

**AT THE SIGN OF
THE RED SWAN**

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At the Sign of the Red Swan by Ambrose Elwell

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AMBROSE ELWELL

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AT THE SIGN OF THE RED SWAN

BY
AMBROSE ELWELL
↓

ILLUSTRATED BY
REGINALD F. BOLLES



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THIS, the story of my life, is dedicated to those Americans whose fathers and grandfathers lived in New England within sound of the sea; to those honest and industrious women whose sons have gone forth to the uttermost parts of the earth carrying within their breasts an affection and respect for the humble firesides of Maine; to the wives and mothers of the toilers of the sea who make possible the strength and virility of the world's best mariners and keep sacred the memories that go forth in the minds of men where the sky and horizon meet.

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AT THE SIGN OF THE RED SWAN

CHAPTER I

I LEAVE HOME

If the tale I am about to tell, the story of my life and adventures, shall be the means of clearing my fair name and of interesting those outside the circle of my friends, I am glad to give the world the following facts, so varied, so unusual. And I set them down the more willingly in the hope that those who follow me along life's way will not judge their fellow men without proof positive.

I have often wondered whether it would be worth while entirely to portray these remarkable happenings. I hesitate to trespass upon the credulity of the reader, yet, perhaps, this story of the life of an humble and grateful human being will be of benefit to others.

So I have set down here my life's true story. As I look back over my three score years and ten,

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many places, facts and occurrences unroll before my eyes. All can be easily verified, and, indeed, they may be known already to some who read my story.

My name is Ambrose Elwell. I was born on Christmas Day, 1848, on York's Island, near the Isle au Haut, off the coast of Maine. The first sound that I remember was the breaking of the surf on the outside of our little island and the lapping of the waters on the shores of the rockbound cove in which my father's fishing boat was moored. My father was a hardy lobster fisherman, strong in mind and body, but much smaller in stature than I became. My mother was a saintly woman, kindly and patient. She was born far to the north on the mainland, and was a woman of no mean education in those times. I might say here that she was a very pretty woman, of excellent physique and of sterling worth.

In winter our island surely was a desolate and bleak spot for the habitation of any human being, but there was no more beautiful spot in the summer and fall. The house in which I was born was located on the narrow neck of land which formed the western end of the tiny harbor, to-day used as