

The Strange Adventure of Mr. Nathaniel Flichter.

MY DEAR SON: Since thou didst ask me to write for thee some short account of my earlier life, I have written thee several letters, some of which, forsooth, contain many happenings of interest to me. Thou may'st remember one letter in which I made mention of my having met with a godly seafaring man, one who, of a truth, was even too devout, for he continually did pray aloud, calling upon the Lord to take vengeance upon him, did he do this or do that, or did he fail to do this or that. Dos't thou remember him? His name was Nathaniel Salem, and his ship—a brig he called it—did float in the river near our home. Twice or thrice I had him in to meat with me, and did sell him many of the products of my farm with great advantage to myself. Maybe thou wilt, by this time, recall him and perchance also the manner of my meeting with him.

After he had been about here quite a time, one day he did invite me that I should come aboard and dine with him. Now, ever since that day on which he did laugh so much at me, when he said, "Blow, my sailor;" (he had been sitting over near the fire), and I did'st proceed to blow upon him with the bellows, thinking he wished for to get cool,—ever since that time, I have been careful what things I spoke and answered unto him. But now of a truth; sith I did not perceive how that it were possible for me being a man to come a board, I told him how that it was an impossible thing he did ask of me, for I could not become a board. But he then explained to me that he merely wished me that I should come with him on his boat and there dine with him. Would'st thou ever have understood what he did mean, thinkest thou? Well, I did accept his invitation, not without something of secret misgivings, however, for never have I been over-fond of floating things; but led by a certain degree of curiosity to see the inside of his ship, what it was like, I accepted.

That evening we went to the ship in a small boat which, when we reached the ship, was tied so that it would stay by the side of the vessel just underneath a ladder cunningly made of ropes, by means of which we climbed over the side of the ship to the floor—the deck, the captain called it. Thence we descended to the captain's sitting-room which he called his