

A SHORT CRUISE

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A Short Cruise by James Otis

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JAMES OTIS

A SHORT CRUISE



ON THE ROCKS.

A SHORT CRUISE

BY

JAMES OTIS

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A SHORT CRUISE.

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN HIRAM.

To a stranger who walked through the single street of Oldhaven shortly after noon on a certain day in August last past, it would have seemed as if the village was entirely deserted.

The fishing-fleet had left the harbor the day previous, and since every male inhabitant between the ages of ten and sixty was a member of the fleet, there were none to represent the settlement, save the mothers and children; for as the girls grew toward womanhood they turned their backs on the cluster of weather-beaten houses, to become "mill-hands" in the noisy factories a dozen miles inland.

It was on the shore of the harbor that the children usually played; but on this day they had deserted it, and for two reasons: The first and most important being that Captain Hiram

Stubbs, owner of the sloop *Island Queen*, a man whose gruff voice and apparently harsh manner prevented him from being a favorite with the younger portion of the population, was cleaning the bottom of his tiny vessel as she lay heeled upon the sand, and the young people were not at all eager to listen to the lectures or advice which he was inclined to bestow upon them at every convenient opportunity, therefore they left him severely alone.

The second reason for this change of playground was that two strangers — summer boarders — had arrived at Oldhaven the evening previous, and apparently had evinced no disposition to become acquainted with the children of the village.

Ellen Seabury, an unusually small girl, who often spoke with pride of the fact that she was twelve years of age, and her brother Thomas, one year her junior, were the new-comers.

Not being acquainted with Captain Hiram Stubbs, and therefore unaware that the children of the village did not consider him a desirable companion, Ellen and Tom went out on this particular day to make an independent exploration of Oldhaven and vicinity, accompanied by a chubby little youngster about three years

old, who had, immediately she appeared on the street, claimed acquaintance with the matronly looking, tiny girl.

"Hello, my hearties!" Captain Hiram cried in a boisterous tone that sounded to Ellen very much like a gust of wind. "So you're the summer boarders what have come down to Old-haven for a quiet time, eh? Well, I allow you'll get it here, for this is the quietest spot to be found on the coast. What did you say your name was?"

"I didn't say, sir," Ellen replied timidly; and Tom, instead of attempting to assist in this beginning of a conversation, began to clamber up the smooth side of the *Island Queen* as she lay heeled over on the yellow sand.

"Come down out of that, youngster!" Captain Hiram shouted as if in anger. "Do you allow I paint that 'ere craft jest for the purpose of havin' you scratch her with your boot-heels?"

"There ain't any heels on these boots; an' s'posin' there was, how could I scratch her with my toes?"

"That's somethin' I ain't goin' to take the trouble to explain, 'cause I don't know how it's done; yet it seems to me as if a boy couldn't