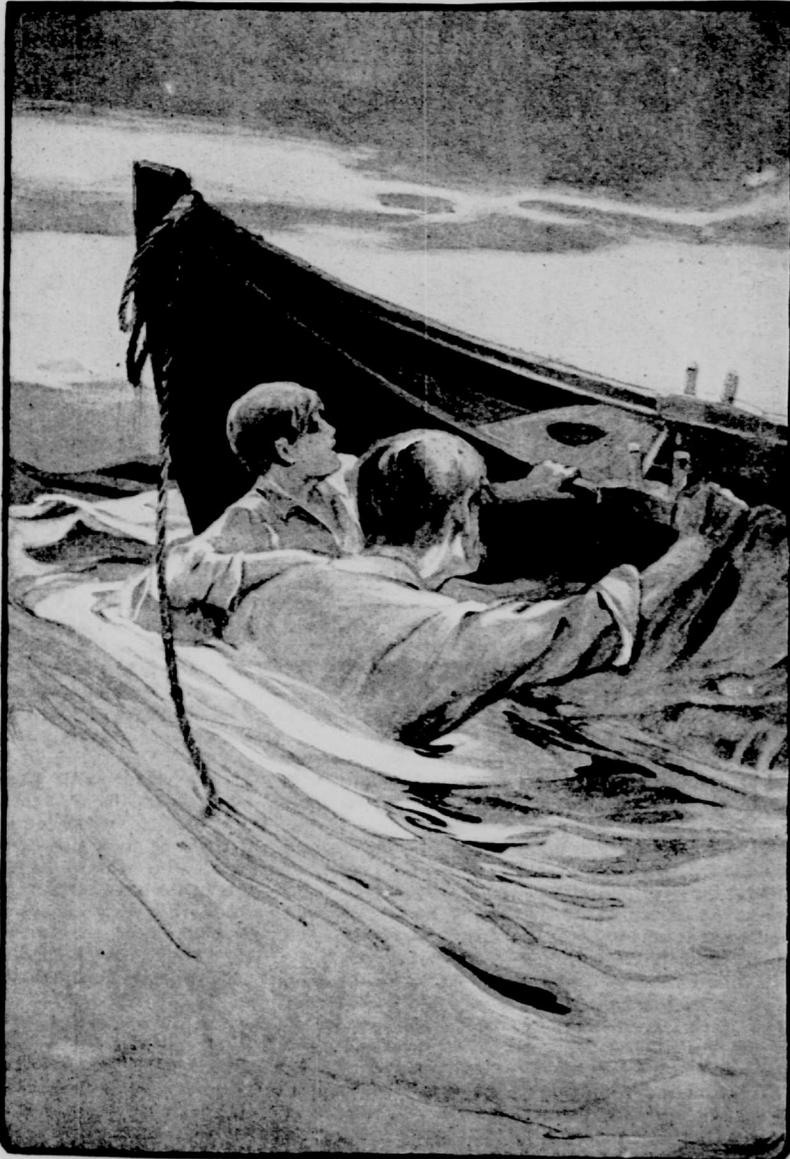
"What you laughin' at?" Jacky asked.

"I brought ashore something better than the gear." "The dory?"

"No, b'y!" Eli roared. "My little partner!"

Birds' Self-Protection

THE ingenuity of many birds in building nests in such a way as to protect them from the attacks of rivals and enemies is wonderful. The long, hanging nest of the oriole and the dome-shaped nest of the wren are remarkable for their place and manner of construction. Perhaps the oriole of Central America is not surpassed in this respect by any other bird. It builds its nest in the banana tree. Selecting a large banana leaf, and with its bill for a needle and some strong grass for thread, it sews the two edges together, following the grain of the leaf close by one of the veins. It does its work so deftly and neatly that it takes a close examination to detect the stitches. In this cunningly devised pocket the little bird makes a nest of soft grass or of hair, and there lays her eggs and raises her little family without fear of discovery.



For the Third Time the Little Partner Was Helped Aboard



moment he was swimming at Eli's side.

"Take it easy, lad," Eli continued. "Just take it easy while I rights the boat. It's all right. I'll have you aboard in a jiffy. Is you—is you—all right, Jacky?"

"Aye," Jacky gasped.

Eli waited for a moment longer. He was loath to leave the boy to take care of himself. Until then he had not known how large a place in his heart his little partner filled, how much he had come to depend upon him for all those things which make life worth while. He had not known, indeed, how far away from the old, lonely life the lad had led him. So he waited for a moment longer, watching Jacky. Then he swam to the overturned dory, where, after an anxious glance toward the lad, he dived to cut away the gear—and dived again, and yet again; watching Jacky all the time he was at the surface for breath.

The gear cut away, the mast pulled from its socket, Eli righted the boat. It takes a strong man and clever swimmer to do that; but Eli was clever in the