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THE GROUNDED "PLOW BOY."

Two Boys in a Lake Erie Gale.

By Conyers C. Converse.

A little eighty-ton schooner ashore, almost in the identical spot off which one of the large lake steamers had grounded one year before.

Her captain, too, had mistaken the red flash of the revolving beacon for the steady red light that marked the entrance to Erie harbor, not two miles distance, just as the commander of the larger vessel had done; both discovering their mistake when it was too late; and, in the case of the great steamer, it had taken the help of a "lighter," the tug Erie and the U. S. R. S. cutter Perry to float her. In that of the little Plow Boy, of Buffalo—but not to anticipate and tell the last of my story first.

Up in a shady spot on the shore, just above the little schooner, was the wreck of a small shanty, likewise an evidence of the severity of the gale, it having come down upon the heads of its inmates during the same night. These two—Ned Fairly and Fred Canfield—were camping in the open air since the disaster, and sleeping under the propped-up roof, the interest in a gang of men working on the beached schooner being too strong for them to find time to patch up the shanty.

A tug had parted a two-and-a-half-inch hawser trying to draw the Plow Boy off. Captain Jackson, a short, sandy-bearded man with a very red face, was shouting orders and encouragement all day long; she was dug under

and long beams used in attempts to pry her up and off, in the manner of the Mississippi steamboat men. Then, too, her best bower—or heaviest anchor—had been carried out and a good hold been taken upon part of an old sunken wreck off shore, when a strain was put upon the cable by means of the capstan, until Captain Jackson had bawled for the men to stop, for fear of breaking the new line.

Unfortunately the little vessel had been sailing "light," and so had been beached high and dry.

"It's a case of liftin' her onto ways, I'm a thinkin'," was the remark of one grizzly worker, squinting at the stranded craft as he rested after shoveling sand away from her bilge, only to have it washed back again by the small waves—"eh, cap?"

To which Captain Jackson answered that he feared it was so, and growled at his hard luck with sailorlike, though excusable, surliness, as he pulled and pulled the harder at a block of driftwood that he was trying to use as a foundation for a marine "jack."

Little wonder that under these engrossing circumstances Ned and Fred pulled and hauled with the rest, Fred feeling that he certainly would have something to tell his friends about when he returned to Pittsburg and, though they sympathized with the captain, who, they learned, was also the owner of the little Plow Boy, they voted the novelty of the experience "great fun."

On the fifth day of the little craft's stay on the shore, she was deserted by the workers in a body. They held a council at the noon hour; asked for their pay and, when it was not forthcoming, threw up the job.

At first Captain Jackson went and sat on the cabin house of his little vessel, in apparent indecision. Toward night Fred saw him picking his way up the sand bank toward the ruins of the shanty. The boys welcomed the little man cordially.

He had come to ask them if they would be

shipkeepers for him while he ran down to Buffalo to try to raise funds and then, he could not offer them provisions; for the last of the little vessel's stores had gone to feed the hands who had deserted her.

But the boys were only too delighted to exchange the tumble-down shanty for the snug cabin of the little Plow Boy and they began shifting their hardtack, soups and other canned edibles of their store aboard cheerily.

"Bill and Dan are in for two more weeks at the hospital, for the knocks they got, or they'd be here," were Captain Jackson's parting words, "and then we might, 'course I don't expect you boys to stay aboard if there's another gale and there's danger in it," he called

back from down the beach. "Only keep the canvass dry if you can."

"Aye, aye," Ned responded with an assuring wave of the hand. Then he turned and took a comprehensive look over the tilted deck of the little Plow Boy, with an especially agreeable feeling of importance.

Fred, too, rather enjoyed the sensation which the knowledge that the little schooner was entirely in their care evoked. Very little imagination was needed to feel that the Plow Boy was truly plowing her native element.

The waves washed against her side and the open lake lay, an unbroken sheet of blue, except for the white sails of a vessel to the northward and the smoke of sundry steamers here and there.

The Plow Boy lay with her stern partly surrounded by water, though her bow was deeply imbedded in the sand and slanted up as though mounting a long swell.

"This beats shanty camping all hollow," was Fred's comment that night from one of the little bunks in the plain and neat cabin—and indeed the interior did seem cheery in the light of the hanging lamp burning above the small center table.

"Yes, we'll have a smooth time of it if no gale springs up," Ned answered from the other side of the little apartment. This was further proved in the morning; for they were able to cook elaborate repasts on the galley stove and spend the remainder of their time exploring the schooner and lying in her sails.

That night, however, the Western sky looked threatening. This was late in September and fall gales might be expected at any time. Ned Fairly took a long look about before he drew the cabin slide.

By midnight the storm had broken and the pounding, gushing surf made shouting the only mode of conversation practicable. The wind whistled through the rigging of the little vessel in long wails; barrels and barrels of water were being hurled upon the top of the cabin and her decks—she could even be felt to sway at the blows of some of the heavier seas!

"Let's take a look out," Fred proposed.

To have opened any of the cabin windows would have deluged the little apartment. The ebbs crawled down through the door into the hold and thence to the forward deck by way of the fore-castle. Climbing upon the bulwarks and clinging to the forestay a stirring sight lay before and about them.

The Plow Boy was as completely surrounded by water as though she were afloat the seas breaking far up on the shore and all about her. Not a star could be seen; her hull could hardly be distinguished in the thick gloom.

It would have been a hazardous undertaking to have attempted to have gone ashore.

"Fred!" halloed Ned in his companion's ear suddenly, "this is as big a gale as she came ashore in, and the water's higher because its blowing down the lake. I've been thinking—are you in for a big trip?"

"You don't mean we can do anything?" shouted Fred back.

"We might get her off, and riding to the anchor, if we could bring the cable forward the way it is made fast just now, would only make her bow swing in further if she works loose."

"I was thinking of that," his chum returned. For in order to swing loose and ride to the heavy cable Fred knew that the schooner's bow would have to describe a long circle directly in toward shore, as she was pointing toward the direction from whence the wind came, and the cable over her stern would hold it in place until something gave way, at least. Then all chance of getting the little vessel off would be past, as she would be washed still further upon the sandy beach.

"I say try," he cried, and both began to work their way aft.

Wet to the skin—more nearly drowned—they managed to reach the wheel, when, working knee deep in swirling water most of the time, they were able to cast off the heavy cable from the sheet bits at last. Fortunately the ship's end of the long cable was still at her bow, so that they only had to cast the part they loosened overboard, or they might have been drawn over the side in the attempt to carry it forward.

Clinging to the bulwarks like parrots, they worked their way forward again, manned the windlass and took in the slack of the big line as much as they were able. Nor were they any too soon in doing so.

"Boom!" a great sea struck the little vessel and the boys felt her rise from the sand. The rushing power of water tried to sweep her

down the beach and in, but the cable's resistance could be distinctly felt.

If the long line held the boys knew it would draw the little craft off with every sea that tried to wash her farther in and down the dark shore.

But now each great wave raised her from the sloping beach and dropped her with a severe jar, which, if it continued long, would most surely sink her.

However, this danger grew less and less. With a thrill that set the boys shouting, they soon felt the little Plow Boy rising, falling, and pitching on the inrushing waves as she swung loose from the shore—the little schooner was off!

Then followed a night of heaving and rolling and back-aching work at the pumps—for the vessel leaked quite a little—that Ned and Fred say they will never forget. They did not grow seasick because there was no time to think of it. But they have since declared that they would not have missed the experience for worlds.

The storm eased up in the morning, when the lighthouse skiff brought old Captain Jackson out to them; nor was there ever a much more pleased man than he. Ned and Fred felt that his gratitude to them was enough reward for their efforts in floating the Plow Boy. They helped him sail her into Erie harbor, when he pressed them to be cabin passengers on her later run to Buffalo. But here my story ends, for a letter to Pittsburg brought this response by telegraph:

"Fred Canfield, Reed House, Erie, Pa.: Mr. Fairly is here and he and I think you two have had enough roughing it this summer. Come home.
R. H. CANFIELD, Pittsburg, Pa."