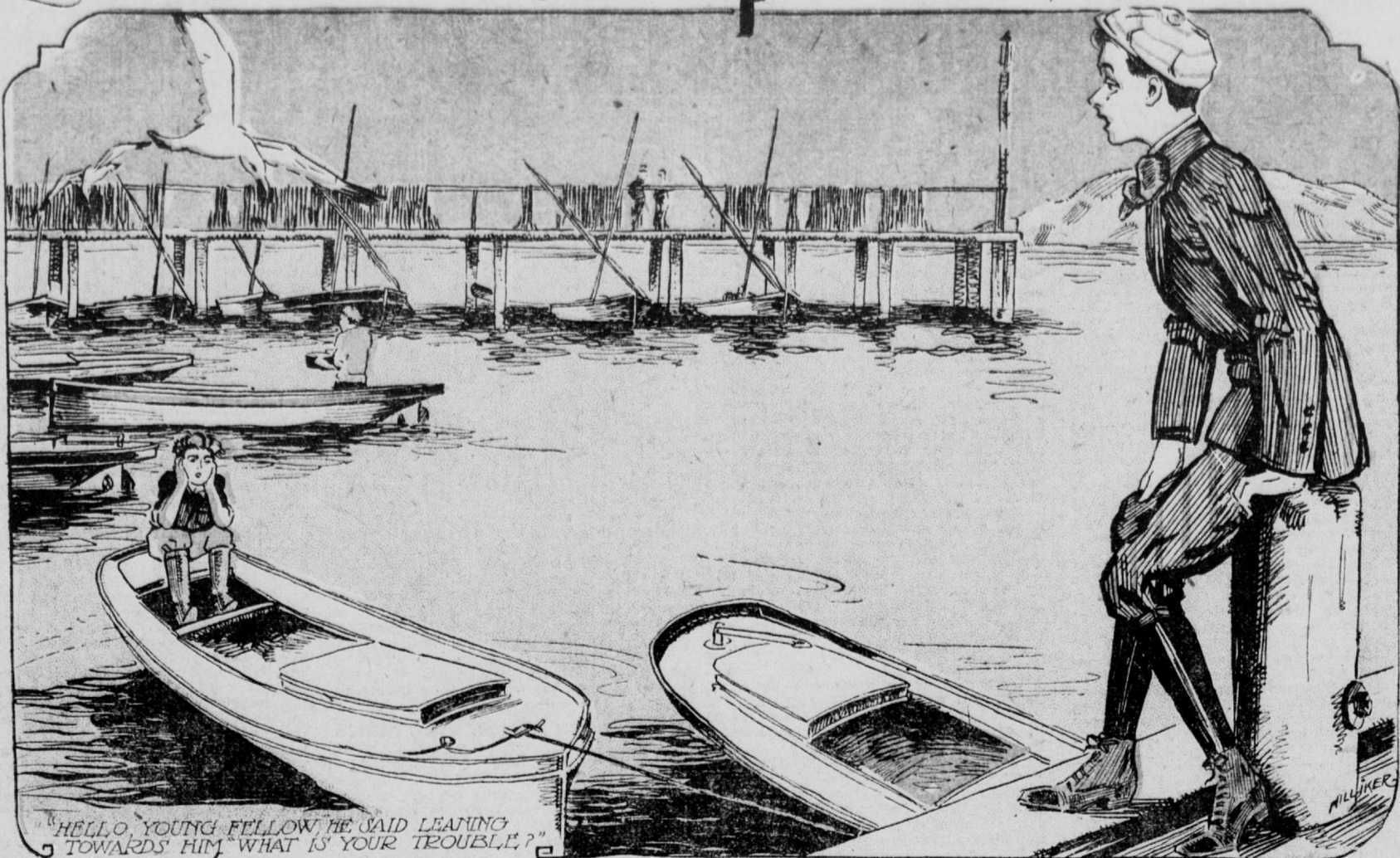


# A Partnership In Fish



"HELLO, YOUNG FELLOW," HE SAID LEANING TOWARDS HIM, "WHAT IS YOUR TROUBLE?"

By PERRY NEWBERRY

"THERE is no use crying over spilt milk. It has to be done, that is all!"

Harry Britton spoke with decision and his mother regretfully nodded assent. "I presume you are right," she said, "and there is no use talking more about it. College will have to be given up and high school, too, for the present at least. I don't see how I could have trusted that man so, but your father, when he was alive, believed him honest and—"

"Never mind, mammakins. You did just right and the money's gone through no fault of yours. Now I am going to earn enough so that we will not care at all about what is past."

Disappointment after disappointment met his efforts to find paying work that he could do. The necessity for wages became urgent. Bills were coming in that had to be paid and there was no one to pay them but Harry. He must find work, and if, as it seemed, there was no work to be found, he must make work.

One morning he had traveled the sea wall from the ferries to Meiggs wharf, looking for any odd job that might come with the docking of a sailing vessel or river steamer. He had found nothing, and was resting a moment before starting for town, watching the Italian fishermen unloading their morning's catch. Silvery fish, their scales gleaming in the morning sun, were thrown from the smacks to the wharf, carried to a waiting wagon and driven away. They all seemed happy and contented enough, laughing and talking in Italian—all except one boy, alone in a little dory, who had no jokes or banter, but sat quietly with big, sad eyes looking out across the bay.

Harry was sitting on a pile almost over the boy of the sad eyes, and Harry, with the disappointments of the unsuccessful days of wage hunting, felt an immediate sympathy for this boy of another race. "Hello, young fellow," he said, leaning down toward him; "what is your trouble?"

The Italian lad straightened up and looked at him, but made no response to this greeting for so long that Harry felt sure he did not understand English. The look that passed between them, however, was one of inquiry, of search and of satisfaction. That look told each of the two boys that they were in harmony, one with the other; and the Italian answered the question that Harry had asked.

"My father die—he drown. They bury him yesterday."

Harry looked his sympathy. "There is only the me now to worka da boat an' the mother with five-a leetle ones at da home. I theenk it not possible to earn-a da money to keep all together." It was a case so near Harry's own that he whistled in rueful surprise.

"I'm in just the same boat!" he cried, "with a family to support and no way of doing it. But say—what is your name?"

"Pietro—Pietro Brizzoli. What is yours?"

"Harry Britton. Say, Pietro, you should be able to make money with that outfit if there are any fish to be had. Can't you catch them?"

Pietro smiled. "I can catch when any catch. I know the feesh and their ways. But it is da market. There is not da price."

"No price?" echoed Harry, who had on occasion bought fish at the market. "I thought fish were plenty high when I was able to buy them. What do they pay you?"

"Five, seex, seven cents for the pound. It depends on the kind-a of da feesh."

Again Harry whistled. That was certainly not what the meat market man had charged him. "They must be cheating you because you are a boy," he said.

The Italian drew himself up proudly. "No, they notta cheata me," he said. "All—" and he waved his hand to indicate the boatmen in the slip, "all getta da same."

"Well, then," said Harry, "there is some one who is getting the difference, and that is more than you make out of it, and you do all the work. Look here, Pietro; let me down on that boat of yours. I have a scheme."

Pietro grasped the painter and drew the boat up under the wharf, and Harry swarmed down the pile to the curving deck. "Here it is," he began. "You have fish or can catch them. I have time—all kinds of time. Suppose we form a partnership and I peddle the fish-you catch. The markets charge as high as 22 cents a pound for some fish, and 15 cents is cheap. I will get the market price, but deliver fresh fish at the door. You will make more, and I will make something. What do you say?"

Pietro gave the matter some serious thought. "We might make-a da try," he said at last. "I have here some rock cod that are thees morning's catch. You take-a da beeg basket and da feesh and you see. Perhaps it weel go—yes? Then we go into da pardners."

"Good enough, and I am sure it will go. I will tackle the Western Addition, where they want fresh fish and are not afraid to pay the prices. You'll see that I will make this go, and I'll meet you here with your share of the profits tomorrow morning. What time do you get in?"

"Eight of the clock, if the wind hold good. Later when it ees da calm."

Harry left his new friend with a basket of fish on his shoulder that staggered him by its weight. It was good that his shoulders were strong or he would not have been able to make the journey up to Van Ness avenue, where he intended to begin operations. It required frequent rests, but he was on his way to earning some money for his mother, and it made him too happy to care.

The first place he made an effort to

sell was a large house on the avenue, a house that had been pointed out to him as the residence of one of San Francisco's wealthy men. He went to the rear door, realizing that the fish peddler would not be welcomed at the big front entrance, and he told the maid who opened the door for him his business. "The cook does not buy of peddlers," she told him.

"I am not a peddler exactly," Harry said. "I am about to become a partner in the fishing business, and we are going to supply some families with fresh fish—right out of the sea. Every morning I will get my load from his smack when it sails in and will make delivery before noon. You can see how nice and fresh such fish will be."

Harry had rehearsed this speech as he climbed up the hill, and he was glad to see it had its effect on the maid. With a "Wait a minute; I'll call the cook," she left him, returning in a moment with a man who was evidently a French chef. Harry repeated his statement of his intention while the man inspected the contents of the basket. "I will take this one," he finally decided. "Tomorrow bring me a sole. How much for this?"

Harry weighed it—Pietro had trusted him with a spring scale—and the chef paid him—\$1.35. It was the first money that Harry had ever received for effort on his part, and it seemed like the riches of Midas! He went to the next house with the energy of encouragement, and although he did not make a sale, he took an order for a fish to be delivered on Thursday. The rest of the day passed with varying success, and his basket was empty, except for one fish, which he took home to his mother.

Harry was waiting at Fisherman's wharf when Pietro came sailing into the little harbor next morning. On the Italian boy's face was a smile of recognition and expectation, as he pulled his boat in between the piles. Harry was quickly aboard and related his experiences.

"Eight dollars and 20 cents," he concluded, exultantly, showing a handful of silver before Pietro's eyes. "What do you think of that for business? Now do you want to go into partnership?"

The fisher boy laughed. "It is more da mon dan I make in four days," he said. "Yes, I make-a da partner—sure! glad I make-a da partner!"

"Good! How will this arrangement suit: one share for the boat, one share for you, and one share for me?"

"Da boat? Him no pardner! One share-a to you, one share-a to me. So we split da mon."

"No; that wouldn't be fair. You have capital invested in this fishing outfit, boat, nets and trawls, and I have only my work against it. You work at the fishing and I work at selling them; so we are even on that part. But the capital you have must be earning, too."

"Yes, but some day I catch-a mor feesh dan you sell. I sell-a da more feesh to da market men—dat be for da boat. For you, da pardner, what feesh you sell, I take-a da one-half,

you take-a da one-half da mon."

As Pietro was resolute, and had made a sound argument that appealed to Harry's sense of fairness, this arrangement was made; yesterday's sales returns were divided; and Harry, loaded down with a basket of fresh fish, washed clean in the bay and neatly and attractively displayed, started out on his second day as a marketman. His bright, smiling, honest face made him friends and the story he told of his business venture and his fisherman partner won him almost as many sales as the appearance of his wares. It was not many days before one client was sending him to another. "I told her about you and she wants you to sell to her," they would tell him, and he was always grateful and polite in his thanks. In this way the firm of Brizzoli & Britton soon outgrew the basket; it would not carry enough fish to make the rounds. So they procured a horse and wagon.

A horse and wagon would have been clear beyond their modest fortunes, even with the success they had achieved, if luck and Harry's faculty of making his customers his friends had not entered into the transaction. Mrs. Ockley's servant had been buying fish of Harry for some time, when one morning she chanced to be in the kitchen when he came in. She looked at his basketful of sea fish and remarked at the neatness with which they were displayed. "It must be a heavy carry for a boy," she said. "How much does it weigh?"

"I take out about 70 pounds when I start, but I ride out on the streetcar as far as I can. Then when I begin to sell it gets light fast."

"You should have a horse and cart." "Yes, because we could sell more if I could carry them. But a horse and wagon are too much for our present capitalization," and Harry laughed cheerfully.

"I don't know but—" then she stopped. "When you come in tomorrow ask to see me. I have an idea that may be just what you want. You look like a boy who would be careful with dumb animals and not abuse them."

"He wouldn't harm a fly," said the servant girl, who had been an interested listener to the conversation.

So the next day the firm secured its horse and it cost not a penny. Mrs. Ockley had been looking for a home for a faithful animal which was getting too old for the carriage, and after consultation with her husband, she gave him to Harry. A wagon, older than the horse and less beautiful, was bought with \$20 of the firm's capital, and Harry brightened it up with a coat of paint. Brizzoli & Britton, with a bright new city license, became a wagon and a boat, two boys with plenty of enthusiasm and energy and a fixed principle of honest treatment of all their customers. Later, before Harry was quite ready to enter college, a second wagon was put on, and an office opened up; and today the firm name is as well known for fairness and honesty as any in the city. Of course Harry went through college; and so did Pietro.