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THE SUBMARINE BOYS AND THE SPIES

Dodging the Sharks of the Deep

by

VICTOR G. DURHAM

1910

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CHAPTER I

"GUESS DAY" AT SPRUCE BEACH

"Has anyone sighted them yet?"

"No."

"What can be the matter?"

"You know, their specialty is going to the bottom. Possibly they've gone there once too often."

"Don't!" shuddered a young woman. "Try not to be gruesome always, George."

The young man laughed as he turned aside.

Everyone and his friend at Spruce Beach was asking similar questions. None of the answers were satisfactory, because nobody knew just what reply to make.

Everyone in the North who has the money and leisure to get away from home during a portion of the winter knows Spruce Beach. It is one of nature's most beautiful spots on the eastern coast of Florida, and man has made it one of the most expensive places in the world.

In other words, Spruce Beach is a paradise to look at. The climate, in the winter months, is mild and balmy. Health grows rapidly at this favored spot, and so fashion has seized upon it as her own. True, there are yet a few cottages and boarding houses left where travelers of moderate means may find board.

The whole air of Spruce Beach is one of holiday expectancy. The winter visitors go there to enjoy themselves; they expect it and demand it. They are gratified. From the first of December to the middle of March, life at Spruce Beach makes you think of a great, jolly, unending picnic. The greatest cause for regret is that more people of ordinary means cannot go there and reap some of the plentiful harvest of fun and frolic.

The thousands of tourists, hotel guests and cottagers at Spruce Beach had been promised that by the middle of December they would have a treat the like of which few of them had ever enjoyed before. The Pollard Submarine Boat Company, so named after David Pollard the inventor—the company of which Jacob Farnum, the shipbuilder, was president—had promised that by that date their newest, fastest and most formidable submarine torpedo boat, the "Benson," should arrive at Spruce Beach, there to begin a series of demonstrations and trials.

Still more extraordinary, the captain of this marvelous new submarine craft of war was known to be a boy of sixteen—Jack Benson, after whom the new navy-destroyer had been named.

Newspaper readers were beginning to be familiar with the name of Captain Jack Benson. Though so

young he had, after a stern apprenticeship, actually succeeded in making himself a world-known expert in the handling of submarine torpedo boats.

Those lighter readers of newspapers, who scoffed at the very idea of a sixteen-year-old boy handling a costly submarine boat, were sometimes reminded that the same thing happens at the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, where the young midshipmen are given instruction and often are qualified as young experts along similar lines.

More remarkable still, as faithful readers of newspapers knew, Captain Jack Benson had associated with him, on the new torpedo boat, two other sixteen-year-old boys, by name Hal Hastings and Eph Somers. It was also rumored, and nearly as often believed, that these three sea-bred young Americans knew as much as anyone in the United States on the special subject of submarine boat handling.

Be that all as it might, it was known to every man, woman and child at Spruce Beach that the "Benson" was due to arrive on this December day and the whole picnicking population was out to watch the incoming from the sea of the strange craft.

More than that, the United States gunboat, "Waverly," had been for two days at anchor in the little, somewhat rockbound harbor just north of the beach. It was to be the pleasant duty of the naval officer commanding the "Waverly" to extend official welcome to the "Benson" as soon as that craft pointed its cigar-shaped nose into the harbor.

The first boat built by the submarine company had been named, after the inventor, the "Pollard." The second had been named the "Farnum," in honor of the enterprising young shipbuilder who had financed this big undertaking. And now Spruce Beach was awaiting the arrival of the company's third boat, the "Benson," so-called in recognition of the hard and brilliant work done by the young skipper himself.

That this was to be something of a social and gala occasion, even on board the gunboat, was evident from the fact that on the naval vessel's decks there now promenaded some two score of ladies and their escorts from shore, and on the hurricane deck lounged musicians from hotel orchestras on shore, these men of music having been combined to form a band, in order to make the occasion more joyous.

"Look at that shore, black with people!" cried a woman to one of the naval officers on the deck of the "Waverly."

"There must be at least ten thousand people in that crowd," laughed Lieutenant Featherstone. "I wonder whether they're more interested in the boat, or its boy officers?"

"Are Captain Benson and his comrades really as clever as some of the newspapers have made them out to be?" asked the woman doubtfully.

"Judging by letters I've had from friends who are officers at the Naval Academy," replied Lieutenant Featherstone, "the young men must be very well versed, indeed, in all the arts of their peculiar profession."

A cheer went up from the principal throng over at the beach. Smoke had been sighted off on the eastern horizon, and this must come from the long expected craft.

From boat to boat the news passed, and so it traveled to the deck of the "Waverly," where the sailors received it with broad smiles. The leader of the impromptu band raised his baton, rapping for attention. But Lieutenant Featherstone, below, caught the leader's eye in time and held up his hand for a pause.

"If you play, leader," called the officer, in a low voice that carried, nevertheless, "don't imagine that your music is to welcome the 'Benson.' Submarine boats don't travel under steam power. They can't."

So, too, on shore, the understanding was quickly reached that the smoke did not indicate the whereabouts of the expected submarine. Half an hour later it was found that the smoke came from the tug of a fruit transporting company.

Where, then, was the "Benson?"

It was not in the least like young Captain Jack Benson to be behind time when he had an appointment to get anywhere. Nor did that very youthful companion expect to arrive late on this day of days.

Some miles away from Spruce Beach the submarine boat, as shown by her submersion gauge, was running along at six miles an hour some fifty-two feet under the surface of the ocean.

Young Eph Somers, auburn-haired and oftentimes impulsive, now looked as sober as a judge as he sat perched up in the conning tower, beyond which, at that depth, he could not see a thing. However, a

shaded incandescent light dropped its rays over the surface of the compass by the aid of which Eph was steering with mathematical exactness.

Out in the engine room stood Hal Hastings, closely watching every movement of even as trusted and capable a man as Williamson, one of the machinists from the Farnum shipyards.

At the cabin table sat Captain Jack Benson himself, his head bent low as he scanned a chart. His right hand held a pair of nicked dividers. Near his left lay a scale rule. A paper pad, half covered with figures, also lay within reach.

On the opposite side of the table sat Jacob Farnum, owner of the Farnum shipyard and president of the Pollard Submarine Boat Company. Beside Mr. Farnum sat David Pollard, the inventor.

Readers of the preceding volumes in this series are familiar with all these people, now decidedly famous in the submarine boat world. In the first volume, *"The Submarine Boys on Duty,"* was related how all these people came together; how the boys, by sheer force of character "broke into" the submarine boating world. In that volume the building of the first of the company's boats, the "Pollard" was described, and all the exciting adventures that were connected with the event were fully narrated.

Our former readers will also remember all the wonderful adventures and the rollicking fun set forth in the second volume, under the title of *"The Submarine Boys' Trial Trip."* In this book, bristling with adventures, and made lighter, in spots, by accounts of humorous doings, was told how the boys gained fame as submarine experts. It was their fine, loyal work that interested the United States government in buying that first boat, the "Pollard."

The third volume in the series, entitled *"The Submarine Boys and the Middies"* told how our young friends secured the prize detail at Annapolis; where, for a brief time, the three submarine boys served as instructors in submarine work to the young midshipmen at the Naval Academy. Nor was this accomplished without serious, and even sensational, opposition from the representative of a rival submarine company. Hence the boys went through some rousing adventures. Incidentally, they fell against practical instruction in hazing at the Naval Academy.

Adventures enough had befallen the submarine boys to last any man for a lifetime. Yet, as fate decreed it, Captain Jack Benson and his staunch young comrades were now destined to adventures greater and further reaching than any of which they could have dreamed. In advance, this winter trip to Spruce Beach promised to be little more than a pleasant relaxation for the youngsters. What it really turned out to be will soon be made clear in the pages of this volume.

"It seems a very risky plan that you're trying, Jack," remarked Jacob Farnum, at last.

"Don't you want me to do it, sir?" asked the young skipper, looking up instantly from his chart.

"Why, er—"

But here David Pollard, the inventor of these boats broke in, eagerly:

"Of course we ought to do it, Farnum. Jack is wholly right. If we enter the harbor at Spruce Beach in this fashion, and carry through our entire plan successfully, what on earth can there be left for opponents of our class of boats to say?"

"Not *if* we succeed, of course," smiled Farnum. "It's only the pesky little 'if' that's bothering me at all. I don't want any of you to think me a coward—"

"We know, very well, you're not, sir," Captain Jack interposed, very quietly.

"But if we make any slip in our calculations," continued Jacob Farnum, "the first bad thing about it is that we'll smash a fine boat which, otherwise, the United States Government is likely to want at a price around two hundred thousand dollars. That, however, is not the greatest risk that I have in mind. On board this craft are five people without whom it would be rather hopeless for anyone to go on building the Pollard type of boat. Therefore, besides risking a valuable craft and our own rather inconsequential lives, we go further and put the United States Navy in danger of having only a couple of our boats. Now, the fact is, we want the Navy to have three or four dozen of our submarine craft, for we ourselves believe implicitly in the great worth of the Pollard boats."

"That's just the point, sir," cried Captain Jack Benson.

"Eh? What is?" inquired Mr. Farnum, looking at his young skipper in some bewilderment.

"Why, sir," laughed Jack, "the point is that we believe our boats to be infinitely ahead of anything owned in any other navy on earth. We believe it possible to do things, with boats like this one, that can be accomplished with no other submarine craft in the world. Now, it's a fact that, in all the navies, lest an accident happen to a submarine, that craft is obliged to travel about, always, in the company of a steam craft of war, which is known as the parent ship. Yet we've come, straight from the shipyard at Dunhaven, many hundreds of miles, without any such escort. We've been running along under our own power, night and day, without accident, stop or bother. Thus we've shown that the Pollard boat can do things that no other submarine craft are ever trusted to try alone. And now, all that remains to show is that, at the end of a long voyage, we can approach a coast, unseen, even though thousands of people are probably looking for us, and that we can get into a harbor without being detected; that, in fact, we could do anything we might have a mind to do to an enemy's ships that might be in that harbor. But now, sir, you propose that, lest we have accidents, it will be best to rise to the surface and enter the harbor at Spruce Beach as plainly and stupidly as though the 'Benson' were some mere lumber schooner."

"I see the thing just the way Jack Benson does," murmured David Pollard, thrusting his hands down deep in his trousers pockets.

"Oh, well, if I'm voted down, I'll give in," laughed Jacob Farnum. "I wonder, though, how Hal and Eph feel about this?"

"I don't have to ask them," nodded Captain Jack, confidently.

"Why not?"

"We settled it all, days ago, sir."

"And they both agreed with you?"

"Down to the last jot, Mr. Farnum. They saw the beauty and the boldness of the plan."

Oh, well, go ahead, then, responded Mr. Farnum, rising and standing by the cabin table. "Of course, the picturesque and romantic possibilities of the scheme are plain enough to me. We'll have the people at Spruce Beach agape with curiosity, then wild with enthusiasm. And, really, to be sure, we have to arouse the enthusiasm of the American people over this whole game. That's the surest way of forcing Congress to spend more money on our boats."

"Where are you going, Jake?" called the inventor, as his partner started aft.

"To the stateroom, to get a little nap," replied the shipbuilder. "We're not by any means due at Spruce Beach yet."

"Jake Farnum is surely not a coward," chuckled Mr. Pollard, as the stateroom door closed. "Nor is he over anxious about any detail in our little game, or he couldn't go to sleep at this important time. I know I couldn't get a wink of sleep if I turned in now. I've simply got to sit up, wide awake, until I see the finish of your bold stroke, Jack Benson."

Captain Jack laughed easily, then glanced at his watch to note the lapse of time since he had made his last calculation of their whereabouts. It is one thing to be in the open air, navigating a vessel, but it is quite another affair to be fifty-odd feet below the surface, calculating all by the distance covered and the course steered.

"Any deviation in the course, Eph?" Captain Jack called up into the conning tower.

"Not by as much as a hair's breadth," retorted young Somers, almost gruffly, for with him, to depart from a given course, was well nigh equal to a capital crime.

Jack touched a button in the side of the table. Obeying the summons, quiet Hal Hastings thrust his head out into the cabin.

"Just the same speed, Hal?" the young captain asked.

"Hasn't changed a single revolution per minute," Hastings answered, briefly.

With his watch on the table before him, and employing the scale rule and dividers, the young submarine skipper placed a new dot on the chart.

"Something ought to be happening in three quarters of an hour," Benson remarked, with a chuckle, to Mr. Pollard.

Less than half an hour later the young submarine skipper climbed up into the conning tower beside Eph.

"Same old straight course, eh, lad?" asked Jack quietly.

"You know it," retorted Eph.

"Then we're where we ought to be," responded Jack Benson, bending forward. With his right hand on the speed control he shut off speed.

"Now, just sit where you are, Eph, until I come up again," advised the young commander.

"Going to the surface?" demanded Somers, with interest.

"Pretty close," nodded Benson.

Calling Mr. Pollard to his aid, Jack began to operate the machinery that admitted compressed air to the water tanks, expelling the water gradually from those same tanks. This was the means by which the submarine boat rose to the surface. All the time that he was doing this, Jack Benson kept his keen glance on the submersion gauge. At last he stopped.

"How is it up there, Eph?" he called, pleasantly.

"Why, of course there's a lot of good daylight filtering down through the water now," Somers admitted.

Captain Jack went nimbly up the spiral stairway. Now, he had still another piece of apparatus to call into play. This affair is known to naval men as the periscope.

In effect, the periscope is a device which in the main is like a pipe; it can be pushed up through the top of the conning tower, through a special, water-proof cylinder, until the top of the periscope is a foot, or less, above the surface of the water.

The top of this instrument is fitted with lenses and mirrors. Down through the shaft of the periscope are other mirrors, which pass along any image reflected on the uppermost mirror of all. At the bottom of the periscope is the last mirror of the series, and, opening in upon this, there is an eyepiece fitted with a lens.

As Captain Jack Benson applied his right eye to the eyepiece he was able to see anything above the surface of the water that lay in any direction that the periscope was pointing.

"Right opposite Spruce Beach, as the chart showed!" chuckled the young commander. Under the magnifying effect of the eyepiece lens Benson could see the beach, the flag-bedecked hotels, and the moving masses of people on the shore. Yet, all this time, he was out at sea, more than a mile from the beach. The periscope itself, if seen from a boat an eighth of a mile away, would undoubtedly have been taken for a floating bottle.

"Let me have a peep," demanded Somers.

Eph looked briefly, then chuckled:

"Must be thousands of people over yonder, wondering what on earth has happened to us!"

"Do you make out the gunboat, at anchor to the north of the hotel section?" inquired Captain Jack.

"Oh, yes. Say, they'll have an awakening on that gray craft, won't they?"

"If we don't make any slip in our calculations," answered Benson, gravely.

"Well, we're not going to make any slip," asserted Eph Somers, stoutly.

"Now, keep quiet, please, old fellow. I want to do a little calculating before we take the last, desperate step."

All this time the conning tower of the submarine was just a bit below the surface. Nothing but the slender shaft and the small head of the periscope was above the wash of the lazy waves.

Captain Jack soon had his calculation made. Then, with a quiet smile, he remarked:

"I guess you'd better get below, Eph, for your part. I'll take the wheel, now, and Mr. Pollard will attend to the submerging mechanisms."

Eph laughed joyously as he darted below. He had a part assigned to him that was bound to be enjoyable.

"Mr. Pollard!" called down the young skipper, a few moments later.

"Aye, Captain Jack!"

"Let her down slowly, please, until the gauge shows just fourteen feet. That's the greatest depth I dare try for the course we're going to follow."

"Aye, Captain Jack. Fourteen feet it shall be."

For the benefit of some readers who may not understand, it is to be stated that the charts of harbors bear markings that show the exact depth of water at every point in the harbor at low tide. Thus, the chart of the harbor just north of Spruce Beach had already told the young submarine skipper just how far below the surface he could travel with safety to his craft.

Further, he knew the draft of the "Waverly" to be eleven feet. So the youthful commander could feel quite certain that he would be in no danger of colliding, below the water-line, with Uncle Sam's gunboat.

On the deck of the "Waverly" itself there was the same spirit of expectancy that there had been an hour earlier in the afternoon.

Lieutenant Featherstone, executive officer of the gunboat, was not, however, impatient. In fact, he stood at the rail, aft, a pretty girl beside him, and both were looking down musingly at the rippling water below.

"As I was saying," drawled the lieutenant, "when—"

Just then he stopped, though he did not appear startled.

Straight up out of the watery depths shot a Carrot-topped boy, his wet skin glistening in the sun.

"Good gracious!" gasped the girl. "Where did that boy come from?"

"Say, sir," called up Eph Somers, distinguishing the lieutenant in his swift look, "where do you want the submarine boat to anchor?"

"What's that to you, young man?" called down Mr. Featherstone, bluntly.

"Oh, just this much, sir," retorted Eph, treading water, lazily; "I belong aboard the 'Benson,' and I've been sent to inquire where you want us to find our moorings."

"You from the 'Benson'?" snorted the lieutenant, incredulously. "Then where is your craft!"

"Coming, sir."

"Coming?" jeered the lieutenant "So is Christmas!"

"The 'Benson' will be here first, sir," retorted Eph, splashing, then blowing a stream of water from his mouth. "The 'Benson,' sir, is due here in from twenty to thirty seconds!"

"What's that?" demanded the naval officer, sharply. Then a queer look came into his face as a suspicion of the truth flashed into his mind. He was about to speak when his feminine companion pointed, crying:

"What can that commotion mean out there?" There was a little flurry in the waters, then a parting as something dull-colored loomed slowly up.

Barely a hundred feet away from the port rail of the gunboat the new submarine boat, "Benson," rose into sight.

Eph Somers had left the craft, while still below surface, by means of the clever trick worked out by Jack Benson and his comrades, as described in "*The Submarine Boys' Trial Trip*."

Almost instantly the manhole cover was thrown open. Jack Benson, natty as a tailor's model, in his newest uniform, stepped out on deck, waving his hand to the gunboat.

"You'll have to consider that we got you, won't you, sir?" shouted the young submarine captain.

Then, both on shore and on the decks of many craft, a realization of what had happened dawned in the minds of thousands of people at about the same instant. A great, combined cheer shot up—a cheer that was a vocal cyclone!

CHAPTER II

TROUBLE IN THE MAKING STAGE

On the hurricane deck of the "Waverly" stood one man, mouth wide open and eyes a-stare, who couldn't seem to get the meaning of it all. That man was the leader of the combined band from the winter hotels.

Turning, glancing upward, the lieutenant looked at the leader with a glance of cool wonder.

"Play, man! Why don't you play? What are you there for?"

Then, all of a sudden, reddening, the band leader rapped his music stand with his baton, next gave the signal, and the band crashed forth into the exultant strains of:

"See! The Conquering Hero comes!"

At the third measure the band was all but drowned out by renewed cheering, that came more uproariously than ever.

Captain Jack Benson had surely chosen a dramatic manner of making his appearance at Spruce Beach. Ten thousand tongues were set wagging all at once. When there came a lull, a man's voice on a tug not far from the gunboat could be heard, asserting loudly:

"Well, that's what submarines are for—to sneak in while you're wiping a speck of dust from your eye!"

That remark, coming just as the band ceased its strains, was plainly audible, and brought a laugh from everyone aboard the submarine, including Eph, who was just climbing, in his bathing suit, up to the platform deck.

Lieutenant Commander Kimball, hurrying from his cabin, had joined Lieutenant Featherstone at the rail, the pretty girl slipping away to join a group of civilians.

"What do you think of us?" called Jacob Farnum, a broad grin of delight on his face.

"You'll do," admitted Kimball.

"Do you consider yourself sunk?" demanded David Pollard, laughingly.

"Theoretically, yes," assented Lieutenant Commander Kimball. "I wonder if you could do it as well in war time?"

"Couldn't possibly do anything like it in war time," called back Captain Jack Benson. "For, sir, you fly the Stars and, Stripes!"

That was a happy speech, delivered at just the right second. It set all within hearing to cheering again. And then the thousands beyond caught it up.

"I'll say this much," shouted back Lieutenant Commander Kimball, as soon as he could make himself heard: "We'd rather have you with us, Mr. Benson, than against us."

"You'll have your wish, sir, as long as I'm alive," Jack answered, turning and lifting his hat in simple yet eloquent salute to the Flag waving at the gunboat's stern.

All this time Hal Hastings stood by the deck wheel, one hand occasionally straying to the engine room signal buttons, as he kept the "Benson" just about a hundred feet from the gunboat and nearly abeam.

"Where shall I anchor, sir?" called Captain Jack, presently.

"Better take it about four points off our port bow and at least four hundred feet away, Mr. Benson," called back the lieutenant commander.

"Four points off port and four hundred feet it is, sir," answered the young submarine skipper, saluting. Then he gave the order to Hal.

"As soon as you're anchored, I'll send you over a boat to be at your disposal this afternoon," called Lieutenant Commander Kimball.

"We'll use the boat, sir, to pay you a visit, if you permit," Jack shouted back.

"By all means come aboard. Then we'll visit you. We're anxious to see the works of such a wonderful little craft."

Within ten minutes a man-o-war's cutter was alongside, rowed by six alert-looking young sailors, while a coxswain held the tiller ropes.

Messrs. Farnum and Pollard, Jack and Hal made up the visiting party, leaving Eph Somers aboard the submarine, with Williamson to help him at need.

Cordial, indeed, was the reception of the submarine folks aboard the gunboat. There was a great amount of handshaking to be done.

In the meantime, Eph Somers was having something in the way of trouble back on the platform deck of the "Benson."

Two small boats, manned by harbor boatmen, and each carrying a few passengers, had put off from shore, and now ranged alongside.

"How do you do, Captain?" shouted a young man at the bow of one of the boats.

"Louder!" begged Eph.

"How do you do, Captain?"

"Louder. I'm afraid the captain can't hear you yet," grinned the carrot-topped submarine boy. "He's over on the gunboat."

"Then who are you?"

"Who? Me?" demanded Eph, innocently. "Oh, I'm only the Secretary of the Navy."

"All right, Mr. Secretary," laughed the same young man. "We are coming aboard."

"Aboard of what?" inquired Eph.

"Why, you're submarine boat, of course," came the answer.

"Guess not!" responded Eph, briskly.

"Why, yes; we're newspaper men, and it's business, not fun with us."

The boat containing the speaker lay lightly alongside at this moment. In another moment the young man in the bow would have clambered up on deck, but Eph called down to him:

"Hold on! Stay where you are. My orders are to hit any fellow with a boathook who tries to come up here in the captain's absence."

"But we've got to have a look at your boat, don't you see?" insisted the newspaper man, though, as Eph carelessly picked up a boathook, the would-be caller waited prudently in the bow of his boat.

Young Somers was surely in a state of uncertainty. He had strict orders to allow no one aboard unless he knew them to be United States naval officers. On the other hand, the auburn-haired boy knew how necessary it was for the submarine folks to keep on good terms with newspaper writers if the American people were to be favorably impressed with the claims of the Pollard boat.

"Now, see here," said Eph, balancing the boathook, "I'm sorry to stand here making a noise like a crank, but have you any idea at all what orders mean on shipboard? And I'm under the strictest orders not to let anyone aboard."

"Get your orders changed, then," proposed another newspaper man, cheerfully.

"If you'll wait, I'll see if I can," muttered Eph, hopefully.

"Oh, we'll wait."

Williamson's head had appeared in the manhole way.

"Come out on deck, and don't let anyone on board unless we get orders to that effect," murmured Somers, passing the conning tower. Then, through a megaphone, the submarine boy hailed the gunboat, asking if it would be possible for him to talk with Jack Benson. Benson soon afterward came forward on the "Waverly." Eph explained the situation. Jack shouted back to allow the visitors on the platform deck, but not to let any of them into the conning tower, or below.

So Eph turned to the two boatloads of visitors, explaining:

"Perhaps you men can get that all changed if you come out to-morrow, when the captain is here. But the best I can do to-day is to let you up here on the platform deck."

"Oh, well," returned the first newspaper man to get up there beside the boy, "you can tell us, as well as anyone, about your trip down the coast and the way you slipped in here."

"And also," chimed in another, "you're the young man who came straight up through the water when she was beneath the surface?"

Eph admitted that he was.

"That's the thing *I* want to know about," continued the second newspaper man. "I've heard before about that wonderful trick of leaving a submerged submarine, and coming to the surface. How is the thing done?"

Eph regarded this questioner with wondering patience, before he replied:

"You want to know so little that I'm sorry I'm deaf in my front teeth and dumb in my right ear."

"That's on you, Paisley!" chuckled one of the newspaper men.

Then three or four began to ask questions at the same time, which caused young Somers to wait, then remarked blandly:

"Now, if you'll all kindly talk at once, I'll give you, in a few words, a straight account of the plain features of our trip down here, including our run under water. But, if there's any question I don't answer for you, you'll understand, I hope, that it's because I know it would be bad manners for me to tell you anything that only officers of the Navy have a right to know."

"All right, Commodore," nodded one of the newspaper men, good-humoredly. "You're all right. Go ahead and spin your yarn in your own way."

Thereupon, without telling anything that he had no right to tell, Eph managed none the less to give his hearers an entertaining account of the "Benson's" long trip down the coast without stop or help.

"And, unless I'm in a big error, gentlemen, ours is the longest trip that a submarine boat ever took by itself."

"You're right there, too," nodded one of the newspaper men, who made a study of naval affairs and records. "And the way this craft came in this afternoon beat anything, so far as I'm aware, that was ever done with a submarine."

"That's Captain Jack Benson's specialty," replied Eph Somers, his eyes twinkling.

"What's his specialty!"

"Doing things with a submarine boat that have never been done before. Captain Benson is the latest wonder in the submarine line."

"He has a very steady admirer in you, hasn't he?" inquired one of the newspaper men, laughingly..

"Yes; and the same is true of anyone else who knows him well," declared Eph, warmly. "Jack Benson is about the best fellow on earth—and one of the smartest, too, his comrades think."

Thereupon one of the newspaper correspondents began tactfully to draw out young Somers about the history and past performances of the young submarine captain. On this subject Somers talked as freely as they could want.

"It was Benson, too, who discovered the trick of leaving a submarine boat on the bottom, and coming to the top by himself, wasn't it?" slyly asked one of the visitors.

"That was his discovery," nodded Eph, promptly.

"What's the principle of the trick?"

Eph's jaws snapped with a slight noise. He remained silent, for a few moments, before he replied:

"So far, that trick is known only to the Pollard people and a few officers of the Navy. The fewer that know, the better the chance of keeping it a secret. Don't you believe me?"

"That's one way of looking at it, perhaps," nodded a reporter. "But there's another side to that, too, Somers. The United States now own some of your boats, and the money of the people paid for those boats. Now, don't you think the people of this country have a right to know some of the secrets for which they pay good money, and a lot of it?"

On hearing the question put that way Eph looked tremendously thoughtful for a few seconds.

"Why, yes, undoubtedly," admitted the carrot-topped submarine boy. "I never thought of it that way before."

"Then—"

"See here," interrupted Eph, "it was the Secretary of the Navy, who on behalf of the people, bought our boats."

"Yes—"

"He acted as the agent of the people," Eph continued.

"Well—"

"Therefore," asserted Eph Somers, with a roguish twinkle in his eyes, "the Secretary of the Navy is the proper official for you to go to in search of that information. And you may tell the Secretary—"

"Stop making fun of us," interposed a newspaper man.

"You may tell the Secretary," finished Eph, "that I said I had no objection to his giving you the information you want."

The newspaper men after gazing briefly at the innocent-looking face of the carrot-topped one, began to grin.

"Young Somers is all right," declared one of the visitors. "He knows when to talk, and also when to hold his tongue."

"I never was sized up so straight before," grinned Eph, "since I was caught stealing grapes behind the Methodist church."

Before the newspaper men departed in their boats they had obtained some amusing and interesting points for a news "story." Yet not one of them had gained any inside information as to the closely guarded secrets of the submarine. Eph, from his very disposition and temperament, made undoubtedly the best press agent the Pollard Company could have had. Hal Hastings, while wishing to be obliging, probably would have said his whole "say" in twenty or thirty words. Jack Benson would have sung the praises of the Pollard boats readily enough. But it was Eph, alone of the three, who could give to such an interview the humor and wit that American newspaper readers enjoy.

One "reporter" in the party that was rowed back to the beach was not known to his associates. Wherever several newspaper men are gathered at a point on business it is generally easy for a stranger, not connected with the press, to push himself into the group. The stranger, in this instance, had given the name of Norton, claiming to be from an Omaha paper.

Arrived at the beach, however, "Norton" did not hasten to the telegraph office. Instead, he hurried to the Hotel Clayton, the largest and most expensive of the hotels at Spruce Beach.

Entering one of the elevators, Norton stepped off at the third floor. He stepped briskly down a corridor, stopping before a door and giving an unusual style of knock.

"Come—in," sounded a drawling voice, and Norton entered.

From a seat by a table, in the center of the large room, rose a man somewhat past middle age. This man was tall, not very stout, with a sallow face adorned by a mustache and goatee. The man's eyes were piercing and black. His hair was also black, save where a slight gray was visible at the temples.

As Norton entered, the man, who rose, threw a cigarette into the fire place, then reached over, selected another cigarette and lighted it. The room was thick with the odor of some foreign tobacco.

"Well, Norton?" challenged this stranger, in a low voice.

"I've been aboard the new submarine, Monsieur Lemaire," replied the young man. "I went with a party of newspaper writers, pretending to be one of their calling."

"An excellent idea, Norton. And you saw the very boyish officers of the boat?"

"Only one of them. The other two were paying a call on board the gunboat. I saw Somers."

"You gathered some idea of how to pump him for the information wanted, of course?"

"No; I didn't," retorted Norton, scowling. "I learned, very soon, that Somers is one whom we want to leave out of our count in getting information?"

"Why so?"

"Well, M. Lemaire, if you meet that young fellow, and try to draw him out, you'll understand. He can talk longer, and tell less, than any young fellow I've met. He seems to guess just what you want to know, and then he carefully tells you something else."

"Ah, well, out of three young men, we shall find one who will tell us all we need to know," laughed M. Lemaire, gayly. "So it is only a question of learning which of the three to make the first attempt upon."

"If you want a suggestion—" began Norton.

"By all means, my dear fellow."

"Then turn your batteries of inquisitiveness loose upon Jack Benson, first of all. He may be easy game. As for the third, Hal Hastings, I hear that he is a silent fellow, who says little, and generally waits five minutes, to think his answer over, before he gives it."

"Benson it shall be, then," nodded M. Lemaire. "I shall find it easy to meet him. And now, good-bye, Norton, until this evening. You will know what to do then."

After Norton had gone out, closing the door behind him, M. Lemaire carefully flicked the ash from his cigarette as he murmured to himself:

"Then it shall be Captain Benson whom we first attack! Nor do I believe I can do better than to enlist the services of Mademoiselle Sara. Ah, yes! Her eyes are fine—perfect. One looks into her eyes, and trusts her. Captain Jack Benson, you shall have the pleasure of meeting a most charming creature!"

CHAPTER III

ON THE EDGE OF THE SPIDER'S WEB

An hour after dinner the orchestra of the Hotel Clayton crashed out into the first two-step.

The big ballroom was already two thirds as well filled as it could be with comfort. Potted green palms stood everywhere at the sides. The orchestra in the gallery was nearly concealed behind a fringe of green. The air was sweetly odorous with the fragrance of southern blossoms. Scores of young women in all varieties of handsome evening dress enlivened the appearance of the scene. Their gems cast glitter and enchantment. There were men enough, too, for partners in the dance, the men behind expanses of white shirt-front and clad in the black of evening dress.

Just a few of the men, however, lent additional color to the scene. These were officers and midshipmen from the "Waverly," who came attired in the handsome blue, gold-braided dress uniforms of the service.

Among the guests of the hotel who attended the dance were Jacob Farnum and his two young submarine experts; Jack Benson and Hal Hastings. The shipbuilder had come ashore with his young friends, registering at the Clayton and taking rooms there.

"It's time for you youngsters to get ashore and have a little gaiety," Farnum had declared. "If you don't mix with lively people once in a while, you'll rust even while you keep the 'Benson's' machinery bright."

Jack and Hal had agreed to this. Eph, however, had expressed himself decidedly as preferring to remain on board the submarine for the time. Williamson, too, had elected to remain on board, and so had David Pollard, who rarely cared for anything in the social line.

On the floor, even before the music struck up, was M. Lemaire. He was in the usual black evening dress, though on his wide shirt front glistened the jeweled decoration of some order conferred upon him by a European sovereign.

A handsome and distinguished figure did M. Lemaire present. He nodded affably to many of the ladies in passing, and the interest with which his greetings were acknowledged proved that M. Lemaire was in a gathering where he could boast many acquaintances.

Almost at the first, M. Lemaire had succeeded in having Captain Jack Benson pointed out to him. The tall, sallow man looked over the submarine boys eagerly, though covertly. He beheld them in handsome dress uniforms, very much like those worn by the naval officers, for Jacob Farnum had insisted that his young submarine officers, wherever they went must be appropriately attired.

In the throng, as M. Lemaire passed, stood one handsomely dressed girl. Her face, which was interestingly beautiful, had a slightly foreign look. The jewels that she wore must have cost a fortune. The girl herself was a finished product in the arts of good breeding and grace.

As M. Lemaire approached her, this girl recognized him with a smile and a half-quizzical look.

"Ah, good evening, Mademoiselle Nadiboff," murmured M. Lemaire, as he bent low before the handsome young woman. "I am charmed."

Then he murmured, in a low tone, swiftly:

"Yonder are, the two boys. Jack Benson is the one you will interest. You, Sara, know the arts of conversation well enough. Make him your slave, until he is willing to tell all that we want to know. Invite him to drive with you in your auto car to-morrow. But, bah! You will know how to make him talk!"

All this was said swiftly, unheard by anyone else. Then M. Lemaire, having appeared hardly to pause, passed on.

A minute later Mademoiselle Nadiboff was chatting laughingly with Lieutenant Featherstone.

"Who are those two young men over there?" questioned the young woman. "Are they of the Navy?"

"No, though related to us in interest," replied the lieutenant. "They are the captain and chief engineer of the submarine that arrived this afternoon. Youthful, aren't they?"

"Very," agreed Mademoiselle Sara. "But I like their faces. You will present me, will you not, Lieutenant?"

"Gladly."

So Jack and Hal found themselves bowing before the handsome young foreigner. Mlle. Sara had the appearance of being, equally interested in both of them, though she soon managed, with her social arts, in drawing somewhat aside with Jack Benson.

And then the music crashed out. One of the young woman's feet began to tap the floor, her eyes glistening.

"Entrancing music," she murmured.

"If you are not engaged for this dance—" murmured Jack, hesitatingly. This beautiful creature seemed so superior to the usual run of the human kind that the submarine boy felt he was too presuming.

"You are very kind," replied the young woman, with a swift smile. "I shall enjoy it greatly."

Jack took one of her hands in his, resting his other hand lightly at her waist. A moment later they

glided over the polished floor.

"Benson is doing famously," laughed Lieutenant Featherstone, half-enuviously. "But before I think of myself, Hastings, I must seek an interesting partner for you, also."

"Kind of you," returned Hal, gratefully. "But I fear I must remain a wall-flower, or a human palm to-night. I don't know how to dance."

"You don't?" murmured Featherstone, in amazement. "Good heavens! I thought even the bootblacks knew how to dance in these modern days!"

Jacob Farnum knew how to dance, but did not care for it this evening. He was much in love with his young wife, and, as she was not here, the ballroom floor had no attractions for him. So he and Hal retired to seats at the side of the ballroom.

"Jack is dancing with a famously pretty girl—the loveliest of many that are here to-night," smiled the shipbuilder. "I trust he won't have his head turned."

"Don't worry, sir," Hal rejoined, briefly.

The second dance, also, Jack Benson enjoyed with Mlle. Nadiboff. The young woman herself arranged that gracefully. At the end of the second dance Jack led his partner to a seat. Then she sent him for a glass of water.

Her cobwebby lace handkerchief fell to the floor. M. Lemaire, passing at that instant, espied it, picked it up, and returned it to her with the bow of a polished man of the world.

"Flatter the young fellow! Make him dance attendance on you to the point that he forgets all else," whispered the man.

"Trust me for that," murmured the girl.

"I do." And M. Lemaire was gone, swallowed up in the increasing throng.

As Jack Benson brought the glass of water Mlle. Nadiboff sipped at it daintily. Raising her eyes so that she could read the placard now suspended from the balcony rail, she announced:

"The next number is a waltz, Captain Benson. Truly, I am eager to know how you waltz. It is a sailor's measure."

"Then perhaps you will favor me with a waltz, later in the evening," returned Jack, courteously. "But if I had the impudence to ask you for this waltz, and if you were generous enough to grant it to me, I know what would happen."

"What, my friend?"

The word "friend" was gently spoken, but Jack Benson replied bluntly:

"Some of the men here would lynch me, later in the night, Mlle. Nadiboff."

The young woman laughed musically, though, as Jack glanced away for an instant, a frown flashed briefly over her face.

"You will not disappoint me, I know, Captain," she murmured, persuasively. "Besides, you are too brave to fear lynching for an act that grants pleasure."

This was so direct that Jack Benson could not well escape. Nor, truth to tell, did he want to. He found Mlle. Nadiboff's bright, gentle smile most alluring. So, when the music for the waltz sounded the submarine captain led her forth on to the floor.

At the finish, after Jack had led his partner to a seat, Lieutenant Featherstone joined them. One or two others approached, and Benson slipped away, though just before he did so the young woman's eyes met his with a flash of invitation to seek her again later.

"You've been extremely, attentive, but I, imagine some of the other men are combining to thrash you, Jack," smiled Farnum, when Benson returned to his friends.

"Mlle. Nadiboff is a very delightful young woman," Jack answered, heartily. "I'm sorry you don't dance, Hal."

"If I were very sorry, I'd learn," rejoined Hastings, simply.

During the waltz and the number that followed Jack remained with his friends, looking on.

Then Lieutenant Featherstone, feeling that the Navy must look to the enjoyment of these strangers, came over to them.

"How many of you dance?" inquired the lieutenant.

"Two of us," answered Hal. "I don't."

"Mr. Farnum, I must introduce you to an agreeable partner," urged the Navy officer. "Who shall it be? I know most of the ladies here."

"Don't think me a bear, Mr. Featherstone, but I don't believe I'll dance to-night, though I thank you tremendously," replied the shipbuilder.

"Then, Benson, you must uphold the honor of your party," laughed the lieutenant, linking his arm in Jack's and drawing him forward.

Captain Benson's next dance was with a California girl; after that he led out a jolly young woman from New York. As he left the latter partner, Mlle. Nadiboff, on the arm of a gentleman, passed close enough to murmur:

"Captain, you are neglecting me—and I have saved the next, a waltz, for you."

Not being engaged for that waltz, Jack could hardly do, otherwise than claim it. Indeed, he greatly enjoyed dancing with this gracious, handsome young woman. Yet, soon after he had taken Mlle. Nadiboff to her seat, and another partner appeared to claim her favor, Benson slipped away.

"Go after Captain Benson, I beg of you, and bring him back here for a moment," requested the young woman of her new partner. That gentleman obeyed, even if with a poor grace. Jack returned, bowing, while the gentleman walked away a few feet.

"Captain, you are a stranger here at Spruce Beach?" murmured Mlle. Nadiboff, directing the full gaze of her luminous eyes at Jack's.

"Yes, truly."

"I go motoring at eleven in the morning. I shall expect you here, at that hour, to drive with me."

Jack looked as regretful as he felt.

"I'm very, very sorry, Mademoiselle" he replied. "But I am here on duty, and—"

"Duty?" she interrupted, with a light laugh. "And pray what is duty, Captain, but a something with which to flavor our pleasures in life?"

"With me, Mlle. Nadiboff," Jack Benson replied, earnestly, "duty is everything, pleasure included."

"I am not accustomed to having my commands disregarded," exclaimed the young woman, though in a low tone, while her eyes flashed some of her displeasure.

"You are giving me pain, Mademoiselle," Jack responded, gravely. "Perhaps, at another time—"

"Enough sir!" the young woman interposed. "And now I behold my next partner glancing this way appealingly. I shall speak with you the next time we meet, Captain."

Jack bowed, withdrawing. Making his way around the ballroom, he dropped into a seat beside Mr. Farnum.

Even before Mlle. Nadiboff's partner could rejoin her, M. Lemaire appeared around a palm at Mlle. Nadiboff's back as naturally as though he had not been playing the eavesdropper.

"Have a care, Sara," he whispered, mockingly, "or you will fail in making a fool of that young fellow!"

Half way through the next dance Jack and his friends remained in their seats. Then Hal, stifling a yawn behind his hand, remarked:

"I've a notion that I shall be asleep in a few minutes. Late hours, except on duty, don't jibe with our

line of work."

"They don't," admitted Captain Jack, rising.

"Good, boys!" nodded Mr. Farnum, approvingly, as he also rose. "The more rest you have the keener your wits will be for your work."

So they left the ballroom, observed by but few.

Five minutes later Mlle. Nadiboff sat surrounded by three men, with whom she was chatting gayly. M. Lemaire approached her. She greeted him so pointedly that the other three men soon fell away.

"I can hardly congratulate you, Sara," hissed M. Lemaire, speaking in French.

"You think I have not made young Benson attentive enough to my whims?" the young woman asked, plaintively.

"Attentive?" sneered M. Lemaire. "Do you know where he is now?"

"No," admitted Mlle. Nadiboff.

"He has gone away upstairs with his friends, that they may all be prepared for an early and full day's work."

"You are jesting with me," protested Mlle. Nadiboff, indignantly.

"Take my arm, then, if you will," requested M. Lemaire. "We will stroll about, and we shall see if your eyes are keen enough to discover your young submarine captain."

The young woman defiantly accepted the challenge. By the time that they had strolled around the ballroom scarlet spots glowed in her cheeks. In either eye a tear of anger glistened behind the lash.

"Are you satisfied?" murmured M. Lemaire, in a low voice.

"I fear that I shall have to teach the young cub a lesson or two in the art of showing devotion to a woman's wishes," Mlle. Nadiboff answered, tremulously.

"Shall we walk in the grounds?"

"I beg you to take me out into the air," replied the young woman.

"Yes, it will be better," whispered her companion, cruelly. "Your face is aflame. You will attract too much attention here, and too much curiosity. The American naval officers have sharp eyes—sometimes!"

Procuring his companion's wrap at the coatroom, and throwing a light topcoat about himself, M. Lemaire led the way to a distant settee from which they could look out over the star lit waters beyond the beach. The man had an especial reason for choosing this seat. From that place they could quickly catch sight of anyone who came near enough to overhear.

"Sara," began M. Lemaire, less brutally than his companion had expected him to speak, "for once I fear that you are going to fail utterly."

"Then you do, not know me," she replied, with spirit. "I shall win! I shall have Captain Jack Benson carrying my fan and craving my smile. And that shall be quickly, too!"

"If you do not succeed, Sara," retorted the man, "then sterner measures will have to be tried. This youthful Benson may even have to lose his life in the attempt that must be made, at all hazards, to wrest from him a set of drawings of the boat he commands, and a description of all her working parts, and all the secrets of managing the boat!"

"If he could hear you, he would be charmed with the outlook," muttered the young woman, shrugging her shoulders.

"Sara, do you comprehend the situation altogether? The Pollard type of submarine boat is now the most formidable and dangerous in the world—and only the United States Government can buy boats from the makers! Any country in the world that goes to war with the United States must be beaten unless that country knows how to provide itself with submarine boats equal to those of the Pollard make. You may be sure that, at this moment, Spruce Beach is overrun with spies representing every

great government in the world. The first country to buy, steal, coax or drag out the Pollard secrets wins! You know the master we serve, Sara, among the governments. We must be the spies who win—even though all the Pollard crew have to be destroyed!"

CHAPTER IV

KAMANAKO APPEARS ON THE SCENE

Had Jack Benson or Hal Hastings heard that strange talk, perhaps neither of them would have slept as soundly that night.

As it was, both submarine boys slept more soundly and sweetly than any other human being in that great hotel, unless, possibly, it were Jacob Farnum.

At daylight all three were astir.

Wrapped in bathrobes that concealed their bathing suits the three made their way down to the beach. There, for ten minutes, they enjoyed themselves in the surf.

"Seems mighty queer to be bathing in salt water in December, doesn't it?" demanded Hal, gleefully, as, with both hands, he launched a column of salt water that caught Jack neatly in the face.

"Anyway, I believe it's just what the family medical man ordered," chuckled Mr. Farnum, as he stepped shoreward, then ran briskly up and down the beach before he went in again for a final plunge.

Over to the bath house, where an attendant had carried their clothing, the three now hastened. After a brisk rub-down and dressing, these three from the "Benson" presented themselves in the hotel dining room, where, at this very early hour, they were privileged to breakfast all by themselves.

"The way my appetite feels," laughed Jack, enjoyably, "I pity the guests who have to follow us at table."

"There won't be any breakfast left. They can have lunch," declared Hal Hastings, gravely.

Hardly had the food been placed before them when Mr. Farnum glanced up, to find at his elbow a bowing, smiling little Japanese.

"Honorable sir, may I address you while you eat?" inquired the little brown man.

"Why not?" asked Farnum, good-humoredly. "Take a chair, won't you, Mr.—"

"Kamanako is my name, honorable sir," replied the Japanese, with three more bows.

"Take a seat, won't you, Mr. Kamanako?" Mr. Farnum invited him again.

"It is much better, honorable sir, that I stand."

"Why?"

"Because I am servant."

"Not here, surely," replied the shipbuilder. "All the waiters here are negroes."

"Not all in kitchen, honorable sir," responded the Japanese, with an air of great deference. "Some in kitchen are Japanese."

"Are you employed in the kitchen, Mr. Kamanako?" asked the shipbuilder.

"Until to-day, honorable sir."

"Meaning you have left the employ of the hotel?"

"Yes, honorable sir."

"Then you're going away from here?"

"I hope to follow the sea, honorable sir. I am a sailor. All my ancestors before me were sailors. We love the salt water."

"There is something, then, that I can do for you, isn't there?" guessed the shipbuilder.

"If you will be so good, honorable sir. I seek to become steward aboard your boat."

"Oh," replied M. Farnum, understanding, at last. "You will have to speak to Captain Benson about that."

He indicated Jack by a nod, so the little Japanese turned to Benson with another bow.

Now, as it happened, a steward was just what Captain Benson wanted. Such duties, formerly, had fallen upon Eph Somers. But now cooking and serving meals did not exactly jibe with Eph's present position aboard the "Benson" Eph was really first officer or mate.

"Yes, we want a steward," Jack admitted. "There's just one drawback, though, Kamanako. We can carry very few people aboard, so that everyone who does ship with us has to count. In other words, our steward must also cook the meals in the galley."

"I think that will be all right, honorable Captain," replied the Japanese, thoughtfully. "How many have you on board?"

"Six," answered the young submarine commander.

Kamanako thoughtfully counted that number on his fingers.

"It is not too many," replied the Japanese. "What do you pay, honorable Captain?"

"Forty dollars, and found."

"I will accept, honorable Captain."

"Are you sure that you can cook well enough for hungry sailors?"

"I am satisfied that I can cook for anyone, honorable Captain," rejoined the little brown man, rather proudly.

"That sounds well enough," smiled Jack. "Have you had your breakfast, Kamanako?"

"Oh, yes, honorable Captain."

"Then, if you'll wait for us, we'll take you aboard. We shall be going in a half an hour, or sooner."

"Would it not be as well, honorable Captain, if I go out before you?" asked Kamanako, respectfully.

"No," smiled, Benson. "Our first officer, Mr. Somers, does not take kindly to strangers who are not introduced."

"Then, if I may suggest—if honorable Captain will write note for me—then I might go out sooner."

"If you want to go aboard, Kamanako, we'll take you out when we go," Jack replied. He was annoyed, though he could not have told why, by the little brown man's insistence.

Smiling and bowing again, Kamanako left the dining room. He was waiting, though, when the others came out. As all three carried dress suit cases the Japanese quietly took those belonging to Mr. Farnum and Captain Benson.

"Most sorry I have not three hands, honorable officer," Kamanako assured Hal Hastings.

There were always plenty of shore boats at Spruce Beach. Just now, on account of the visit of the submarine, there appeared to be more of the small craft than usual. So the submarine party had no difficulty in finding transportation at once. Looking out into the harbor they beheld the "Benson," surrounded by more than a score of rowboats containing sight-seers. Eph Somers, backed by Williamson, stood on the platform deck, doggedly driving away people who wanted to come on board. Yet Eph kept wholly good-natured about it, for he could quite appreciate the curiosity of the sight-

seers.

As this last boat from shore made its way, through the concourse of boats Jack heard a sudden, joyous hail in a woman's voice.

"Oh, here he is—my gallant young captain."

"Mlle. Nadiboff!" ejaculated Jack, under his breath.

Jacob Farnum turned his head away for an instant, but the young captain heard the unmistakable sound of a chuckle from the shipbuilder.

Kamanako turned his mild eyes inquiringly in the direction of the handsome young woman, as though he wondered who she might be.

"Good morning, Mademoiselle," was Jack's greeting, as he courteously lifted his uniform cap. Hal and Mr. Farnum also uncovered. Then the boat ran alongside, and all four clambered on the deck.

In another instant. Mlle. Nadiboff's boat was also alongside.

"You are going to be kind, my Captain, and invite me aboard?" asked the young woman. Eph Somers, who was never intentionally rude to a woman, found himself staring with all his eyes, whereat he colored hotly.

"I shall be very glad to invite you as far as I am permitted to invite visitors," Benson replied. Then, turning briefly to Eph, he muttered:

"The Japanese is to be cook and steward. Take him below, and show him the galley and the supplies."

Then Benson turned to reach down his hand to Mlle. Sara Nadiboff, who trustingly extended her hand to him. She slipped. Jack was obliged to throw his left arm lightly around her waist in order to draw her in safety to the platform deck. Mr. Farnum, after seeing her safely aboard, vanished inside the conning tower, going below to smile quietly to himself.

"As gallant as ever, my Captain!" murmured the handsome young woman spy, gazing almost tenderly into Jack's face. "What a very strange craft! And now, conduct me below, please. I am much interested in seeing how you all live aboard such a little and odd vessel of war."

"I am utterly sorry, Mademoiselle," Jack Benson replied. "But my orders are that no visitors except naval officers, or those brought aboard by naval officers, may see the interior of the boat."

"Yet that Japanese has just gone below!" remonstrated Mlle. Nadiboff.

"The Japanese," replied the young captain, "is our cook and steward, and belongs below."

A light glowed swiftly in Mlle. Nadiboff's eyes, but disappeared almost instantly.

The handsome young woman opened her mouth as though to speak, then compressed her lips tightly.

CHAPTER V

EPH LEARNS SOMETHING NEW

"You are not as gallant as you were last night," murmured Mlle. Sara, in a low tone.

"Last night I was ashore, on social pleasures bent," replied Jack.

"To-day, I am on duty, and duty must go ahead of everything else."

"And I am hungry," continued the young woman, pathetically. "In my eagerness to see that boat that you command, my Captain, I came away from the shore before going through the ceremony of breakfast. Do you mean to say, Captain Benson, that you cannot conduct me to your cabin, there to have that—your Japanese—serve me with at least a sandwich?"

"Mademoiselle," cried Jack, apologetically, "you can't have the faintest idea how sorry I am that my instructions are what they are I feel wicked as I look at your distress, but it is simply wholly impossible

for me to ask you below. I can have food served to you on deck, however."

"What? Eat here before the eyes of all Spruce Beach? And have it made perfectly plain to every onlooker that I am not welcome here?" cried the woman spy, reproachfully.

"Oh, but, indeed, you are welcome here," protested Jack. "As welcome as I am permitted to make anyone. My orders, you know—I am a slave to those orders."

"Yet there is some one aboard," urged Mlle. Nadiboff, in her most pleading voice, while there was an almost tearful look in her pretty eyes, "some one who can change the orders. Your Mr. Farnum, I take it. Go to him, won't you, and plead with him for me? Go!"

One of her little, gloved hands rested on his arm, pushing gently.

But Jack Benson, though she made him feel inwardly at odds with himself, thought more of his duty than of anything else.

"I am very sorry—awfully sorry, Mlle. Nadiboff. But won't you understand that what you ask is wholly impossible?"

"Good-bye, then!" she said, resentfully, though gently, half turning from him.

"You'll shake hands, won't you?" asked Jack, holding out his own right hand.

"Perhaps, after I have talked with you on shore—when we meet again," she replied, a bit distantly. Then she turned to Williamson as her boat came in close alongside. "Your hand, please. I am afraid I may slip."

Williamson helped that most attractive young woman down over the side, lifting his cap after he had seen her safe aboard the rowboat. As the harbor craft veered off, Captain Jack Benson lifted his cap with all courtesy. Mlle. Sara Nadiboff bowed to him rather coldly.

"I suppose," sighed Jack, to himself, as he turned away, "a woman can't begin to understand why we must be so secret aboard a submarine craft that all the naval men in the world would like to know about. If she only could understand!"

Had Benson been able to guess just how well the handsome young spy did understand, and how much she had hoped to learn through appealing to his interest in her, he would have been furious at the thought of his own great simplicity.

"Your charming partner of last night was rather disappointed," observed Hal Hastings.

"Yes; she must feel that I have used her mighty shabbily," Jack responded. "I am afraid she won't forgive me."

"Oh, well, after a few days you'll never see her again," murmured Hal. "Just because a girl is pleasant—and pretty—one can't forget all the orders that he's working under."

Captain Jack Benson talked to himself in about the same strain, yet he couldn't wholly get over the notion that he had been—though helplessly—rude to a woman.

"You won't need me on deck any more, will you, sir?" asked Williamson, saluting.

"No; I shall be on deck," Jack replied, returning the salute. "Very likely Mr. Hastings will be here with me, for that matter."

Soon after the machinist had gone below Eph Somers returned to the deck.

"I've been posting that Kimono," Eph explained.

"Kamanako," laughed Captain Jack.

"Oh, it's all the same to me," sighed Eph. "To my untrained ear all Japanese names sound alike."

"Whatever you do," warned Jack, "don't, hurt the poor fellow's feelings by calling him Kimono."

"Why not?"

"Well, the Japanese are a proud and sensitive race.

"Suppose they are?"

"Do you know what 'Kimono' means, Eph?"

"Haven't even a guilty suspicion."

"It's the Japanese name for a woman's dress."

"Wow!" muttered Somers. "I shall surely have to, forget 'Kimono,' then. What do you call his truly name?"

"Kamanako," Jack responded, and spelled it. Eph wrote the name down on a slip of paper, saying:

"Thank you, Jack. I'll try to commit this name to memory. I don't want to hurt the feelings of a sensitive little fellow. It would be a shame to have to punch him if he felt insulted and made a pass at me."

"Punch him, eh?" laughed Jack in genuine enjoyment. "Eph! Eph! Don't make any false start like that!"

"What are you talking about?" questioned Somers.

"Don't make the mistake, at any time, Of trying to punch that Japanese."

"Trying to?" gasped Somers. "Say, if I made a swing at that light colored little chocolate drop, do you think I'd make a false pass and hit my own nose?"

"You might be lucky if nothing worse happened," grinned Jack. "Eph, did you never hear of the Japanese jiu-jitsu?"

"What's that?" demanded young Somers. "Slang name for something else in the Jap wardrobe?"

"No; it's the Jap way of fighting," Captain Benson explained. "And you want to remember, Eph, that's it's a mighty sudden system, too. It hits like lightning. When the smoke clears away you see a little Japanese bowing over you, and apologizing for having rudely tipped you over."

"And little Cabbage-Jacko could do that?" Eph grinned, incredulously. "Say, it's wrong to tell me such funny things when I have a cracked lip."

"All right," sighed Jack. "But at least you've been warned."

Truth to tell, the young submarine commander wasn't much worried about Eph's deliberately provoking any fistic encounter with a fellow much smaller than himself. In the first place, the carrot-haired boy wasn't quarrelsome, unless actually driven into a fight. At all times Somers was too manly to take out wrath on anyone merely up to his own shoulder height.

Nearly an hour later Jack Benson stepped through into the conning tower; then moved down the spiral staircase.

His rubber-soled deck shoes made no noise. Thus it happened that the young submarine commander came upon the new steward most un expectedly, and without being seen by the little, brown man.

"Kamanako—you scoundrel!" shouted the young captain, beside himself with sudden wrath.

For the Japanese, wholly absorbed in his present task, had deftly removed the gauge from the midships submergence apparatus, and was now dissecting the gauge itself, eyeing the parts with the knowing look of an expert.

At sound of the captain's voice Kamanako wheeled calmly about, holding up the gauge. The smile on the face of the Japanese was childlike and bland.

"This very queer thing," he murmured. "What for you use it—thermometer."

"No," retorted Jack Benson, frigidly, eyeing the detected one. "It's a barometer, and it shows which way a meddler blows in!"

"I don't understand," remarked the Japanese, looking perplexed.

"Then I'll help you to understand. First of all, put that gauge down on the table!"

Kamanako did so, then made a little bow.

"Now," continued Jack Benson, "take cap and go up on deck."

"What shall I do there, Captain?" asked Kamanako, politely.

"Well, you'll stand there until I see if you've done anything else on board. If you haven't, you can then take a boat to the shore—and stay there."

"What this mean, honorable Captain?" demanded Kamanako, a look of offense beginning to creep into his little, brown face.

"Well, if you must have it," returned Benson, coldly, "it means that I've found you spying into our mechanisms here. Now, a spy is a creature no one cares to have about—least of all on a warship."

"You call me spy—call me ugly name like that?" cried Kamanako, showing his teeth.

"Get your hat and go up on deck. Do you hear me?" insisted Captain Jack.

"I hear you, but I please myself about when I do it," retorted the Japanese, drawing himself up to his full though not very imposing height.

"Then you'll go without waiting for your hat," retorted Benson, his patience rapidly oozing now. He started toward the Japanese, just as Eph, hearing the sound of talking, looked in and down the staircase.

"Gunpowder and smoke!" ejaculated the carrot-topped boy. "It's little chocolate drop!"

"Are you going up on deck quietly and in an orderly way?" demanded Benson, a resolute glitter in his clear, blue eyes.

"I please myself," retorted Kamanako, defiantly.

At that Jack Benson promptly forgot the warning he had given Eph, and sprang at the inquisitive steward.

"You'll go—" began Benson.

He was in error, though. It was he himself who "went." As he reached out with his right hand to seize Kamanako something happened. Exactly what it was the young submarine captain never quite knew. But he found himself sprawling under the seat at the opposite side of the cabin.

"Hi, yi! Wow!" exploded Eph, darting down the stairs. "Save some of that for me!"

It was ready and waiting.

The carrot-topped boy crouched low, resting his hands on his knees, after the manner of a football player awaiting an assault.

Kamanako slid in close. Ere Eph could seize him the Japanese let himself fall lightly on one side. One of his feet hooked itself behind Eph's advanced left ankle, the other foot pressing against the knee of the same leg. Eph's ankle was yanked forward, his knee pressed back, and Somers went toppling as a tree in the forest does.

Kamanako was so quickly on his feet again to suggest that he had fallen and risen in the same movement. There was a quiet, yet dangerous, smile on the face of the Japanese.

The door of the engine room opened swiftly though noiselessly. Williamson, the machinist, took in the whole scene instantly. Hardly a full step forward he took when his fist landed between the shoulders of Kamanako, sending that young Japanese through the air, to land sprawling.

As Kamanako leaped to his feet he found himself blinking at the muzzle of a revolver that the machinist held in his right hand.

CHAPTER VI

"Don't get troublesome," advised the machinist, softly. "I've never shot a Jap, but I've always wanted to."

There was a flicker of a grin in Williamson's face that found a reflection in Kamanako's own features.

By this time Jack Benson was on his feet, a bit ruffled though with all his wits about him. At the same time Hal Hastings peered down from the top of the staircase.

"You've had all the fun so far, Kamanako," Jack admitted. "But now you've got to get off this boat mighty quick. Do you choose to go without any more fuss?"

"I go when I get ready," retorted the Japanese, sullenly.

"What's the matter, Jack?" asked Hal, slowly.

"I've caught a dirty spy at work overhauling our mechanisms," replied the young submarine boat commander.

With something of a snarl Kamanako turned as though to spring at Benson again. The sight of Williamson, immovable as a piece of marble, yet holding that revolver suggestively, cooled the Japanese ardor.

"How will it do, Captain," queried Hal, "if I pass the word to the gunboat and, have a file of marines come over to take charge of this spy?"

"First rate," clicked Benson, and Kamanako looked decidedly uneasy. He had his own reasons why he didn't care to be placed under arrest by United States troops.

Eph, striking on his head, had been knocked senseless. He was too strong, however, too full of vitality, to remain knocked out for long. Now, he half opened his eyes, as he murmured:

"How beautifully the birds are singing today! And there's mother, letting down the bars so the cows can go to the milking shed!"

Jack laughed, in spite of himself. Then he turned to the Japanese.

"Kamanako, do you want to go quietly, or remain to see what the Navy officers do with you?"

"I go now," replied the Japanese, with a shrug of his shoulders.

Turning, he started up the step, while Hal Hastings, regaining the deck before him, hailed one of the harbor boats.

Jack darted to where Eph was trying to sit up, and raised him to one of the cabin seats.

"What do you think, now, of jiu-jitsu?" asked the young captain.

"I don't know," confessed Somers, sheepishly. "I didn't see any of it."

At this moment a stateroom door opened and Jacob Farnum thrust his head out.

"Anything happening?" inquired the ship builder.

"No, sir," Jack answered. "It's all over."

Mr. Farnum came out, to ask further particulars. Williamson, as soon as he had seen the Japanese disappear up aloft, dropped his revolver back into his pocket, closing the engine room door.

Eph, however, had his own private idea of vengeance to execute. Up the stairs he went, holding hard to the spiral rail, for he was still a bit dizzy. Kamanako, having dropped into the stern of a shore boat, looked unconcerned as he was pulled away.

"Yah!" grunted Eph, shaking his fist. "You kimono! Kimono! Kimono!"

"What does that mean when it's translated?" inquired Hal, looking interested.

"That's a Japanese insult," grinned young Somers.

"Do you think Kamanako understands it?" queried Hastings.

"If he doesn't then what good does it do him to be Japanese?" Eph demanded.

Jacob Farnum listened with great interest to what his young captain had to tell him. David Pollard, being still asleep, had no notion, as yet, of what had happened.

"I reckon," muttered the shipbuilder, "It won't be any use to have any Japanese aboard here as steward, or as anything else."

"I shan't hire any more of them," Benson replied. "I shall always suspect a spy, after this, when I see any Japanese aboard any kind of a war craft, or serving at any military post."

"I'm sorry I missed seeing Eph do the flying somersault act, though," laughed Mr. Farnum.

"I missed it as much as you did," admitted Jack Benson. "At the moment my face was buried in the carpet."

When the two ascended to the platform deck Captain Jack asked, soberly:

"Well, Eph, what is your present opinion about the ability of a Japanese to look after himself?"

"Don't rub it in," muttered Somers, with another sheepish grin.

"Oh, that's all right," retorted Jack. "I came in for pretty nearly as much as you did. I may meet Kamanako again, however. If I do, I'll pay him back."

"What?" gasped young Somers. "Jack Benson, I thought you knew enough to be sure when you've had plenty!"

"I'll pay that little fellow back, just the same, if I ever get a half-way chance," insisted Benson.

"Please yourself," muttered Eph, grimly. "As for me, I'm not looking for any damages. I've had plenty of 'em already."

Not much later the submarine people were favored by a visit from some of the officers of the gunboat.

Plans were discussed for making some displays of the submarine's strong points on another day. When the officers had gone, Mr. Farnum turned to the boys to propose:

"You've never seen any of the country around Spruce Beach. Neither have I. What do you say if we go ashore? I'll charter an auto, and we can have quite a trip before it's luncheon time. Then we'll come back and eat at the hotel."

Right under the shadow of the gunboat, Williamson could be relied upon as being sufficient guard. But David Pollard declined to go ashore, on the plea that he had some letters to write, which left a guard of two on board.

It was eleven o'clock, just to the minute, as the automobile chartered by Mr. Farnum came around the corner of the hotel veranda. At that same instant another and handsomer car came rolling into sight. The door of the ladies' parlor opened, and Mlle. Sara Nadiboff, arrayed with unusually pleasing effect, came out.

As she caught sight of Jack she started, then came eagerly over to him, holding out her hand.

"Here comes my car," she murmured. "And I see, my Captain, that you have changed your mind. You will drive with me this morning."

"I'm sorry that I can't," Benson replied, and he meant it. "But I am engaged to go with Mr. Farnum and our party."

"You prefer to avoid me?" cried Mlle. Nadiboff, reproachfully, raising her eyes swiftly to his.

"Now, please don't say that," begged Benson. "I wish you could understand, Mademoiselle, how far from the truth it is."

"Say but the word, and Mr. Farnum will pardon you," coaxed the charming young Woman.

"I couldn't even think of that," replied Benson. "It is business to go with one's employer."

"Business?" repeated Mlle. Nadiboff, with an accent half of disdain. "Surely, you are not sufficiently a petty shop-keeper or serf to think always of that word, 'business!'"

"I fear I am," Jack nodded.

"Bah! Then you will never be a success with the ladies," taunted Mlle. Nadiboff, though her eyes were laughing, challenging.

"Of course, I'm only a green country boy," Jack replied, with admirable coolness, and without any tone of offence. "So my highest ambition is to be a success in the submarine business."

The young woman had tact enough to perceive that she had not quite scored by her contempt for business. She was about to change subject adroitly, when Mr. Farnum called, laughingly:

"Are you coming with us, captain? Or, have you found pleasanter company for a drive?"

Jack's hand started toward his uniform cap. He was about to excuse himself, when the young woman answered for him:

"He was just assuring me, Mr. Farnum, that he would gladly go with me, but that you had the right of prior engagement."

"Oh, I'll release, him," volunteered Mr. Farnum, his eyes twinkling.

"Now, my Captain, you can no longer find excuse, unless you truly prefer other company to mine."

Though Jack was interested in the vivacious manner of Mlle. Nadiboff, he had not yet lost his head under any of her flatteries. He was secretly irritated against Mr. Farnum for letting him off so easily. So Jack swiftly determined upon his own plan of evening matters.

"The way the affair has turned out, Mademoiselle, I shall be delighted to go in your cars. Yet I am going to ask one every great favor."

"A thousand, if you wish!" cried the young woman spy, graciously.

"Will you permit me to invite my chum, Mr. Hastings?"

"Assuredly," she replied, with a very pretty pout, "if you feel that you will find my company, alone, too dull."

"It isn't that," Jack replied, with ready gallantry. "I am anxious to have Hastings share my rare good fortune."

Then raising his voice he called:

"Hal, Mlle. Nadiboff desires me to invite you to come, too."

Young Hastings was quick-witted enough to understand that this was all but a command from his chum. So he hastily left Mr. Farnum, stepping over to join the other party. Mlle. Nadiboff's little booted right foot tapped the flooring of the veranda impatiently, but that was the only sign of displeasure she gave. Her eyes were as laughing and as gracious as ever. She extended her hand to Hal, who bowed low over it in knightly style—a trick he had caught from his observation of naval officers.

Then, as though to punish Jack, Mlle. Nadiboff asked:

"You will hand me into the car, Mr. Hastings?"

Hal did so, taking the seat beside her in the tonneau. Jack Benson, suppressing a twinkle that struggled to his eyes, closed the tonneau door, then stepped in on the front seat beside the chauffeur.

Despite her own cleverness, the young woman gave a slight gasp of astonishment over this swift arrangement.

"Decidedly, my young captain is not wholly, a fool," she told herself. "When I seek to snub him, he puts it past my power. However, it may be that this young engineer will be better suited to my purpose. I will study him."

"Toot! toot!" The Farnum auto, getting away first, went past them, sounding its whistle while Mr. Farnum and Eph lifted their hats.

"Our gallant friend, the captain, must feel out of conceit with me," laughed Mlle. Nadiboff to Hal. "He prefers the chauffeur's company to mine. So we must console ourselves."

Though he had not been able to hear any of the conversation, M. Lemaire, looking out from behind

the lace curtains of a parlor window, had seen what had happened.

"Sara is doing better this morning," he muttered to himself. "Though why should she take two of the young men with her? Ah, I see that she has the engineer at her side, while young Benson rides on the front seat. Clever little woman! She is going to make the young captain jealous! Well enough does she know how to do that!"

Not quite so well pleased was the young woman herself, as the drive proceeded. Though she did all in her power to charm Hal, and though she did succeed in interesting him, she could not draw the boy out into much conversation. Hal usually had little to say. Though he answered Mlle. Nadiboff courteously from time to time, he did not utter many words. Indeed, he appeared to be thinking of something far remote from the present scene.

"Are you bored, Mr. Hastings? Does the sound of my voice annoy you?" asked Mlle. Nadiboff, as the auto flew over the quiet country roads inland from Spruce Beach.

"Good gracious, no!" replied Hal.

"Then why do you say so little?"

"Because you say it so much better, Mademoiselle."

"But flattery will never take the place of interested conversation."

"Engineers don't talk much," protested Hal.

"So they think a great deal. Of what were you thinking?"

"Oh?" murmured Hal. "Oh, I was thinking of my engine, I guess."

Mlle. Nadiboff bit her lips in secret rage. If she had felt that she was doing poorly with Captain Jack Benson, evidently she was now seated beside an absent-minded sphinx.

"What place is that over there?" inquired Hal, coming out of a brown study as he felt some reproach in the stiffening attitude of his companion.

Hal's eye had been caught by what looked like the ruins of an old castle. Such sights are at least rare in the United States.

"That ruin, do you mean?" asked Mlle. Nadiboff. "Oh, it is a quaint bit of a castle, only some three hundred years old, though long past in ruins. I believe it was erected as a stronghold by some wealthy man, in the old days when the pirates from Havana now and then swept along the coast on their raids. Would you like to see the place, Mr. Hastings?"

"Very much indeed," Hal admitted, "if you have the time."

"The time?" Mlle. Nadiboff's laughter rippled out merrily. "Why, I have all the time in the world, Mr. Hastings. I live only to enjoy myself."

"That must be rather a dull existence, then," thought Hal, while his pretty companion leaned forward to give the order to the chauffeur, who turned up a road leading to the ruined castle of the old piratical days.

Jack had heard the conversation, and so knew, without asking, for what they were now heading.

As they drew closer they discovered other automobiles near the old castle.

"The place has several visitors to-day?" hinted Hal.

"Oh, yes; it is one of the show spots of this section," replied Mlle. Nadiboff. "It does well enough to look about there for a few minutes. But a ruin like that suggests death and decay, and I—I love life."

"Still, that castle is now a part of history," suggested Hal, "and history, it seems to me, should always be interesting."

"This stupid young engineer!" fumed Mlle. Nadiboff, to herself. "He would drive me wild, if I saw much of him. I think even my slow little captain will prove more romantic."

Though neither of the submarine boys could yet suspect it, they were soon to stumble into much more than relics of the past.

They were destined to find themselves exposed to one of the greatest surprises of their already eventful lives.

"Here we are," cried Mlle. Nadiboff, as the auto stopped near the north end of the castle. "May you discover something to interest you!"

The submarine boys certainly did!

CHAPTER VII

A POINTER "JOLTS" THE SUBMARINE CAPTAIN

There was not much left of the old castle, save the walls, and some badly crumbled ruins of inner buildings.

"The Florida climate doesn't seem to agree with castles," suggested Jack. "I have, an idea that, in Europe, a castle only three hundred years old would last much longer and keep much better."

"In Europe?" repeated Mlle. Nadiboff. "Oh, yes; much better. But then, perhaps in Europe there would be a feeling of veneration for the old that would lead the people to take much better care of their castles. It would be so in my country, I know."

"May I ask what is your country, Mademoiselle?" asked Jack, looking up and into her face.

"Guess, Mr. Yankee!"

"Why, I would guess that you are a Russian."

"You are worthy of the name of Yankee, then. Yes; I am a Russian."

Another party of sight-seers passed them at that moment, and one man was heard to remark:

"At the south end of the castle is a stairway leading down to an underground dungeon. Legend tells us that some forty Spanish pirates were once confined there, for a month, before permission was received from the governor to hang the Spaniards."

"Did you hear that?" murmured Jack, interestedly. "A real, old dungeon, with an interesting history."

"Such a history merely afflicts me with a shudder," replied Mlle. Nadiboff, shrugging her shoulders.

"By Jove, I believe I'd like to have just a glimpse of that old dungeon, Mademoiselle, if I am not tiring you or wasting your time."

"You will have to go alone, then," replied the young woman. "I will wait, my Captain."

"I will remain with Mlle. Nadiboff," volunteered Hal.

So Jack Benson, after raising his cap, stepped off rapidly toward the southern end of the old ruin.

With much difficulty he found the entrance to the stairway leading below. At the head of the stairs two youngish men were standing. The face of one of them looked familiar.

"How do you do, Captain?" nodded that one. "You don't recall me, I guess. I saw you, yesterday, only for a moment at the rail of the gunboat. My name is Hennessy, one of the newspaper men who visited your wonderful craft yesterday."

"I am glad to meet you again," Jack replied, "and sorry that we couldn't show you more."

"This is my friend, Mr. Graham," continued the newspaper man. "Graham is the Washington correspondent for my paper, so of course he has heard of your boats before."

"If you had been aboard," smiled Jack, "you might have seen something in the way of a little news happening."

"What was that?"

"Why, we found a new Japanese steward, whom we had engaged, absorbed in his study of some of our mechanisms. So we had to induce him to quit our service and go back to shore again."

"A spy, eh?" smiled Graham. "There are many of them about. Wherever there is anything connected with our national defense the spies of Europe are sure to flock, until they have learned all they want to know. And I suspect that they rarely fail, in the end. You were fortunate to catch your Japanese at his tricks at so early a stage in the game."

"I wish all these spies could be herded together and hanged!" muttered Captain Jack, in honest indignation.

"Do you?" asked Graham, looking at the boy, with a queer smile.

"Can you doubt it?" challenged Jack.

Graham was silent for a few moments, puffing at his cigar. Then, speaking very slowly, he went on:

"Captain Benson, I wonder if you would be much offended if I offered you some information that might prove of much value to you?"

"What makes you think, sir, I'm such a fool as that?" asked Jack, gazing at the Washington correspondent in great astonishment.

"One sometimes has to use a good deal of caution, even in offering well-intended information," replied the Washington correspondent, "Benson, I've been stationed at the national capital for eight years, now. I meet all kinds of people, and I see a good many others whom I don't get to know, and don't want to know, and yet I become familiar with their histories."

"I don't doubt that, sir," Jack assented. "The life of a Washington correspondent must be full of interesting things and experiences."

"Washington itself is full of foreign spies," pursued Graham, studying the ash on the end of his cigar. "After a newspaper man has been in Washington a while he begins to have people pointed out to him who are either known or believed to be in the employ of foreign governments for the purpose of getting information that our national authorities would much rather conceal."

"That must be true," agreed Benson. "And I suppose there are some very clever men engaged in that peculiar line of business."

"Some of the smartest of them are not men, but women," continued Mr. Graham. "Men, perhaps, direct them, but the women spies, when they are young and good-looking, can usually coax a lot of information."

"Oho! I'd like to get a look, some time, at one of these clever women spies," declared Jack, much interested.

"That's just what I'm coming to," pursued the Washington correspondent. "I hope you won't be offended, Benson, but I understand you have already paid some attention to one of the brightest women in this line."

"Mlle. Nadiboff?" cried Jack, guessing instantly what the other sought to convey.

"Yes," nodded Graham. "Though I believe, when I first saw her, eight years ago, she was using some other name than Nadiboff."

"Eight years ago," smiled Jack, "she must have been about thirteen years old. Do they employ spies at such a tender age?"

"Eight years ago," retorted Graham, "this young woman was, I should say, about twenty-one years old. I am aware that she looks hardly older to-day. When I saw you with her ten minutes ago it was the first hint I had that she was in Florida."

"So she's a spy?" muttered Jack Benson, speaking more to himself. "Then I can understand why she seemed so anxious to interest me. I was not wrong about that."

"No," laughed Graham. "Beyond a doubt the young woman is very anxious to please you, and to keep your interest. You happen to command a type of submarine torpedo boat in which all the world is at present much interested. By the way, I wonder if Mlle. Nadiboff, as you call her, works under the

directions of the same chief? He was a man—"

Here the Washington correspondent gave a description that caused Jack Benson to exclaim:

"Why, that's M. Lemaire, to a dot!"

"I guess there's no doubt about it, then," laughed Mr. Graham. "You've fallen into the hands of a pair of the boldest, wickedest and cleverest of foreign spies."

"I thank you heartily for informing me about them," breathed Jack Benson, his eyes gleaming as he thought of the pair. "But there's one thing that puzzles me. Mlle. Nadiboff is a Russian, and M. Lemaire must be a Frenchman. Then which country owns that precious pair?"

"Spies rarely have any country," smiled the Washington correspondent. "They work for whichever government will pay them best. Today they will sell out their employers of yesterday."

"They're a noble lot, then," grunted Jack, disgustedly.

Mr. Hennessy proposed that they go down to have a look at the dungeon underground. While they were examining that damp, slimy old cell, the conversation continued.

"Has either of that pair seen you, Mr. Graham?" asked Jack.

"I don't believe it. I'm not stopping at the Hotel Clayton."

"Then neither of them will suspect that I've been posted," muttered Benson, with a short laugh.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because I rather think," smiled the young submarine captain, "that I may attempt to pay that pair back in their own coin—somehow. By the way, do either of them know you well when they see you?"

"They might remember me as a newspaper writer," replied Graham. "So I'll keep out of the way."

"It won't be necessary for me to keep out of the way," added Hennessy. "I don't know either Mlle. Nadiboff or her companion; and, besides, I'm here openly as a reporter interested in the submarine craft."

By this time the three had returned to the upper air.

"I'll vanish, now," proposed Mr. Graham. "But you, Hennessy, if Captain Benson doesn't mind, might as well go along with him. You may get a good look at the Nadiboff woman. You, too, may think her very young. She has a knack of keeping so. Yet she's at least twenty-eight or thirty. Good-bye, for the present!"

Graham turned, losing himself from their sight amid the ruins. Hennessy walked with Jack back to where Hal and the woman awaited them.

Jack's mind was rapidly revolving plans for teaching some one a lesson that would not be forgotten.

CHAPTER VIII

EVEN UP FOR MR. KAMANAKO

"This is Mr. Hennessy, one of the newspaper men who visited our boat yesterday afternoon," said Jack, on rejoining his companions. "Mr. Hennessy has been returning good for evil. While I am unable to tell him any of the things he wants most to know about our boat, he, on the other hand, has been telling me much of interest about these ruins."

"There are a lot of legends about this old wreck of a castle," laughed Hennessy. "Most of them are too silly to consider for a moment. One of the old stories has to do with a secret passage. Some of the

guides hereabouts show what they solemnly explain was one of the outlets of the secret passage in bygone days. Do you care to devote five minutes to looking at the ridiculous thing?"

Mlle. Nadiboff smilingly accepted the suggestion, so Hal and Jack also agreed. The reporter led the way across a field, pausing at last before a fringe of weeds and low bushes.

"Now, just step through this wild hedge," Hennessy proposed, smilingly, "and you'll see how little it takes to start a yarn. Look out, though, that you don't fall down."

As they stepped through the fringe cautiously the members of the party found themselves peering down the shaft of what appeared to be a very ordinary well. It was circular, in shape, and had been laid, on the inside, with a masonry of stones.

"There is water at the bottom, isn't there?" inquired the woman Spy.

"Yes," replied Hennessy. "It was never anything more than a well. Yet, day before yesterday, one of the local guides brought me here and insisted on telling me all about its having been an outlet of a famous secret passage from the castle. I had some fishing tackle in my pocket, so I rigged up a line and weight, and let it down. I satisfied myself that there were about four feet of greenish, slimy water at the bottom of a well. I wish you could have seen the guide's face!"

"Here come some visitors, now," nudged Hal.

Two men and four women, led by a guide, approached the place.

"This shaft looks dark and mysterious enough," began the guide, reeling off a well learned lesson, "to be as full of historic interest and mystery as it really is. This shaft is what is left of one of the outlets of the famous secret passage to and from the castle."

While the new visitors crowded about, asking questions and offering remarks, the party that Hennessy was guiding stepped into the background, secretly enjoying the guide's buncombe.

"If people would only stop to use their good sense a bit," whispered Hennessy, "they'd know, at once, that the shaft is only a long disused well."

"Great Scott!" whispered Jack. "Here come Mr. Farnum and Eph with a guide. Let's see if they will be buncoed."

Guide number two came up, with the shipbuilder and Somers in tow. Greetings were exchanged. Then the last arrived pair stepped forward in the guide's wake. Farnum listened with an amused smile.

"Oh, pshaw!" grunted Eph. "Is this the best you can show us? This is nothing but an old well, with ten feet of malaria at the bottom. Show us, for a change, something that we can believe."

Hal began to laugh quietly. Then all hands stepped forward for another look down the shaft. As they stepped outside again Benson happened to turn just in time to see a familiar figure coming along a path near by.

It was Kamanako, better dressed than he had been earlier in the morning, and carrying a bulging dress suitcase.

"Hullo!" muttered Jack Benson, in a tone loud enough to carry to the ears of the newcomer. "There's that infernal Jap spy—that scoundrelly thief of other men's secrets!"

Kamanako halted as abruptly as though he had been challenged by a sentry. As he saw the young captain a dark, red flush crept into the cheeks of the little, brown man.

"You talk much," sneered the Japanese his anger rising.

"I say what I think about spies and fellows who would steal other men's secrets," retorted the young submarine captain.

"You will hold tongue better, if you please," snapped Kamanako.

"I? Hold my tongue for any scamp like you?" taunted Jack Benson.

The taunt had the effect for which Jack wished. Kamanako, looking furious, dropped his dress suit case and ran angrily forward.

Just in time, as the Japanese bounded through the fringe of weeds, Captain Jack dodged adroitly to one side.

So Kamanako plunged past him—and, the next instant, there came a smothered yell from the inside of the well shaft.

"Oh, that was a shame!" came indignantly, from one of the women in the party of strangers.

But Jack, paying no heed to her, had stepped back to the edge of the well shaft. Dimly, down at the bottom, he could make out Kamanako, standing in slimy water that reached nearly up to his arm-pits.

"Is the water fine, eh?" Jack called down, laughingly.

"I show you—some time!" came the answer, in smothered rage.

"You showed me Japanese jiu-jitsu," mocked Benson "so I had to do something to return your courtesy. What I have just shown you is called—American strategy!"

By now Kamanako had succeeded in pulling himself part way out of the water, using his hands and feet on projecting bits of the old masonry.

"You'll get out, in time, for you're a patient fellow," Jack called down, in a tantalizing kind of encouragement. "Don't forget the name that I have just given you—American strategy. And, the next time a fellow tries to make you mad, don't let him do it until you've looked the ground over. American strategy—yes, that's the name."

Laughing, as he straightened up, Jack turned away from the shaft

"And aren't you going to throw him down a rope, or do something to help the poor fellow out?" demanded the same indignant woman.

"Not in view of his line of offense, madame," Benson replied, raising his cap.

"Offense? What did he do?"

To the whole party Jack explained how Kamanako, that same morning, had been caught spying upon the controlling mechanisms of the submarine boat. All the young skipper's hearers were satisfied, then, to leave the Japanese there to work his own way out, since no one feels any sorrow over the punishment of a spy.

"Gunpowder and doughnuts! But you did get square," chuckled Eph, as the submarine party turned back to the automobiles.

"So that Japanese was a spy, you said?" murmured Mlle. Nadiboff, in a low tone, as they walked along.

"Yes, beyond a doubt," Jack assured her.

"It must seem strange to be a spy," murmured the young woman. "It must give one a strange feeling."

"Yes, and a mighty mean feeling," agreed Jack, coolly.

As he spoke he raised his eyes carelessly to her face. He did not make the glance so significant as to betray his real thoughts.

Mlle. Nadiboff did not flinch nor change color under that brief scrutiny. Instead, she appeared to be almost lost in thought as she walked along.

Suddenly she clutched at the young captain's arm.

"I wonder if you would do something very great, to please me?" she murmured, questioningly.

"I'd certainly like to have you try me," responded Jack Benson, in an equally low tone. He spoke the truth, too, for he believed that this charming but dangerous companion was scheming some sudden move in her plans as, a spy. He wanted to find out what that move would be. Above all, if it were possible, he wanted to get knowledge of which foreign country she represented.

"Won't you contrive to drive alone with me in my car, when we reach it?" she whispered, coaxingly.

"And leave your chauffeur behind, also?" asked Jack, smiling.

"That will not be necessary. I do not mind him. But I have much that I wish to say to you, my Captain. As for your friend—pardon me, but he is dull, and—"

"Quiet, I think you mean, Mademoiselle," interposed Jack. "Hal's worst enemy, if he had one, would hardly call him dull."

"Anyway, my Captain," murmured the young woman, "he does not interest me, and I do want a few words with you."

"This charming young spy," muttered Benson quickly, to himself, "is beginning to feel that I'm not enough interested to be coaxed away from my duty by flatteries. I take it she means to show her real hand, and try to play it in earnest. If that's the case, I want to know what she is going to say."

Aloud he replied:

"It will be easy enough to send my friend away with the others, Mademoiselle. When we reach the automobile all I shall have to do will be to look straight at him."

"Ah! You have a code of signals—you two?" Mlle. Nadiboff laughed, delightedly.

"A code?" repeated Jack. "No; we have never needed one. But my chum is an unusually bright and quick young man."

CHAPTER IX

"DOG, WHO IS YOUR MASTER?"

Seeing Jack and the young Russian woman so interested in their talk, the others had gradually strolled away from them.

Hennessy had already succeeded in securing an invitation to return to Spruce Beach in Mr. Farnum's hired auto.

Hal Hastings presently turned, as though to step over to Mlle. Nadiboff's car, but he caught a swift look from Jack, and turned back. Hal had not yet heard of the grave suspicion against the young woman, and could not guess what this move of his chum's meant. Hastings, however, was swift to take the hint.

"You have not overstated your friend's intelligence," murmured the young Russian gleefully. "At a short look from you he retreats."

"Oh, Hal and I always understand each other," smiled Jack.

"That is very interesting. And yet I do not like Mr. Hastings as I like you," replied the young woman.

She looked at him with a friendly, little flash in her eyes. Had Jack been a few years older, and not warned, he might have been snared by this experienced flirt. As it was, he did not take the trouble to answer her last little speech.

Just before they stepped into the car Mlle. Nadiboff uttered a few quick words, in some foreign tongue, to her man at the steering wheel. The auto sped away. Jack noted only, at first, that they were now going further from Spruce Beach. The road down which they drove, however, was a beautiful one, and the submarine boy did not much mind where they went, provided he could find out how Mlle. Nadiboff meant to make the approach against his loyalty to the submarine company.

"Do you know, my Captain, that you are hardly a flattering escort?" began Mlle. Nadiboff, after they had whirled along for a mile or more.

"Why not?" Jack inquired, bluntly.

"Have you noticed how I seem to please most men?"

"I saw that several were very anxious dance with you last evening, and that, whenever you were seated, men flocked about your chair."

"Why do you suppose they did that?" challenged Mlle. Nadiboff.

"Because you are a very handsome woman, and the men admired you," Benson answered, plainly.

"Ah! Then you think I am handsome?"

"I haven't a doubt of it," Jack answered.

"Do you admire me?"

The challenge came plain and direct. Mlle. Nadiboff now gazed searchingly into the submarine boy's eyes.

"I—I think you a very handsome woman to look at," Captain Jack admitted, readily.

"Is that all you have to say?"

"I—I am afraid I do not understand you, Mademoiselle."

"You have no desire to be especially gallant to me? It would cause you no jealousy if you, saw that I preferred the company of other men?"

Jack Benson returned her glance, almost in, bewilderment for a moment. Then he leaned back, trying to stifle the impulse to laugh, but he did not wholly succeed.

"You are amused?" cried the young Russian, half angry.

"Amused—yes, at the idea of my falling in love, if that was what you meant to suggest," replied Jack, again speaking very candidly.

"And why should that amuse you, my Captain?"

"Why, do you know how old I am, Mlle. Nadiboff? Or rather, how young? I am only sixteen. At my age, if I formed any notion of being in love, it would be sensible to have me spanked and put on a short diet for a few days."

He laughed merrily, now, and Mlle. Nadiboff turned away her head to conceal the tears of vexation that started to her eyes.

"Bah!" she thought to herself. "I have been wasting time—at Lemaire's orders. The only way to induce this boy to betray his trust will be by offering him presents of marbles, tops, kites—bah! *Bah!*"

Mlle. Nadiboff settled back in her seat, looking straight ahead, her attitude as frigid as could be. For some moments she did not attempt to speak. When she did open her lips she said, icily:

"I find that I have been wasting my time."

"Wasting your time, Mademoiselle?" echoed Jack Benson, coolly, for he was much more fully alive to the situation, thanks to Mr Graham, than she had any chance to know. "May I ask what you have been trying to do?"

The question made the young woman bite her lip. Mlle. Nadiboff had been a spy quite as long as Mr. Graham had stated. As she looked back over the years she was able to recall man after man whom she had flattered and lured by the witchery of her eyes. Secret after secret she had coaxed from men entrusted with guarding such mysteries. The rewards of the work had kept M. Lemaire and herself both bountifully supplied with money by the foreign governments that they had served as spies. Most men whom she had tried to win into her service the young Russian woman had found easy enough victims. But now, here was a sixteen-year-old boy laughing at her attempts at "cleverness."

"I was wrong to think Jack Benson a fool," she said to herself, angrily. "He is far more clever than the men I have met. I can do nothing with him. I must turn him over to Lemaire—to see if that prince of spies, as he has often been called, can find the flaw in this submarine boy's armor."

With that Mlle. Nadiboff leaned forward, murmuring a few words to the chauffeur, who nodded slightly. Then the young woman leaned back, turning a smiling, friendly but no longer coaxing face to Jack Benson.

"If I have amused you," she smiled, "I am glad. We will say that much and forget the rest, eh, Captain Benson."

"I am glad to agree to anything that will please you," responded the boy, gravely.

Mlle. Nadiboff shot a covert look at his face, then decided to say nothing. She began to have a

suspicion that this sixteen-year-old boy was far more clever than she, despite all her years of strange experiences.

A mile further along the automobile branched off the main road, running down a shaded lane at much reduced speed.

"What is this—some short cut back to the beach?" asked Jack, trying to conceal his astonishment.

"Yes," replied the young Russian, falsely.

Soon the big car stopped. The chauffeur thrust a whistle between his lips, blowing a trilling blast.

Jack Benson changed color somewhat. This sounded suspicious—a signal in the woods. It was doubly suspicious after the hints that Mr. Graham had given the young submarine captain.

"Do not jump—do not be afraid," laughed Mlle. Nadiboff, rather maliciously. "Nothing in the way of danger threatens."

Almost immediately the chug-chug of another auto was heard, just ahead up the narrow road. Then into sight glided a small runabout, which sat M. Lemaire, all by himself. That Frenchman stopped his car, next waving one hand gayly to those in the larger car.

Then, lifting his hat most courteously to the young woman, M. Lemaire stepped over to the other car. The Russian woman spoke in some tongue, the like of which Benson had never heard before. It was Arabic, a language that both of these spies understood perfectly. What she said was:

"The boy is yours. Do what you can with him. I admit that I have failed. I have no hope of being able to do anything with him."

M. Lemaire's eyebrows contracted briefly, in a slight frown. Then, forcing a pleasant look to his face, the Frenchman asked, in a tone easy enough with courtesy:

"Captain Benson, will you step out and talk with me a few moments? I have much to say."

"I can listen," nodded Jack, looking steadily, shrewdly into the eyes of this male spy. "At the same time, sir, this whole proceeding, meeting, request and all are so unusual that I think you cannot do better than to give me a frank explanation of what this all means."

"Means?" murmured the Frenchman, as though not comprehending.

"Yes," retorted Captain Jack Benson, disdaining to beat about the bush for an instant. "If you pretend that you do not understand me, sir, I shall feel obliged to have a poor idea of either your honesty or your intelligence."

"Are you trying to insult me?" asked the Frenchman, a warning flash in his eyes.

"Not at all," Jack answered, unhesitatingly. "I am asking you for a direct statement. Why am I brought here in this fashion? What is wanted of me?"

The young captain was now paying no attention to Mlle. Nadiboff. She, finding herself not needed in the talk, had slipped out at the other side of the car, and was now strolling slowly some yards away.

"Won't you step out, Captain Benson, so we can walk and talk this matter over?" again insisted the Frenchman.

"Then you have something to say that you don't think quite proper for the chauffeur to hear?" demanded Benson, almost mockingly.

"Oh, our good Gaston is all right," laughed the Frenchman, nodding at the chauffeur.

"The chauffeur, then, is one of the crowd—all spies," flashed through Jack's vengeful mind. "I might have guessed it. And this crowd have me a long way from my friends."

"You are not afraid to step down to the ground, Captain Benson?" asked the male spy, half mockingly.

"Afraid?" flushed Jack, springing down to the ground and confronting M. Lemaire. "No; I am not afraid of a regiment like you!"

"I begin to imagine that you are a brave young man, Captain," assented M. Lemaire, rather admiringly.

"Brave?" echoed Benson. "There's nothing here that calls for bravery, is there?"

"No-o-o," smiled the Frenchman slowly. "Nothing, Captain, but the courage to do and dare—and prosper."

"You speak like the puzzle page in a mail order magazine," laughed Jack Benson, more easily. "Now, Monsieur, won't you oblige me by becoming more definite?"

"What can I say, then?"

"Why, M. Lemaire, I always like to deal with people who are direct and right to the point. You plainly have some kind of a scheme that you are trying to put through with me. Won't you oblige me by coming straight to the very point?"

"I shall be as direct as you can wish, Captain Benson," replied the Frenchman, regaining his smile. "Let us stroll. Walking often helps the flow of language."

Out of the corner of his eye Jack noted that, though Mlle. Nadiboff refrained from joining them, she none the less hovered at no great distance from them.

"Now, my young friend," began the Frenchman, after a pause of a few moments, "you command the submarine boat, and you know all her secrets. You are a draughtsman, to, no doubt?"

"A fair draughtsman," nodded Jack.

"You could draw us a model of the boat you command. You could make drawings of all the important parts. You could supply us with explanations."

"Just what sort of explanations?" Jack asked, coolly.

M. Lemaire shot a swift, sidelong glance at the submarine boy.

"How?" demanded the Frenchman. "You do not understand yet?"

"You promised, Monsieur, to be very exact and explicit. What do you want?"

"Why, then, such drawings and such explanations that any skilled shipbuilder, from the plans you furnish us, could build another boat just like, and just as effective, as the boat you now command?"

"What do you want to do with such plans?" asked Benson.

"Why, would you care about that, if I pay you well enough?"

"Perhaps not," muttered Jack Benson. "Still, when I go into anything, I like to know all about it."

"Well, then," cried M. Lemaire, gayly, "first of all, we will come to the question of a fee to be paid you for your trouble. Such drawings and such papers you could prepare for us in two or three days, could you not?"

"I think that very likely," Jack admitted. He had thrust his hands deep down into his trousers pockets, in order to restrain his very natural impulse to spring at the Frenchman and rain blows in the latter's face.

"Two or three days' work, let us say," continued M. Lemaire. "And, for that we will pay you handsomely—ten thousand dollars in the best money of your land!"

They halted, gazing at each other. For a few seconds Jack Benson did not dare trust himself to utter a word. When he did speak, it was to ask, calmly:

"M. Lemaire, who is your master?"

"My master?" repeated the Frenchman. "I do not understand you."

"Every dog, even a dirty one," thundered Captain Jack Benson, "has a master! Who's yours?"

M. Lemaire's face became livid in an instant. His hands working convulsively, he sprang at the young submarine captain.

Mlle. Nadiboff, snatching a riding whip from under her automobile coat, turned and ran toward them. The chauffeur snatched up a wrench, leaping out of the automobile.

CHAPTER X

M. LEMAIRE PROVES HIS TRAINING

"You insult me!" screamed M. Lemaire, halting right under the face of Captain Jack Benson, who looked at him undaunted.

"I didn't," denied Jack. "I let you do that yourself. My congratulations, sir. You certainly know how to insult your own manhood as well as the most confirmed scoundrel could wish!"

"You insult again!" quivered M. Lemaire, his French accent asserting itself. "I s'all make you pay for zat!"

He struck wildly, badly, as a Frenchman does who has no knowledge of boxing. Benson merely warded off the blow, at the same time brushing M. Lemaire back a couple of steps.

"Now, you keep away—Gaston, or whatever your name is!" warned Jack, wheeling upon the chauffeur. "If I lose my temper, some one is going to be hurt."

But that defiance served only to draw the chauffeur on. Raising the wrench, he rushed swiftly at the young submarine captain, aiming a blow at his head.

Just as might have been expected, Jack Benson wasn't there at that instant.

Instead, he dodged nimbly to one side, at the same time driving in a blow that landed under one of the chauffeur's ears. The fellow went to the ground. Swift as a flash Jack bent over him, and snatched up the wrench, hurling it off among the trees.

Then Jack wheeled around to face Mlle. Nadiboff, bowing.

"Don't you attempt to do anything, I beg of you, Mademoiselle," Jack urged. "It would come fearfully hard to have to make even the signs of striking at a woman."

Though she did not fear physical violence from him, there was something in Benson's eyes, at just that moment, which caused the Russian woman to retreat three or four steps.

Now Jack drew himself up, for he was becoming master of himself. He at once resolved to play this game, if there was to be more of it, with greater coolness.

"I think you see, Monsieur, that I am not be frightened by your childish gymnastics," Benson uttered.

M. Lemaire, too, had forced himself to greater coolness.

"Why, Captain Benson, I might even kill, if I found it necessary," replied the Frenchman.

"Then don't get any notion that it's necessary," frowned the young submarine captain. "It would get you into a fearful lot of trouble, and could do you no possible good."

"But you called me a 'dog,'" pursued M. Lemaire, plaintively. "To a Frenchman that is the gr-r-r-rand insult!"

"Let it go at that, then," proposed Benson, with a pretense at amiability.

"Ah! Then you will forget what has just happened, if I will?" cried the Frenchman, eagerly. "That is admir-r-r-rable! Now, then, ten thousand dollars I have said you shall be paid for what you will furnish me. Ah, even in this rich country, one can do much with ten dollars!"

"It wouldn't be much, I'm afraid, as compared with my prospects with the Pollard Company," replied Captain Jack, with his most thoughtful air.

"Your prospects with the company?" echoed M. Lemaire. "Why, my bright young captain, your prospects with the company will continue just the same. They will never know that you have taken this little fortune from me. Ten thousand dollars! Think of that!"

"And you'd turn around and sell what I'd, give you for a half a million, very likely."

"Oh, no, no, no!" disclaimed the Frenchman, solemnly. "There would be nothing like that in it for me."

"Then no foreign government wants very badly to know about the Pollard plans," inquired Jack.

"There is no government that would pay a really great fortune for such information," M. Lemaire assured the submarine boy.

"There is one," retorted Captain Jack, with a cunning smile.

"Which one?" demanded the Frenchman, doubtfully.

"One that you don't happen to represent," laughed Jack, quietly.

"Ah, I much doubt it, though I beg you to pardon me for saying so, Captain Benson."

"Why man alive," grumbled Jack, "are you running away with the notion that you're the only one who ever approached me with a view to finding out how the Pollard boat runs? You claim, to be a spy for some other government, M. Lemaire. Are you such an infant as to think yourself the only spy in the field?"

"You would have to tell me about the others. Name them, or describe them to me," urged the Frenchman. "Then I would know, if they are real agents of any foreign government."

"I would tell you nothing of the sort," muttered Captain Jack. "I am young, perhaps, yet I'm old enough to keep my own secrets."

"Then it is agreed, anyway," hastened on the Frenchman, "that, in three days, you will have ready the plans and descriptions, and that I, after I have looked them over and have found them satisfactory, will hand you ten thousand dollars."

"If you've made any such agreement," laughed Benson, "then you've made it with yourself only. You certainly haven't made it with me."

"Don't you agree, then?" asked M. Lemaire.

"No," said Jack, shortly, turning on his heel.

"Where are you going, Captain?"

"Back to Spruce Beach."

"On foot?"

"Yes, for I know your kind too well to suppose that you'll offer me a ride back."

"Wait!" cried M. Lemaire, persuasively, and Benson, halted, looking at him. "Of course I cannot offer you a lift back to town," continued the Frenchman, smilingly, "for that would be ungallant. But Mlle. Nadiboff, who had the pleasure of your company out here will, I know, be most delighted at having your company on the return."

"Assuredly," added the young Russian woman, with one of those charming smiles that had failed so utterly with the submarine boy. "I shall feel most offended if Captain Benson does penance by walking all the miles back to Spruce Beach."

"I'd be a fool, then, to take that long walk back, when I can ride," thought Captain Jack.

So he turned, retracing his steps and bowing to the young woman.

"Yet, before we start," proposed M. Lemaire, anxiously, "let us see, Captain, if we cannot yet come to some arrangement."

"Well?" demanded Jack, for boyish curiosity tempted him to find how far this Frenchman was willing to go.

"Captain Benson," proposed Lemaire, "let us say that the price for what I ask shall be fifteen thousand dollars."

"You're not getting anywhere near my price, M. Lemaire," laughed the submarine boy, derisively.

"You are playing with me—laughing at me!" cried the Frenchman, yet he spoke cheerily, for now he began to hope that this American boy might yet be induced to sell himself, body, soul and honor.

"We may as well drop this line of talk," hinted Jack Benson. "You were good enough to offer me a ride back to town, I believe?"

"Yet the price? Let us settle that first," begged the Frenchman. "Captain Benson, I will make you one more offer—but it must be the last. Listen!"

Yet that word was followed by three or four utterly mysterious words, uttered in a low voice in Arabic.

"Yes," nodded Mlle. Nadiboff, as Jack glanced from one to the other, "but this must be the last offer."

"The last, the only, the highest offer," muttered Gaston, who had recovered from the blow Captain Jack had given him.

"Well, then, Captain Benson, bring me your plans within three days, with all the other data needed for the construction of one of your submarine boats, and I will hand you, in exchange, the sum of twenty thousand dollars. There you are, my good friend! Twenty thousand dollars. Now you are ours, are you not?"

Disgusted, yet crafty, Jack Benson pretended to hesitate.

"You must give me your answer at once," demanded M. Lemaire. "I cannot be played with any longer."

Captain Jack drew himself stiffly erect, looking the Frenchman full in the eyes.

"M. Lemaire, you must have been a spy for a good many years. You have been engaged so long in dishonest transactions that you are unable to understand such a thing as common honesty."

"Do you call it honesty," demanded the Frenchman, with a bitter smile, "to demand more than twenty thousand dollars for such an easily performed service?"

"You idiot!" broke forth Jack, in sudden contempt. He was no longer able even to play with this rascal. "Your offer is just as good as one of a million dollars would be. I wouldn't take either!"

"What! You have been trifling with me?" demanded M. Lemaire, starting forward.

Now the meaning of those few words in Arabic became plain enough. For Mlle. Nadiboff, who had bent over, her hand toying with the sand, suddenly clutched a handful of the fine grains and straightened up, hurling the sand full in Benson's face.

In that same flashing instant Gaston darted behind the young American. As the half-blinded young captain dodged back, the chauffeur caught him around the neck, dragging him to the ground, while Lemaire sprang a-top of the boy.

Jack fought desperately enough, but the two men rolled him over, struggling to hold his hands. Then

Click! Snap!

Jack Benson's wrists were handcuffed tightly together.

Now M. Lemaire leaped up, looking down gloatingly at the boy.

"Benson, you young fool," scoffed the Frenchman, "since you refuse to be treated as a friend, you shall know what it is to have us for your enemies. You deem it easy to laugh at us—to call us names! Bah! You will soon be glad to beg from us! Your hours of misery are now before you—perhaps days of torment that shall end in madness. Defy us? Balk our plans? Pouf? How little you know of the people with whom you have now to dealt."

Then, at a sign from Lemaire, Gaston threw himself upon Benson's legs, swiftly binding the ankles together. This done, Lemaire himself added a gag to Jack's mouth that shut off the last chance of making a sound.

This done, the two men bore Captain Jack to the larger auto, while Mlle. Nadiboff, chuckling softly, covered him completely under robes.

CHAPTER XI

JACK'S FRIENDS DO SOME FAST GUESSING

"So that's the kind of people they are?" Jacob Farnum smiled softly as Reporter Hennessy finished repeating the information volunteered by Mr. Graham, the Washington correspondent.

To this Hal had contributed the little he was able to tell of Mlle. Nadiboff's conduct.

"You will have to look to your young captain more closely after this," wound up Hennessy.

"Why?" questioned the shipbuilder.

"Even at this moment he is away in the company of that clever woman."

"Oh, he won't be cross with her," retorted Farnum, with an easy smile. "Jack Benson is always courteous with women."

"But aren't you afraid your young captain will have his head turned by her?" pressed the reporter.

"Who? Jack?" laughed Mr. Farnum. "Say, it's very plain you don't know Jack Benson."

The shipbuilder, two of the submarine boys and the reporter were seated by themselves at one end of the Hotel Clayton's big front veranda.

"Aren't you at all uneasy?" asked Hennessy.

"If I am," proposed the shipbuilder, "I'm going to cure my mental unrest with luncheon. Won't you join us, Mr. Hennessy?"

If appetite were any guide, none of the submarine people felt the slightest uneasiness as to information that the sprightly Mlle. Nadiboff might be able to coax from Captain Jack while on that auto drive.

By the time that the quartette came out again, however, Farnum began to look bothered.

"After two," he declared, "and Jack not here. Now, at three o'clock, I've agreed to take out a party of naval officers from the gunboat. We want to show those Navy fellows some of our prettiest work in the 'Benson.'"

"It looks as though your young captain is finding his companion so pleasant that he forgets to look frequently at his watch," suggested the reporter, slyly.

"Jack Benson doesn't know anything about the three o'clock appointment," replied Mr. Farnum.

"If he isn't here in season," put in quiet Hal, "it won't cause us any real trouble, anyway. Those of us who will be on hand can manage the boat through any ordinary trial or trip."

Eph was very silent—for him. After fifteen more minutes had gone by young Somers sauntered out into the road, where he could command a long view in the direction in which he would naturally look for Jack's approach in Mlle. Nadiboff's car.

After some ten minutes Eph Somers came running up the roadway.

"It's all right," he announced. "The car is coming."

In hardly a minute more the car rolled up to the veranda, and stopped. Mlle. Nadiboff, catching sight of the little party, smiled and nodded graciously as she stepped to the veranda.

"Where's Captain Benson?" inquired Hal, starting toward her.

"Captain Benson?" repeated Mlle. Nadiboff, looking a trifle surprised. "Hasn't he returned?"

"Not yet," Hal Hastings answered her, his gaze fixed steadily on the young woman's face. "How could he return ahead of your car, Mademoiselle?"

"Why, he left me more than half an hour ago, and within two miles of here," replied the young woman, easily. "I proposed going to another hotel, a few miles from here, for luncheon. So he asked me

to put him down, saying he would walk in. That was not more than two miles from here, was it, Gaston?"

"Much less than two miles," replied the chauffeur.

"And he hasn't returned?" queried Mlle. Nadiboff, looking mildly curious.

"He has not yet come," Hal replied.

"Then he must be a slow walker, or—but will you take my car and go back to look for him? Will take you to the spot where your young captain left us on foot?"

Hal Hastings's first impulse was to accept the offer of the car. Yet Mlle. Nadiboff's acting was so perfect, her air so unconcerned save for mild curiosity, that any suspicion Hal may have felt for a second or two was quickly banished.

"No, though I thank you, Mademoiselle," he replied. "Captain Benson will doubtless be here before we could make a fair start."

Nodding pleasantly, the Russian vanished through the ladies' entrance. Hal went back to his companions.

"Say," broke in Eph, presently, "if she left Jack to go several miles for her luncheon, she got it and returned mighty quick."

"Probably used a woman's privilege, and changed her mind about driving to that other hotel," suggested Mr. Farnum.

For some minutes more the party waited, then went down into the road, but there was no sign of Jack coming along.

"Mighty strange!" muttered Hal, uneasily. "Well, we've got to aboard, now," announced Jacob Farnum, after glancing at his watch. "Sorry we can't very well invite you to go with us, Mr. Hennessy."

"I shall see you, if you come ashore in the evening," replied the reporter. "In the meantime I shall be about the hotel. If I see Benson, I'll tell him where you all are."

Being well provided with cigars, Reporter Hennessy did not quit the veranda after he had once taken his seat there. So it happened that he noted the arrival of M. Lemaire, alone in a runabout, just about an hour after the time when Mlle. Nadiboff had returned.

Jack Benson, however, did not put in an appearance.

The submarine torpedo boat, with its naval party aboard, sailed out of the harbor, returning just before dark.

Then, as soon as could be, Messrs. Farnum and Pollard and Hal and Eph came ashore, heading straight for the hotel.

"Your young captain hasn't succeeded in walking the two miles' distance to this hotel," announced Mr. Hennessy, who was waiting for them.

"Confound it, I don't like the looks of this," muttered Farnum, uneasily. "It looks as though something had been done to Benson."

"Will you notify the police?" questioned the reporter.

"I don't believe that would be wise. At any rate, not quite yet," interposed Hal.

"Then what would you do?" demanded Mr. Farnum, turning upon the young engineer.

"If Jack has come to any misadventure through that pair of spies," uttered Hal, anxiously, "it seems to me it will be a heap more promising if we keep a sharp, unseen watch over every move made by M. Lemaire and Mlle. Nadiboff."

"Right-o, every time!" clicked Eph. "If anything has happened to good old Jack through that pair, then they're the only ones to be watched!"

Dinner, that evening, wasn't as confident a meal for the submarine party as luncheon had been. Both Mlle. Nadiboff and the Frenchman were in the dining room, though they did not sit together.

Later, the young Russian woman appeared in the ballroom. She was as eagerly sought as a partner as she had been the night before.

Farnum and his friends did not enter the ballroom, not having brought evening dress ashore with them.

Yet, some of the time, they remained near the entrance to the ballroom. It was here that M. Lemaire, in evening clothes, saw them and bowed most amiably.

"You do not care for the gaiety of the dance?" he inquired.

"No," replied Jacob Farnum, evasively. "We are looking for Captain Benson, and thought it just possible he had entered the ballroom."

"Did he not tell you, this afternoon, whether he would be at the dance?" Lemaire inquired, in a tone of polite curiosity only.

"We didn't see him this afternoon," replied Mr. Farnum, rather curtly.

"You astonish me," cried the Frenchman.

"In fact we have not seen Captain Benson since we left him on an automobile ride this morning."

"Ah! I had not heard of that," murmured the Frenchman. "I trust nothing is wrong with the gallant young fellow."

"Oh, that's hardly likely," drawled Jacob Farnum, with an effort. "Captain Jack Benson a lad with a pretty good idea of how to take care of himself."

While speaking Farnum did not look particularly at the Frenchman, but trusted to the boys to watch the man's face covertly. M. Lemaire, however, proved to be a good actor and a master of facial expression.

As soon as he could, without attracting attention, Jacob Farnum drew his little force to one side.

"Something serious has happened to Jack," muttered the shipbuilder, moodily. "It may have been an accident, but I believe it's ten times more likely that that infernal gang of spies have trapped the lad and brought harm to him. We've got to act, and act fast!"

CHAPTER XII

IN THE POWER OF THE SPIES

Something had, indeed, "happened" to Jack Benson, and much more was likely to happen.

The young submarine captain lay on a pile of dried grass that had been thrown on a board floor. His hands were still manacled. Worse, one of his feet now had an ankle-ring fastened securely, and this was chained to a stout staple driven in the floor.

It was a curious place in which young Benson lay, a place with a strange history.

Years before a tunnel had been bored into the side of a hill. After the tunnel had been lined with a masonry of stone it was not more than three feet in diameter. This tunnel led into an artificial cave some eighteen feet square and nine feet high. This cave had been shored up and boarded as to ceiling, floor and walls.

A great deal of labor had been expended in building this curious place under a low hill. Yet the original builders had figured that their time so spent would yield large returns. This part of the Florida coast lay conveniently near to Cuba. On moonless nights a small sailing craft would put in along the coast, laden with smuggled Havana cigars. There being no safe place along the shore in which to store the cigars, this place, hidden well in a forest, had been constructed as a safe depository. For some time the cigar smugglers had prospered. Then, as was to have been expected, Uncle Sam's sharp eyed customs men ran the illegal business down, arresting the smugglers, all of whom were subsequently imprisoned.

For a while afterwards this cave had been visited by the curious. All this smuggling, however, was now a thing of many years past, and curiosity-seekers had come to leave the place alone.

M. Lemaire, however, in studying the surrounding country, had heard of the artificial cave. He visited it. At need, he saw that it would suit his purposes. And now Jack Benson lay there, having been brought hither in Mlle. Nadiboff's automobile.

The young submarine captain was now not gagged. He had yelled for help perhaps two hundred times in the long hours since his enemies had left him there. Yet there had been no response. Benson was now willing to believe that there was now no likelihood whatever of his being able to summon help.

Unable to consult his watch, and lying there in complete darkness, the submarine boy had lost track of time. It was now nearly two in the morning. He had not eaten since early the morning before. He was famished, and, what was much worse, was parched for want of a drink of water.

"I wonder if they intend to leave me here to die?" thought Jack Benson, for perhaps the five-hundredth time. "It would be fiendish. Yet looking for mercy in Lemaire would be like looking for a lake of pure water in the Sahara."

Jack shifted, as much as the chain at ankle would permit. He groaned with the discomfort of it all.

As if in answer there came another groan, low, hollow, yet unmistakable. Captain Jack raised himself on one elbow, listening keenly. The groan was repeated.

"Who's there?" he called.

By way of answer there came still another groan. It was hollow, gruesome, and suggested the grave itself. But Jack Benson was a healthy, intelligent boy, with sound digestion and well tuned nerves.

"If you're trying to work any ghostly trick on me," called Benson, derisively, "try something else!"

Again the groan, a bit louder, but Jack's answer was a merry, ringing laugh, in which there, was not a trace of dread.

"Thank you for the company, Mr. Groan," he called cheerily. "I was beginning to feel a bit lonely. But say! Can't you bring a light—even a ghostly one?"

"I am the spirit of Paul Jones," breathed a low, wailing voice.

"Oh nonsense!" jeered Jack. "Paul Jones never spoke with a cheap French accent."

"I come to—to warn—you," sounded the same sepulchral accents.

"Bring the warning right in and let's have look at it," begged Jack, heartily. Some convulsive sobs sounded out by the passageway.

"Oh, say," chuckled Jack, "as a vender of blood curdling noises you're in need of repairs. Listen! I'll sound a much better line for you!"

With that, and in a deep, blood curdling voice, Captain Benson started in on the first verse of "Down among the dead men."

He was interrupted then by a more tangible sound. Beyond, a match was scratched. Then a lantern was thrust in from the low tunnel, followed by the appearance of the rather long body of Gaston, the chauffeur.

"I thought my singing would bring something," chuckled Jack. "In a large town it always brings the police. Well, how are you? I'm really glad to see anything human, and I suppose you'll answer to that description, eh?"

In silence the chauffeur stepped forward resting the lighted lantern on the floor a few, feet from the boy. Then the Frenchman seated himself on the boards, next bringing out a paper package from one of his pockets. As he untied the string Jack watched with lively interest.

"Sandwiches, eh?" chuckled Jack. "Thank you. I'm ready."

"This is my supper," answered Gaston, taking a bite of one of the sandwiches. "You don't get any."

"Oh, I don't?" demanded Captain Jack, feeling the pangs of hunger worse than ever.

Gaston's next move was to take a bottle from another pocket, uncorking it.

"As you're a Frenchman, I suppose that's wine," muttered Jack. "I don't use that kind of stuff, but water—"

"This is water," replied the Frenchman, pouring a few drops onto the floor before the submarine boy's eyes.

Jack's throat ached at sight of the water. "I suppose you've come here to eat and drink, in order to torment me?" asked Captain Benson.

"It must give you huge pleasure to watch me," suggested Gaston, taking a swallow from the bottle.

"About the only pleasure I could get from watching you," retorted the boy ironically, "would be if I could see you swinging from the end of a rope that was tied in a tight noose around your neck!"

"Perhaps that will happen to you—yet," hinted Gaston, looking keenly at the boy.

"Humph!" muttered Jack. "How would that help your rascally crowd?"

It was plain that the chauffeur didn't really want to eat or drink, but that he had been tormenting the captive. Now Gaston carefully placed the sandwiches and the bottle of water where young Benson couldn't possibly reach them.

"You've been having too pleasant a time here," glared the Frenchman, bending over the boy. "You haven't yet suffered enough to be ready for the plans that we have for you."

With that the chauffeur threw himself a-top of the boy, striking him a blow in the face.

"You lean, long-legged coward!" sneered Jack, angrily. "You know about how much punk you'd have if I had my hands and legs free, and stood before you on even terms. How you'd beg, you wretched craven!"

For answer the chauffeur clutched with both hands at Jack's hair, giving a hard pull. Jack gritted his teeth, panting, until at last the torment forced him to utter a pain-wrung "ouch!"

"Perhaps you will soon learn better than to insult me," leered Gaston.

"You wretched dog," shot back the submarine boy, "you're past insult by any decent man!"

"Careful," warned the Frenchman, "or I will soon make you shriek your apologies to me. I can do what I please with you, and sometimes I have an ugly temper. But listen. I come for one purpose only—to find out what answer am to take to my master, M. Lemaire."

"Take him," retorted Jack, dryly, "the assurance of my undying contempt for him and all of his kind."

"You will be left here another twenty-four hours, without food or drink, if you do not give me a better answer to take," warned Gaston, leering down savagely into the boy's face. "Now, consider! Will you send word that you will be glad to see M. Lemaire in the morning?"

"Yes; if he's going to be in state prison," mocked Benson, "and locked in a cell, as he should be."

"Will you see him here?"

"I can't help myself."

"If M. Lemaire comes, will you be sensible? Will you tell him all that he wants to know about your boat and your work?"

"Not if I'm in my right mind!"

"If you continue stubborn, Captain Benson, you will die here, of thirst and hunger."

"Perhaps," admitted Jack, more soberly. "But it will be a full-size man's death, won't it?"

"Oh, you think, then, that you are not afraid to die of thirst and hunger?"

"Since others have done it," retorted Jack, "I suppose I can, if I have to."

"If you have to?" rasped the Frenchman.

"Do you doubt, then, that we would bring such a fate upon you?"

"I don't believe there's anything too low and cowardly for your crowd to stoop to it," admitted Jack Benson, with spirit.

"Have a care, young man!"

"You asked me a question," growled back young Benson, "and I answered you. If it doesn't suit you, don't ask any more questions."

Gaston regarded the boy with a still more sinister look.

"I think, Captain," continued the chauffeur, "that a little pain—will have a good effect in disciplining you."

Jack Benson did not reply.

"Come, now! Let us see if any of your hair will stay in your scalp?" proposed the Frenchman. "Yet, first of all, boy, have you anything to say that will stop me?"

"If I had, I'd say it," muttered the submarine boy, ruefully.

"Then you might give me that message I asked for."

"Is that all that will stop you?" demanded Jack.

"Yes. All."

"Then go ahead with whatever you have in mind," retorted Jack. "As long as my sane mind stays by me I shall never betray the Pollard secrets to any other government!"

"Let us see, then!"

Once more Gaston fastened the long, sinewy fingers of each hand in the submarine boy's hair. He began to tug, gently at first, but gradually increasing the force of the yank.

Jack Benson stood it as long as he could, then at last let out a yell that was dragged from the depths of agony.

"I'm in time, it seems! Stop that! Now, turn and fight like a man—you contemptible hound!"

It was Hal Hastings's voice that rang through the little cave. Hal had just crawled in through the tunnel. Now, the young engineer, his frame shaking with indignation, stood up at nearly his full length, prepared to spring upon Gaston, who, also, had leaped to his feet.

"I thought it would be worth while to watch and shadow you to-night," jeered Hal, angrily. "It turns out I was right. The bushes planted before the mouth of the tunnel bothered me, a while, in finding the way in here after you—*but now I'm here!*"

Of a sudden Hal leaped forward, intent upon pouncing on the chauffeur. But Hal's foot caught in a break in the flooring. He pitched and fell forward.

With a snarl of glee Gaston burlled himself upon the prostrate body of the second submarine boy, pounding him furiously.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FELLOW WHO SHOWED THE WHITE FLAG

Hal lay face down, and subjected to all the brutal fury of the Frenchman's assault.

For a few seconds young Hastings did all in his power to fight back. He was rapidly losing consciousness, however, and poor Jack lay unable to lend as much as a finger's weight to the defense of his chum.

Then, with an oath in a foreign tongue, Gaston forced Hal's hands back, snapping handcuffs on the

engineer's wrists.

"Now, then, you young pest!" snarled Gaston, springing to his feet. "Instead of one of you, I have two. But two shall give me no more trouble than one. So you thought you could subdue me—*me*, did you?"

"I'd have thrashed you all right," muttered Hal, his senses returning under the storm of taunts, "if my foot hadn't caught and thrown me. You wouldn't dare to free my hands and let me to my feet, just to see what would happen to you! You can't fight—unless all the advantage is handed to you. You're a coward—not a fighter!"

"Careful, my young firebrand, or I'll teach you to be more polite to me," sneered the Frenchman.

"Polite to you?" jeered Hal. "Polite to a spy—to a thief of nations! Polite to a scoundrel who wants to steal the biggest secret of defense that the United States Navy has!"

"Oh, we'll have your secret all right," announced the Frenchman, his voice harsh with triumph. "We now have the two boys who know all about the secrets of the Pollard boats!"

"This sounds so good, I reckon we'd better go right on in, Jerry," broke in another voice.

Gaston started, as did the two submarine boys. Then the chauffeur leaped to the mouth of the tunnel, only to draw back in dismay as a big form emerged and loomed up before his startled vision.

The last comer wore the dress and insignia of a petty officer of the United States Navy.

"Get back there!" warned this big apparition, waving a warning hand that looked big enough to be a ham. "Nobody can't go out until we look into this cargo."

After the big sailor a smaller one crawled out of the tunnel, rising to his feet. Though he was smaller, this second sailor was not exactly what could have been called a little man.

"Now, then," demanded the big sailor, "whose captain of this craft?"

Gaston, his eyes threatening to bulge from his head, had fallen back against the wall opposite. His mouth was wide open, but he ventured no answer.

"Stow my sidelights, Jerry," muttered the big sailor to his mate, "but this is a queer looking hold! And two young men here who'd look like officers of the service, if they wasn't so young."

"There never was anybody more delighted to you," broke fervently from Jack Benson's. "You belong to the 'Waverly'?"

"Aye, aye, shipmate."

"Then you know the submarine, of course?"

"Aye, shipmate."

"I am the captain, and my friend the engineer, of that craft."

The big sailor's reply was an explosive yell.

"Don't let that snake-in-the-grass Frenchman get away, mates," begged Jack, earnestly.

"Jerry, I reckon you can hold the only gang way that opens in on this place, can't ye?" demanded the big sailor, turning to his sturdy looking shipmate.

"I reckon, Hickey," said the other.

"This Frenchman is one of a gang of foreign spies, who have taken this means to force us to furnish plans, drawings and all information about the Pollard submarine boats," Jack continued. "You see how he has us ironed down here."

"Got the keys to them irons, Frenchy?" demanded the big sailor, turning upon Gaston.

"Yes," shivered the fellow, looking yellow with fright.

"Then turn our shipmates loose. Not too much delay about it, either," ordered Hickey.

Gaston obeyed as meekly as a lamb. There was a look in Hickey's steady eyes which would lead one

to suppose that the big sailor might be able to use his strength in tearing a worthless human being apart.

"I hope you can understand all the thanks I feel like giving," remarked the young submarine captain, as he rose to his feet, then offered his hand to the big sailor.

"Oh, stow the thanks, anyway," laughed Hickey. "But Jerry and me ain't in for what we thought might be coming to us."

"What was that?" asked Jack, with interest, turning back as he held out his hand to Jerry.

"Why, ye see," nodded Hickey, after glancing down at the Frenchman, who was now unlocking Hal's handcuffs, "I've got a home, a little plantation about two miles back here, that I'm going to settle on for good one of these days. The wife and kids live there. I'd been telling Jerry about the craft and crew, and, as soon as we got shore leave, I took Jerry in tow. We've seen up there two days, and to-night we started back through the woods, 'cause our leave is up at six in the morning.

"Well, while we was coming through the woods we happened to stop a minute. Then we see this Frenchy sneaking through the woods. We wondered what was up. Then he vanished. We looked about, some quiet-like, and on tiptoe, and then we saw this shipmate o' your'n pry apart some bushes and head in this way. It looked queer to us."

"What did you think was up?" asked Jack.

"Why, as near as we could figger, this was some smuggler's hidin' place, and we was figgerin' that perhaps Jerry and me would have five 'hundred or a thousand dollars' reward to divvy up on. It wa'n't—but, anyway, Jerry an' me are proper glad we stumbled in on this, just the same. Now, mate, spin yer own yarn."

Hal was on his feet, by this time, and shaking hands with the two rescuers. Gaston, at the furthest end of the little room, again cowered against the wall, frightened and surly.

Jack Benson told as much of the story as he thought wise, though he felt it best to leave out the names of M. Lemaire and Mlle. Nadiboff.

Next Hal described how, at the hotel, he had set himself to watching Gaston; how he had shadowed the fellow.

"Did he come out here in an auto?" asked Jack.

"No; if he had, I couldn't have followed," Hal responded. "But this place is barely four miles from the hotel. We can get back in an hour."

"What ye goin' to do with this feller, anyway?" demanded Hickey, jerking a thumb in the direction of the frightened Gaston.

"Turn him over to the police," spoke Jack, promptly. "Even if we fail to prove anything else Hal can help me fasten a charge of felonious assault on the scoundrel. That will be enough to keep him locked up for a couple of years to come."

Gaston heard this with a falling jaw, though he did not venture to say anything.

"Well, Jerry and me are ready whenever you are, mates," hinted big Hickey.

Jack nodded, and they filed out, Jerry coming last of all to make sure that the Frenchman did not lag behind.

"Now, stand up, me bucko," ordered Hickey, seizing the chauffeur's collar as that worthy crawled through the bushes at the outer end of the tunnel. "Tryin' to steal submarine secrets, was ye? So some foreign nation'd have the trick of blowing our battleships to pieces, and the sailors on 'em? Jerry, wot d'ye reckon 'ud be about right for Frenchy!"

"Pass him over to me and I'll see," grinned the smaller sailor.

Hickey grasped the frightened chauffeur in both hands, then fairly hurled him at the smaller sailor. Jerry struck him once, with each lively fist, then sent the fellow spinning back to Hickey. The latter caught Gaston, tossing him up in the air, then striking him hard as the fellow came down. This done, the chauffeur was again hurled back at Jerry. For some time the two sailors kept this up. It was rough, heavy punishment. Gaston bellowed like a sick bull under all the strenuous handling. He must have

ached in every bone in his body when Hickey finally caught him, on a rebound, and held him off at arm's length.

"Had about enough, Frenchy?" demanded the big sailor.

"Oh, mercy, monsieur!" panted the fellow wailingly. "I have had much plenty to last me all my life."

"I wish I knew whether ye was lyin'," muttered Hickey, thoughtfully.
"I don't feel a bit tired, yet. Do you, Jerry?"

"Me? The exercise has warmed me up fine," grinned the smaller sailor.

"Mercy, messieurs, mercy!" wailed Gaston, sinking down to his shaking knees, for he feared that these grim tormentors meant to kill him.

"I'd just as soon you'd let up on the scoundrel, if you don't mind, mates," broke in Jack. "You see what a cur he is when he isn't having it all his own way. I told him, back in the cave, that he'd be just this sort of a fellow if the tables happened to be turned."

"Did ye say ye was going to turn him over to the officers?" asked Hickey.

"Yes," spoke Jack Benson, decisively. "A fellow plying the trade of this one needs to be locked up as long as possible."

"Oh, no, no, no, my brave Captain!" implored Gaston, wobbling around upon his knees so as to face the submarine boy. "Not the jail! Not the prison! Me! I have always been as free as the birds of the air. I would die in prison."

"I can't see where much loss will come in if you do," retorted Jack, coldly. "Hal, you brought the handcuffs out with you?"

He held up both pairs.

"No, no, no!" pleaded Gaston, almost tearfully. "Not such disgrace as that!"

"Let me have a pair of the bracelets," requested Hickey, holding out one of his hands. "Now, my tine bird, let me clip yer wings."

Gaston submitted meekly enough, then was dragged to his feet.

While Hal had brought out the lantern and the handcuffs, famished, thirst-tormented Jack Benson had looked after the water bottle and the sandwiches. Now, as all hands trudged along toward the beach the young skipper ate and drank to his full content.

Arrived in town, they roused a cottager. From him they learned where to find the police station. Gaston was thrown into a cell, and Jack entered formal complaint against the fellow.

Jacob Farnum still awake, was found at the hotel. When Hickey and Jerry returned aboard the gunboat neither felt so sorry about not having located a smuggler's camp in full operation. Jacob Farnum had taken the sailor pair apart, presenting each with a hundred-dollar bill.

CHAPTER XIV

A REMEMBRANCE FROM SHORE

It was a drowsy looking submarine party that retired to a room in the hotel to talk over the situation.

"Now, of course, first of all," declared Jacob Farnum, "we must take word of this whole affair to the commanding officer of the gunboat. As the representative, here, of the United States Government, he can give us some advice as to what to do. I am wondering whether M. Lemaire and Mlle. Nadiboff can be arrested."

"Hal," demanded Jack, turning to his chum, "when you were prowling about at the cave, did you hear

Gaston mention the name of M. Lemaire?"

"No," replied Hastings, shaking his head.

"Then there wouldn't be any witness to confirm my testimony," sighed Captain Benson. "Without such a witness to aid me, I don't see how we could expect to prove anything legally against M. Lemaire."

"As for that pretty young Russian woman—" began Mr. Farnum.

"We haven't a single line of proof we could put out against her," interposed Benson. "She will have to escape, I am afraid. For that matter, I'd hate to help in the prosecution of a woman."

"So would I," retorted Mr Farnum. "Yet, if she is helping to undermine the secrets of the United States Government, something will have to be done to stop her."

"Perhaps," hinted Jack, "the best thing to do will be to see the commander of the gunboat."

"Much the better course," observed David Pollard, who, during the last few moments had seemed dreamily silent. "As you yourself suggested, Farnum, that officer should be consulted before a single step is taken in the matter."

"Then we'll all go down to the shore," decided the shipbuilder. "Even at this hour we shall find a boat."

Ten minutes later the party had clambered up on the platform deck of the "Benson." Williamson, having been left to sleep there alone through the night, had secured the entrance to the conning tower. A few sound thumps on the deck, however, roused that machinist, who, donning slippers and trousers, quickly ran up the spiral stairway, admitting them.

"I'm mighty thankful to see you back, Captain," was the machinist's greeting.

There being still nearly two hours of time to elapse before a call could well be made aboard the gunboat, Jack and Hal threw themselves into the berths of one of the staterooms. That brief, sound nap proved the saving of them when, finally, with Messrs. Farnum and Pollard, they went on board the "Waverly."

Lieutenant Commander Kimball received them in his own cabin, hearing Jack's story with utter amazement.

"What I advise you to do, gentlemen, is to go ahead and prosecute the fellow Gaston on the charge of felonious assault. I would, however, try to avoid having any testimony brought out in court to-day. I will send one of my officers to see the public prosecutor, and ask that official to have the case continued for one week. I will also wire the Navy Department at Washington, and await the reply of the Secretary before taking any other steps or offering you any other advice. But do not needlessly alarm Lemaire or the young woman away from here."

So well did the lieutenant commander accomplish his purpose that, when Jack and Hal went to the local court that forenoon, the public prosecutor promptly asked to have the case against the chauffeur continued for one week, and the court as promptly assented.

Gaston was taken back to jail. Though the fellow was well supplied with money, he did not have anywhere near enough to put up the five thousand dollars cash bail demanded by Florida justice.

At the jail a watch was kept to see whether Gaston would have visitors, but none came. M. Lemaire and Mlle. Nadiboff were known to be still at the hotel, but they did not go near their man in trouble. Neither did Lemaire or the Russian appear about the grounds of the hotel.

At noon a letter from Lieutenant Commander Kimball came aboard the submarine, inquiring whether Captain Benson could make it convenient to take him and several officers out to sea afternoon and give an exhibition of the boat's diving powers.

"After we've taken the boat out ourselves, and tested her," was the answer Captain Jack sent back. "With so many spies about we want to be sure that the boat is in safe running order before we risk the lives of half a dozen naval officers."

A luncheon was eaten, after which, the young submarine captain hastily climbed the stairs to the conning tower.

"Throw on the gasoline, Hal," he called back over his shoulder. "And, as soon as we get way, test all the electric connections, before we attempt to do any diving. Be sure of everything old fellow."

Forward in the engine room the gas motors were soon moving merrily. By the time that Eph had cast loose from moorings Jack signaled for slow speed ahead, and the grim-looking little Benson moved on out of the harbor.

Once out of the harbor Captain Jack rang, successively, for two higher speeds. The "Benson" answered both like a charm.

"The gasoline part of the craft is working all right," declared the youthful skipper to Eph, who had come up into the tower.

Fifteen minutes later Hal shouted up:

"All electric connections appear safe, Captain. And all the air compressors are working."

"Are you ready to shut off the gasoline motors?"

"Yes, sir."

"Go ahead, then, and we'll take a dive." Down they shot below the surface, the boat going on a diving keel. Then, for some minutes, Captain Jack ran his submarine pride along at a depth of fifty feet below surface.

"Might as well rise, Captain," called up Mr. Farnum, coming from his stateroom.

So Eph, at the young commander's orders, stood by to let the compressed air gradually into the water tanks. As gracefully as ever the "Benson" rose to the surface. Gasoline power was turned on again.

"Everything is all safe, Captain," nodded Mr. Farnum. "Run back and get your naval party."

As they were to run, now, on the surface, Jack stepped out to stand by the deck wheel Eph and Hal came out with him, David Pollard standing further aft.

As the submarine rounded in under the gunboat's stern the voice of Kimball called:

"As well done as ever, Mr. Benson! When shall we come on board?"

"As soon as we're moored, sir," Jack shouted

As the "Benson" ran to her moorings the youthful captain espied a shore boat that bore, as sole passenger, one of the uniformed, colored bell boys from the hotel.

When Eph made the mooring cable fast, this shore boat ranged alongside.

"Box for Captain Benson, sah," called the negro.

"Right here," acknowledged Jack, going over to the rail. The box proved to be of pasteboard.

"Are you going to open it?" whispered Farnum.

"Why, yes, sir; of course," Jack answered.

"Better do it on deck, then," came the dry answer. "It might contain something explosive, you know."

Though he laughed, young Benson carefully untied the string that held the lid on, also carefully removing the latter. Inside he discovered a handsome bouquet of roses, with a card attached.

"Well, of all the assurance in the world?" gasped Jack Benson.

"What's the matter!" queried Farnum.

"Read what's written on this card, sir."

The inscription ran:

"Mlle. Sara Nadiboff is delighted at learning that Captain Jack Benson has returned in safety from his long walk."

"Any answer, sah?" demanded the darkey in the boat.

"None, thank you," replied Captain Jack, in an even tone.

The boat continued on its way to the shore.

"Say, what do you think of that?" demanded Eph, after he, too, had taken a look at the card tied to the flowers.

"It is plain enough that our charming young Russian doesn't mean to drop Captain Benson's acquaintance just yet, if she can help it," laughed the shipbuilder.

"What are you going to do with the flowers, old man?" asked Hal.

"Flowers should be put in water, to make them keep, shouldn't they" queried the young submarine skipper, innocently.

"Yep," nodded Eph Somers.

"I hope these will keep fresh a long time, then," murmured Benson.

Raising the bouquet he dropped it overboard the harbor—on the side of the boat away from the hotel.

CHAPTER XV

CAPTAIN JACK BECOMES SUSPICIOUS

So successful and enjoyable a trip did the naval officers have that, as the "Benson" was gliding back to the harbor, Lieutenant Commander Kimball broached a subject that had begun to interest the society people among the winter visitors to Spruce Beach.

"Mr. Farnum," inquired the naval officer, "I have a favor to ask of you."

"You know in advance, Mr. Kimball, that it is granted."

"I hope it is, if it's a wise favor to ask," smiled the naval officer. "In brief, the idea is this: Naturally people in this neighborhood are all agog over this submarine craft. Some of the more daring of the ladies have besought me to arrange for a few of them to have a trip on board, even to running beneath the surface. Will you do that, for a party of our friends, to-morrow afternoon?"

"We've been a good deal beset by spies lately as you have means of knowing," replied Mr. Farnum, slowly. "You'll guarantee all of the guests, of course."

"As a naval officer I wouldn't bring anyone aboard here whom I doubted," replied the lieutenant commander, flushing.

"I didn't mean to be offensive, Mr. Kimball. But I have as great a reason as Uncle Sam can have for wanting to preserve the secrets of this boat from all but sworn officers and men of the Navy. You and I are one in that desire, Mr. Kimball, so we'll gladly take out any party, ladies included, that you bring on board."

"Thank you," answered Kimball. "And I can assure you that I shall be very careful in making up my party. Oh, but won't there be fluttering hearts at Spruce Beach tonight And I'm more than half afraid that I shall make an enemy of every lady of my acquaintance whom I have to leave out of the affair. How many, guests can you take, Mr. Farnum?"

"Not above fourteen, all told," replied the shipbuilder.

"Then I shall go ashore myself this evening, to deliver my invitations."

The shipbuilder also went ashore that evening, just to see whether he could learn anything about M. Lemaire and Mlle. Nadiboff. Almost the first person Farnum encountered was reporter Hennessy.

"Oh, your people are still here," answered Hennessy, in response to the shipbuilder's question. "They're both keeping in the background, though. It looks as though they feared to run away, and were waiting to see whether the lightning were going to strike them. Now, that I've told you so much, Mr. Farnum, can't you give me a little more of the inside of this whole strange business?"

"If I did," smiled the shipbuilder, "you'd send it to your paper."

"Of course," admitted the reporter, honestly.

"I'll tell you the best I can do, Hennessy. You keep your eyes and ears open for us, and I'll give you this news story before I give it to any other newspaper man."

"You surely will?" demanded the newspaper eagerly.

"I will."

"Then I'm here to help you"

As the lieutenant commander had predicted, the ladies at the hotels were in a flutter of excitement that evening. Every one who heard of the projected trip on the submarine boat, it seemed, wanted to be invited. By the time that Mr. Kimball's list was made up it consisted of three men and nine women, these in addition to the lieutenant commander himself and Mr Featherstone.

As Jack paced the far end of the veranda that evening a girlish figure, only poorly concealed under a light wrap, stole after him. As the young woman reached him she threw back a light veil, revealing the very pretty face of Mlle. Nadiboff.

"So, my Captain," she cried, "you would forget me when you are getting up a party to take a cruise on your wonderful craft?"

If young Benson felt anything as he looked, he was staggered by this amazing bit of effrontery.

"You do not answer me," cried Mlle. Nadiboff. "You feel guilty indeed, then?"

"Perhaps 'astonished' would be the more accurate word," Jack replied, smiling now.

"My Captain, you were very pleasant with me, the first evening that we met."

"That was before," nodded Captain Benson, still smiling. He stood cap in hand, his whole bearing respectful, for he did not intend to be discourteous even to this known adventuress. He would grant her at least the courtesy due her sex.

"Before what?" she asked.

"Well, er—before that automobile ride the day."

"And why should that change your attitude toward me, my Captain?" asked the young Russian. Her tone was coaxing, almost cooing; her eyes extremely moist, as though the tears would spring forth in another instant.

"Why, you see, Mademoiselle," laughed Jack, coolly, "the finish of that automobile ride was just a trifle too exciting for me. I have plenty of the strenuous side of life out at sea. When on shore my tastes are all for the quiet, peaceful life."

"But surely you do not reproach me with having made the automobile ride unpleasant?"

"Only that, as I remember it, you dropped some dust—or something—into my eyes, and right after that two men took me away in your car—and then things happened to me."

"Why, that was all a joke," protested the handsome young woman, gazing keenly into his eyes.

"Then I'll laugh now—ha! ha! But seriously, Mademoiselle, I haven't a sense of humor that will appreciate carrying a joke quite as far as that one was carried."

"It was all a joke," Mlle Nadiboff insisted. "At least, M. Lemaire so assured me. What ever you may have thought, my Captain, I beg you will not believe that I had any notion of helping to cause you real discomfort."

Her tone was so sincere in its ring, her eyes looked so honestly and appealingly into the boy's that Jack, for an instant, had to wonder whether he were dreaming.

"My Captain," continued the Russian girl, in a voice that trembled softly, "I see, now, that I have been fearfully—cruelly—misunderstood by you. That is more than I can bear. Come, let us take a little walk together in the grounds. I want you to tell me just what part you thought I had in some affair against you. I insist; it is my right to know this. Your arm, my Captain!"

As she spoke, Mlle. Nadiboff slipped her soft little right hand inside of Captain Jack's arm.

Captain Jack took hold of that hand to disengage it. But Mlle. Nadiboff merely held the tighter, while the boy was conscious that she was gazing up at him appealingly.

"I don't wish to be rude, Mademoiselle; don't, force me to be," the submarine boy urged. "Will you kindly release my arm?"

Then, with a subdued though angry exclamation, the girl obeyed.

"You will not even hear me?" she cried, stamping one foot lightly against the veranda boards, while now her eyes brimmed with tears.

"By jove, but she's a bully actor," thought Benson, with a sort of admiration.

"I am sorry, Mademoiselle," he replied, "But I am wanted now. I am forced to say 'good evening.'"

With a bow he turned and left her, replacing his cap as he strode away.

"Oh, that fool, that unnatural young man!" she cried, angrily, to herself. "He prefers what he calls 'duty' to the friendly glance of a pretty eye. Bah! Perhaps he is laughing at me at this moment. If he is, he is laughing much too soon, for I shall teach him a lesson or two. You are not yet beyond my reach, my brave young Captain!"

The veil that Mlle. Nadiboff carefully wound so that two folds fell across her face concealed a hard, sneering, almost barbaric look that had crept quickly into that handsome young face.

But Jack joined his own party at once. Through the rest of the evening he did not encounter either the young woman or M. Lemaire. The latter, in fact, had made himself practically invisible of late.

The next afternoon, early, a launch from the gunboat brought off the pleasure party that was to make the trip on the submarine boat.

Mr. Farnum and David Pollard were ashore at this time. Captain Jack and Eph Somers stood on the platform deck to receive and welcome the party.

The first young woman to whom Benson extended his hand to help her aboard held up a camera for him to take first of all.

"Thank you," responded the young skipper, gravely. "We will send this camera to the engine room. It will be returned to you at the end of the trip."

As he spoke, he slipped the camera box back to Eph, who started for the conning tower with it.

"But I wish to take some photographs with it," cried the young woman, indignantly. "Especially, a flashlight when we are below the surface of the ocean."

"I am most sorry, madam," Captain Jack replied, politely, "but it is wholly out of the question for any photographs to be made aboard the boat."

"No cameras! No photographs?" cried two other young women, in something like consternation. Then one of them added:

"But we want two or three photos as souvenirs—Mr. Kimball, we appeal to you."

"I am wholly powerless in the matter," replied the lieutenant commander, gravely. "Mr. Benson commands aboard this boat, and enforces the rules. I may add, however, that am wholly in sympathy with his decision. You will understand, ladies, that there are many secrets in the handling of a submarine craft like this, It would be absolutely out of the question to allow anyone to carry away photographs of the interior or the working parts of the 'Benson.'"

With that, two more cameras were passed up. Eph as quickly handed them through the conning tower to Hal, who took them down to the engine room.

Then Jack helped his visitors aboard, while Eph slipped forward to let go the moorings at the order.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," announced Captain Jack, "I think there will be room for all on deck. If it pleases you, therefore, I propose that all remain on the platform deck while we make our run out to sea. Then, when it comes time to dive and run under the surface, we can go below."

This plan appeared to suit nearly everyone.

"But I believe I'll go below, now," proposed one tall, blond, strongly built young woman who looked

somewhat Swedish. "I am afraid of too much chill air on the sea."

"Then, if it please the rest, we will all go below," Jack answered amiably.

There was instantly a chorus of dissent. The tall, blond young woman had already made her way to the conning tower, accompanied by a young man of English appearance. But Eph unconcernedly barred their way.

"Step aside, if you please, young man," urged the Englishman. "The lady wishes to go below."

"Captain's permission necessary, sir," replied Somers, quietly.

"You see, ladies and gentlemen," Jack explained, "it won't be quite possible to let visitors roam at will over the boat. It would be against my instructions from the owner. Either all must remain on deck, or all must go below."

As he spoke the young skipper thought he saw a swift look pass between the young Swedish woman and her English escort.

"Oh, well," replied the young woman, shrugging her shoulders, "I do not intend to be disagreeable. If the others wish to remain on deck, I will do so, too."

"Very good, Miss Peddensen," murmured the young Englishman.

Jack Benson took his place at the deck wheel, and Eph, after Hal had come to the conning tower opening, hurried forward once more to cast off the moorings. Then speed was called for, and the "Benson" made a graceful sight as she swept out of the little harbor with such a brilliant, interested company aboard.

The submarine continued until she was three miles out at sea.

"Now, if it pleases the company," Captain Jack called out, "we will go below and dive. Then you, will know what it feels like to be running under the surface."

From the ladies came a few little gasps of excitement. Some of them, now that the moment had come, almost wished they had remained ashore.

"No one need be afraid," smiled Jack. "This boat has been thoroughly tested. We shall go below the surface, true, but we shall come up again the instant that the proper devices are applied to our machinery. Let no one be afraid. There is not even a particle of danger."

"Not a particle," repeated Lieutenant Commander Kimball. "This is an even safer sport than automobiling."

"Let the Navy officers go below first, please," urged Jack, as the ladies began to crowd about the conning tower. He wanted this done in, order that both Mr. Kimball and Mr. Featherstone might be able to use their eyes on the guests below.

At last all had passed down the iron staircase save Eph, who remained by the wheel in the conning tower.

"Pass directly aft, everybody, please," called Jack, quietly.

"What's that for?" asked Miss Peddensen.

"We cannot allow anyone except naval officers to see how our diving apparatus is worked", replied Jack. "Some of you step into the staterooms, on either side, please. All of the visitors must be aft of this curtain."

The extreme after end of the cabin had been rigged with a heavy curtain that could be dropped into place.

"Why, I feel as if we were all being penned up here and held for the slaughter," gasped one American girl, in a tone of fright.

"Yes, indeed!" protested Miss Peddensen. "This is going too far."

"It strikes me as being a good deal like an outrage," blurted the young Englishman. "Mr. Kimball, can't you—won't you interfere in this matter?"

"I am very sorry," replied the lieutenant commander, "but I cannot. This step is necessary, in order to

prevent anyone from having an improper view of the working of the craft. I am going behind the curtain with you. Mr. Featherstone will remain out in the cabin to aid in the handling of the boat. You need none of you feel any uneasiness."

Both Miss Peddensen and the Englishman ceased their objections. But Jack, remembering the glance that had passed between the pair on deck, remained behind the curtain, too, as he dropped it.

"Go ahead, Hal!" he called. "Fifty feet under the surface. Dive gently."

"O-o-o-oh!" came in little screams of alarm as the guests felt the floor on which they stood inclining at a sloping angle.

"We're going below the surface now," young Benson informed them. "We'll soon be running on an even keel."

"All below," called Hal Hastings in a few moments.

"And all clear?" asked Jack.

"All clear, Captain."

"Jack Benson threw aside the heavy curtain, come forward, slowly ladies and gentlemen, and take seats," was Jack's invitation. "I am sorry I shall have to ask you all to remain seated, but we cannot have any serious shifting of weight while we are running under the water."

Though Eph was at the tower wheel Hal Hastings was now virtually in command of the boat, by previous arrangement, for young Benson meant to keep a sharp, though covert, eye on passengers.

The young skipper noted, swiftly, that Miss Peddensen had taken the seat furthest aft in the cabin, while the young Englishman was seated at the forward end of the party of guests.

"Oh, I say, Captain Benson," called the Englishman, "are you permitted to show me how you know just how far below the surface you are?"

"The gauge tells that," replied Jack. "But I will ask you to excuse me from describing it, as I wish to keep my mind on the running of the boat. Mr. Hastings will oblige you; or, I don't doubt, one of the naval officers will."

Even this momentary distraction, however, had given Miss Peddensen time to slip something out of one of her wide sleeves into her lap. And now the young Swedish woman sat so that the object taken from her sleeve was concealed behind the woman who sat next to her.

It wasn't many moments ere Jack noted some thing about the young Swedish woman that caused the young skipper to turn, every now and then, for a swift though hidden glance in her direction.

"What on earth is Miss Peddensen doing?" wondered the submarine boy. "Hang it, I believe she's up to something that she ought not to be doing!"

Through he did not turn and walk in her direction, Jack, thereafter, kept the young Swedish woman much more under secret observation.

"By Jove, I know what she's doing, now," muttered the young skipper. "That movement of her elbow betrays her, and her eyes are fixed, much of the time on her lap. If she isn't sketching something, on the sly, then my eyesight isn't as good as it used to be!"

Captain Jack Benson found himself quickly aquiver with suspicion and indignation.

"Yet I can't afford to make any mistakes," he told himself, uneasily. "I've got to be absolutely sure before I can take the risk of starting a human cyclone about my ears!"

CHAPTER XVI

Yet, for a brief interval more, Jack Benson hesitated.

"Is the young woman sketching, or is she merely writing?" he wondered, anxiously. He watched her a little while longer.

"No; she's sketching. Those are drawing strokes she's making."

Then, looking wholly blank, Jack Benson turned on his heel. He looked first at one mechanism, then at another. Yet, presently, stood close to Lieutenant Commander Kimball's ear.

Only a few words were said, but the naval officer understood instantly.

As Captain Jack turned and went back, Kimball also sauntered along, although he did not appear interested in the submarine boy's movements. Yet it was not long when both appeared before the young Swedish woman.

"Miss Peddensen," murmured the lieutenant commander, "may I see what you are writing?"

The woman looked up, her face composed, her eyes dancing with mirth.

"Why, surely, Mr. Kimball," she replied, laughing. "And very silly stuff you'll find it, too. I have been jotting down my impressions upon finding myself riding under the surface of the sea. I do not handle your English language very well, as you will see."

Mr. Kimball glanced hastily through the three or four pages of rather closely written note paper. It was, as the young woman had stated, a very amateurish composition, in very stilted English.

The naval officer felt a sense of mortification and his face reddened slightly. He had been led to expect that he would find something crime on these sheets of paper. Instead, he scanned a stupid piece of composition.

"I would die of humiliation, to have that read before all these people," murmured the young woman.

Lieutenant Commander Kimball gave Jack Benson a covert elbow-dig in the ribs, a move said, as plainly as words:

"The joke is on you."

Jack, however, through half open eyes, had been watching on his own account. Suddenly he made a dive forward, shooting his hands down close to Miss Peddensen's well-booted feet.

"That same old ship-rat!" exclaimed the submarine boy. "I'll catch the beast before he goes under your skirts, Miss Peddensen."

At the mention of a rat so dangerously close young woman almost shot out of her seat in anxiety to get away.

As she bounded something dropped down out of the wide right sleeve of her coat. It was a small memorandum book.

This was just what Jack Benson caught, in place of the pretended rat. Moreover, the young skipper was clever enough to catch the book so that it fell into his hands open.

"It wasn't a rat, after all, Miss Peddensen," smiled Jack, straightening up and holding the open memorandum book so that both he and Kimball could see what was traced on the two pages that lay exposed.

There were sketches of the compressors, sketches of the mechanism by which the compressed air was forced into the tanks to drive the water out—in fact, sketches of many vital features in the control of the boat. Nor was more than a glance needed to make it plain that this young woman artist possessed expert knowledge of machinery.

At the cry of "rat" three or four women jumped from their seats. The one nearest Miss Peddensen moved hastily to the forward end of the cabin.

"My dear young woman," murmured the lieutenant commander, dropping into the vacated seat beside the Swedish girl, "you won't mind, will you, if I keep these little matters to look over at my convenience!"

There was something so compelling in the look that flashed briefly in the naval officer's eyes that Miss Peddensen lost color, and stammered:

"No-o-o, certainly not; if such silly things interest you."

"They interest me very much indeed," murmured Kimball, thrusting "composition" and sketches inside his blouse.

As the naval officer plainly intended to remain where he was, Jack Benson turned, sauntering forward.

"Another spy nailed, beyond a single doubt," muttered the young submarine commander. "Will there never be an end to them."

As Captain Jack glanced at the young Englishman, Drummond by name, he saw an unmistakable flash of hostility in the Englishman's eyes.

"So you're a spy, too?" quivered Benson, inwardly, turning on his heel. After that, howsoever, the submarine boy took good care to keep Drummond under covert watch.

In time the "Benson" returned to the surface, being now much nearer land than when the aft had made its dive. A few minutes later the boat ran into the harbor and made fast at its moorings.

"What are you going to do about the young woman?" Jack found a chance to whisper, as all hands gathered on the platform deck.

"I don't believe I have actual authority to do anything," Kimball returned, also in a whisper. "But we have the drawings, and that writing, which may be a clever cipher. With that I'm afraid we'll have to remain content."

A launch from the gunboat was in waiting. In this the shore guests were taken back to land. Hardly had the launch left the side of the submarine, when a cutter, also from the gunboat, put in alongside. Two men in ordinary citizen's dress clambered aboard.

"Lieutenant Commander Kimball?" inquired one of the pair.

"Yes," acknowledged the naval officer. "May we see you below, in the cabin of this boat."

"No!" replied Kimball, sternly.

"Oh, as you please, of course," smiled the one of the pair who had first spoken. "Probably I am at fault, though, in not introducing my companion and myself. My friend is Mr. Packwood; my name is Trotter. We are Secret Service men sent down here by the Secretary of the Navy, in answer to your dispatch."

As Trotter spoke he threw back the lapel of his coat, displaying a badge.

"I have also some papers to show you, Mr. Kimball," continued the Secret Service man.

"Oh, of course you may come below," smiled the naval officer. "And, Benson; I guess this business belongs to you, too."

So Jack descended with the party, while the other submarine boys and Williamson remained on deck.

"You have, been bothered with spies, Captain?" asked Trotter, turning to young Benson, when they had reached the cabin table.

"Haven't we, though!" muttered Jack.

"And even took one out with you on this last trip of yours," laughed Mr. Trotter, producing from an inner pocket a book bound in black.

"Miss Peddensen, the Swedish young woman?" demanded Captain Jack.

"Here's the one I mean," replied Trotter, opening the book, which proved to be an album, and turning the pages over rapidly. He pointed to a photograph.

"That's Miss Peddensen," cried Jack, looking up at Lieutenant Commander Kimball for confirmation.

"Well, Peddensen is one of the names she has used," smiled Trotter.

"What foreign government does she serve?" demanded Benson.

Trotter shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, the Department has pretty good information that she has served England, France, Germany, Austria, Russia—oh, these spies have no country! They serve the fattest international purse!"

"Here is what we took from Miss Peddensen," said Kimball, gravely, laying down on the table the sketchbook and the "composition."

Taking up the latter, Mr. Trotter, after a glance declared:

"This is written in a secret cipher, most likely. Packwood, this comes in your peculiar line of work. The sketches are easy enough to understand. They are of the mechanisms displayed in this cabin."

"Yes, this is a cipher," declared Packwood, thoughtfully, after scanning the sheets a few moments. "With some study I can make it out."

"Who's the young Englishman who escorted Miss Peddensen?" demanded Captain Jack.

"Never saw him until I glanced at him in the launch just now," replied Trotter. "He may be another spy, unknown to us, or he may be merely a good-natured and wholly innocent young chap whom the Swedish girl has lured into her service."

"What are these other pictures?" inquired Mr. Kimball, beginning to turn the leaves.

"All of 'em photos of people known to be engaged in stealing naval secrets for foreign powers," replied Trotter. "Captain Benson may keep this album for future use. I've another copy for you, Mr. Kimball."

"Why, here's a good likeness of Mlle. Nadiboff," cried Jack Benson, pausing in turning the leaves and glancing down at the picture of a face he had good cause to remember. "And here, opposite her, is M. Lemaire!"

"Oh, yes; they're both old offenders," nodded Trotter. "Turn along, and see if you remember any more faces."

"Here's Gaston, who is now in jail here," nodded Jack.

"Is he, though?" asked Trotter, with interest.

"What charge?"

"Felonious assault upon Hastings and myself."

"Good," chuckled Trotter. "I shall have to see the judge privately, and ask him to make sure that Gaston Goubet gets the longest sentence possible. Nothing like prison bars to stop the work of these international spies!"

"Why, here's even little Kamanako," smiled as he turned over another page.

"Yes, and a very smooth and slippery little spy that Jap is," declared Mr. Trotter. "He steals all kinds of secrets, from the details of sixteen inch guns down to the method of dyeing a blanket in a mill."

"Are you going to do anything with the Peddensen woman?" inquired Lieutenant Commander Kimball.

"Ain't I, though—just!" answered Mr. Trotter. "You caught her red-handed, with drawings, cipher and all."

"Will she be imprisoned?" inquired Captain Jack.

"Well, that isn't the usual way," replied Trotter. "The young woman is more likely to be taken to New York, given a passage ticket across the ocean, and notified that, if she tries to return to this country, she will find that her photograph is on file at every port of entry. It will spoil her games, without making much of a fuss."

The cutter waiting alongside conveyed Kimball and his brother officer, Featherstone, back to the gunboat. Then it ran into shore; putting Mr. Trotter and his silent companion once more on land.

For some minutes after that Jack, Hal and Eph remained absorbed in the pictures in this album of known naval spies. There were more than two dozen of these photographs, some of men, some of women. On the same page with each picture was given the subject's true name, if known, also the spy's aliases, and other information.

"Sara Nadiboff, twenty-nine, yet looks like twenty," muttered Hal, studying the information under the young Russian woman's photograph.

"And Kamanako is really Lieutenant Osuri," muttered Jack. "Yet the fellow was working in the hotel kitchen until he could get a chance to apply for a job on this craft."

"I don't recognize any other spies among these pictures," muttered Hal. "The only ones here that we know we had already guessed."

"Look at that time," muttered Jack, jumping up. "I must get on shore and see what Mr. Farnum's orders are. And—" thrusting the album in his coat pocket and buttoning it up, "I'll take this picture gallery along. Our employer will be highly interested in it."

It was dusk by the time that Benson reached the platform deck. After a few moments he succeeded in hailing a harbor boat. Yet it was quite dark by the time that Captain Jack stepped on shore.

Instead of going around by the road Jack decided to cross the grounds. As he was walking briskly toward the hotel, an athletic-looking young man stepped out suddenly, from behind of the big trees, blocking the submarine boy's path.

"Good evening, Mr. Drummond," Jack hailed, quietly.

"Now, you halt and stand right where you are," retorted the Englishman, nervously handling a heavy walking stick that he carried. "I don't know whether it's going to be a good evening for you, or not, young man. Do you know that your cursed meddling has resulted in the arrest of a most estimable young woman?"

"Who?" asked Jack, coolly.

"Miss Peddensen," replied Drummond, angrily.

"Oh, I guess the secret service men know what they're about," said Jack somewhat sarcastically.

"And I know what I'm about, too!" roared the enraged Drummond, raising his cane, wrathfully. "Benson, you young sneak, I'm going to brain you!"

CHAPTER XVII

DRUMMOND'S LITTLE SURPRISE—FOR HIMSELF

It didn't happen just that way.

As Drummond swung his cane and brought it down with crushing force, aimed at the submarine boy's head, Jack wasn't there.

Instead, Benson sprang about two feet to one, side. It would have been a fearful blow had Jack's head been in the way. As it was, the cane hit the ground with such force as to be thrown from the Englishman's hand.

With a growl, the fellow leaped forward and snatched up his stick. Jack Benson stood leaning carelessly against a tree, in a way that enraged Drummond all the more.

"I'll show you!" snarled the Englishman. With that he aimed a blow, sideways, at Benson's head Jack ducked, then dodged out. The cane hit the tree with a force that jarred the assailant and all but dislocated his wrist. Again he dropped the stick.

Benson gave a hearty ringing laugh and this enraged the Englishman past endurance. Then Jack added, "Is that the best you can do?"

"I'll show you!" roared the other, making a leap forward. He charged straight at the submarine boy, who wheeled and darted on toward hotel.

"Don't run, you coward!" came the flying taunt.

Just then Jack Benson fell, though he did it on purpose. Straight in the path of the irate Englishman the submarine boy dropped, curling himself up.

It was too late for Drummond to halt, or to change his course. He tripped over prostrate young Benson, then lurched forward landing on his face.

Up sprang Jak Benson, planting two sterling good kicks.

"You beast! Wait until I get up!" roared the victim, in a voice like a bull's bellow.

"What's the matter here?" demanded an astonished voice, and Mr. Trotter, after a short dash, bounded through the darkness, arriving on the scene just as Drummond was getting up.

"This fellow—" began Jack.

"Fellow'?" broke in Drummond, angrily.

"This fellow," Jack continued, calmly, "accused me of causing Miss Peddensen's arrest, and promised to brain me."

"Too bad you've allied yourself with that young woman," muttered Mr. Trotter looking keenly into the Englishman's face.

"What d'ye mean?" demanded Drummond.

"Miss Peddensen turns out to be a well-known military and naval spy, though she hasn't operated in this country before in five years," replied Mr. Trotter, coolly. "However, she has been caught trying to steal the secrets of the submarine boat, and she's under arrest. My side partner, Packwood, is now engaged in unraveling a cipher that was taken from her."

"That's an impudent lie," asserted the Englishman, hotly.

"No it isn't," laughed Mr. Trotter. "It's a Secret Service fact."

"I'm going to go to Miss Peddensen, now, then," asserted Drummond.

"Right-o," drawled Trotter, so significantly that Drummond shot a quick look at the officer, demanding:

"What d'ye mean by that?"

"I'm going to take you to Miss Peddensen," returned the Secret Service man.

"I'll go all the way to Washington, by tonight's express, to see the young lady freed from this outrageous mistake," stormed the Englishman.

"I don't know about your going to Washington—to-night," replied Trotter, yawning.

"What have you to do with that?" demanded Drummond, harshly.

"Why, I reckon, Mr. Drummond, you're my prisoner. You won't very easily go anywhere to-night, without my consent."

"Your prisoner?" demanded the Englishman angrily.

"Yes."

"By what right do you arrest me! What have I done?"

"Well, for one thing, you've tried to injure the captain of the submarine boat, all because he caught your woman friend at strange tricks on board the 'Benson.' For another reason, because we suspect anyone who defends or upholds the spy. Be good enough to step along with me, Mr. Drummond."

"I'll do nothing of the sort," blurted the astounded Englishman

"You'll go all the same," warned Mr. Trotter, first of all displaying his Secret Service badge, next

running a hand back briefly to a revolver that rested in a hip pocket. "I don't much care, Drummond, whether you walk with me, or whether I have to send for an ambulance to bring you along. But you'll go just where I want you to."

The Englishman was too much terrified to reply. Two or three times he opened his mouth as though to speak, but, instead, merely swallowed.

"Come, now—forward march" advised Mr. Trotter. Drummond, without allowing himself to hesitate, went away at the side of the Secret Service man.

"Don't you want your cane?" called Jack Benson. Drummond did not condescend to answer, so the submarine boy slipped back to the tree, where he found the stick. It was a handsome piece of polished partridge wood, surmounted by a handsomely wrought head of gold.

"This will make an interesting souvenir to keep aboard the boat," mused Benson, swinging the stick as he continued his walk.

At the veranda Jack came face to face with Mlle. Nadiboff, just returning from an unaccompanied stroll down by the water front. To the submarine boy's astonishment the handsome Russian greeted him most amiably.

"You have not forgotten old friends, I hope, my Captain?" she added, smiling and with a pretty little coaxing way.

"There are some old friends," replied Captain Jack, lifting his cap, "whom it is impossible to forget."

"I hope you will continue to regard me as a friend," responded Mlle. Nadiboff, more seriously, looking him fully in the eyes.

"Why?" queried Jack.

"I may need a friend," she replied, dropping her glance for a moment.

"You in need of anything—even a friend?" cried Captain Jack, incredulously.

"I may need a friend who can speak a good word for me; who can forget things, or explain them." went on Mlle. Nadiboff, resting a hand pleadingly on his sleeve "My Captain, if need be, I shall send for you. Do not fail me! You won't?"

It looked as though the tears lay just behind her eyes. The submarine boy felt that the situation was becoming too interesting, so he lifted his cap once more as he turned on his heel.

"Mlle. Nadiboff," he sent back to her, "I trust you will never want for the most reliable friends."

He turned down the veranda to go toward the office door, when he encountered another surprise.

Leaning against one of the posts stood Kamanako, as natty and trim as though he had come from the tailor's.

Looking up with a most friendly smile, the little Japanese saluted.

"Why, how do you do?" Jack greeted him, halting. "I had an idea you had left Spruce Beach."

"I should have done so, but I started too late," replied Kamanako, still smiling. Nothing ever daunts that Japanese smile. One of these little men, being led away to have his head chopped off, goes with a smile on his little brown face.

"Started too late?" asked Jack. "How was that?"

"Now, you laugh at me," replied the Japanese.

"Laughing at you? Not a bit!"

"You have told some one that I am a spy," replied Kamanako, without a trace of grudge in his voice. "So now, I cannot leave Spruce Beach. Ticket agent, he will not sell me. If I try to go on foot, the roads are watched. If I take to woods, even, I shall be found."

"Sorry," nodded Jack Benson, and passed on. "So the Secret Service net is around the place, and no suspected person can get away?" muttered the submarine boy. "Well, that's it should be. I wonder if there are any more of this strange crew—men or women spies that don't happen to have suspected so far? If there are, I don't believe they'll wriggle through the meshes of old Uncle Sam's Secret Service

net, anyway."

His mind full of the doings of the day, Captain Jack Benson found Messrs. Farnum and to whom he surely had much to tell.

CHAPTER XVIII

"REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED TO THE 'MAINE'!"

"We'll have no more trouble, I imagine," nodded Jacob Farnum, with a satisfied air, when Jack, at a table in the corner of the dining room, had told, in low tones, all that had happened.

"The spies are all on the defensive, now, beyond a doubt," added David Pollard. "They'll be too busy keeping their wrists out of handcuffs to devote any of their time to trying to get at the secrets of the 'Benson.'"

"I hope you're both right," said Captain Jack, gravely.

"Why, what leads you to think that we may not be?" asked Farnum, curiously.

"Nothing in the way of facts," Jack admitted. "Yet there may be others of this infernal spy gang who have not yet shown their hands, of whose existence the Secret Service knows nothing."

"Well, what can they do, if you don't allow any strangers on board the boat?" asked Mr. Farnum, point blank.

"Nothing much," muttered Benson, "unless—"

"Well, unless what?"

"See here," asked the submarine boy, "what is usually done to such spies by the United States Government?"

"Why, the law provides that, in war time, such spies can be shot in mighty quick order," replied Mr. Farnum. "In peace times the law doesn't allow anything but sending spies to prison."

"But what does the Government usually do?" pursued Captain Jack. "It seems to me I've read of suspected spies being caught around American fortifications, trying to make notes, or take photographs."

"Yes," nodded the shipbuilder.

"And I think I've read, also, that such spies are generally warned and then let go."

"That's the usual procedure, I believe," admitted Farnum.

"Then, after the spies who have been bothering us have all been rounded up and scolded, they'll be given railroad tickets and allowed go on their way?" asked Jack.

"Frankly, I'm afraid that's just what will be in the present case," admitted Jacob Farnum.

"Then," grumbled Captain Jack, making a rather wry face, "it would seem that being a foreign spy, in this country, provides one with a calling that is a good deal safer than being just a lightning rod peddler or a bill collector."

"Yes; it's really so," admitted the shipbuilder, thoughtfully.

"If that is the case," muttered Captain Jack, "the spies here at Spruce Beach will probably keep a bit quiet until they see how things are going to turn out. As soon as their minds are made easy by our generous government, then they'll plot their next moves. If they can't accomplish anything more, they may content themselves with a general revenge of some sort on the whole lot of us."

"You're not afraid of their vengeance, are you?" asked Mr. Farnum, looking up, and into the eyes of his young captain.

"I'm not afraid, of anything, sir," retorted Jack. "The master of a submarine boat has no right to be afraid of things. Even if these scoundrels should get me, in the end, all I can do is to smile, and say: 'So be it.'"

Then, in the next breath, Benson added, earnestly:

"It doesn't matter so much if these rascals get me, but I don't want them to work any mischief to the submarine."

"Bravo!" nodded David Pollard, looking on with a smile.

It is a fact that life in a constant atmosphere of danger renders the average man all but indifferent to fear. Those who meet perils daily grow to consider danger as all a part of the day's work. Perils which, a year before, would have kept Jack Benson awake with dread for a week now appeared to him as not worth thinking about until they happened.

Jack remained ashore until half-past nine. He hoped to hear some word of what the Secret Service men might have learned, or of what these representatives of Uncle Sam were doing. But no word came, so the submarine boy went down to the beach. There was but one harbor boat in sight.

"Ah done thought yo'd be gwine back to do little ship, sah, so Ah done waited fo' you'," explained the negro in the boat. "Any mo' ob yo' pahty to go abo'd to-night, sah?"

"No," Jack answered. "I'll be the last one to put off to-night."

Nor did he forget to reward the darkey's enterprise by handing him rather more than the usual boat hire.

As he stepped aboard Jack found Hal pacing the platform deck.

"Keeping deck watch, old fellow? I'm glad see that," Captain Jack said, commendingly.

"Yes; I'm on until midnight. Then Williamson stands watch until three-thirty in the morning. After that Eph comes up and takes the trick until it's time to call us all."

"When do I come on watch?" asked Jack.

"I never heard the captain of a craft had to stand watch in port," laughed Hal Hastings "Besides, old fellow, we couldn't be sure you'd be aboard to-night. So the watches are all arranged. Anyway, you'd better turn in and get a full night's sleep, for you've more on your mind than the rest of us."

"Then tell Williamson, and have him pass the word on to Eph, that watch ought to be very strictly kept," answered the young captain.

A few minutes Benson remained on deck, chatting with his chum. When he at last went below the submarine captain lost little time getting into his berth.

When Machinist Williamson came on deck at midnight a light wind was blowing, but the air was not really chilly. In his heavy reefer the machinist felt wholly comfortable after he had lighted his pipe and started his slow walk back and forth along the deck.

There did not appear to be overmuch sense in keeping this deck watch. Only a short distance away lay the United States gunboat "Waverly," with her alert marine guard. Though there was no moon, the starlight was bright enough to enable a marine on the gunboat to see anything that might skim over the water toward the "Benson."

Yet Williamson was on watch, under instructions, and he was a faithful fellow who meant to do his full duty.

"Seems kinder tough, of course, to be so long out of one's bunk in the middle of the night," the machinist admitted to himself.

Yet, had his vision been keen enough to know what was happening on shore, almost directly opposite the "Benson," Williamson would have been tenfold more alert.

Over there on the shore, in a clump of flowering, semi-tropical bushes, crouched two men. On the ground with them lay a metal cylinder some two feet long and seven inches in diameter. There was also a coil of wire and a boxed magneto battery.

One of the pair held to his eyes a pair of night marine glasses.

Incessantly this watcher kept his gaze focused on Williamson.

About two o'clock in the morning Williamson found it necessary to go below for a few moments. After reaching the conning tower he paused, for a few moments, to look keenly all about him.

Yet, look as he would through the night, the machinist's vision could not see that the bush hidden pair on shore, guessing his intention from his stop by the conning tower, had silently taken to the water. With them they towed the metal cylinder, which floated. To the cylinder was attached one end of the light wire.

Some distance out from the shore the pair halted, treading water, only their eyes above the surface. But Williamson could not make out such small objects at the distance. Then he went below.

"Now, for it," breathed one of the swimming pair, tensely.

Both swimmers struck out strongly, yet silently, making fast progress through the water by means of some of the best strokes known to swimmers.

When they reached the port side of the submarine Williamson was still below. Nor had the attention of the marine guard on the "Waverly" been attracted.

In just another swift instant the swimmers made a dive that carried them and their cylinder below the surface.

Straight up against the bottom of the hull the pair went.

When they returned to the surface the metal cylinder was in place below.

Glancing backward only once, to make sure that Williamson was not yet on deck, and that the gunboat's marine guard had not detected their stealthy work, the swimming pair struck out lustily for shore.

Back into the same clump of bushes they made their way. In the first few moments neither of the recent swimmers appeared to dare a glance into the face of his comrade. In silence they fitted the shore end of the wire to the battery.

Then one of the pair seized the handle to pomp the fatal electric spark along the wire to the hidden mine under the "Benson's" hull.

"Remember what happened to the 'Maine'!" this wretch chuckled hideously.

CHAPTER XIX

A JOKE ON THE SECRET SERVICE!

"What's that noise?" wondered Williamson.

He stopped, listening intently, for he was still below.

Against the bottom of the "Benson's" hull he heard a steady, slow, monotonous bumping. As he listened, his face took on an anxious look.

"We're in a friendly port," muttered the machinist. "It can't be anything very wrong, and yet—"

That slow steady bumping continued.

"Anything bumping against the bull of a boat at anchor, in that fashion may be wrong," concluded the man, swiftly.

His mind made up to this much, the rest was not difficult to decide. The cause of that bumping required instant investigation. Williamson caught up the tool that came quickest to hand, a pair of nippers, thrust them into his jumper and raced up to the deck.

"If it's any real mischief," he muttered, "I hope I won't be too slow—too late!"

With that he dived overboard, at the starboard rail, the side nearest the gunboat. There was a splash—then the waters closed over the machinist.

He came up at about the point he had planned, where he had heard the bumping.

Held below water as he was by the under-hull of the submarine, he could move with certainty, though but slowly.

Groping, the machinist encountered the metal cylinder. Quickly he felt for its connections which, like a flash, he knew must exist. He found the wire, but reached for another. It all had to be done swiftly, for his reserve "wind" was fast giving out. Not finding a second wire, he fastened his nippers against the first wire—then cut. Now, steering the metal cylinder, he pushed it out from under the hull. Cylinder and man rose together.

Whew! What a powerful breath the man took! Then he steered the cylinder carefully against the hull, and managed to hold it there until he could reach a piece of cordage and make the cylinder fast.

This done, he dashed below, thumping hard on the door of the stateroom occupied by Captain Jack Benson and Hal Hastings.

"Eh? What is it?" called Jack, almost instantly.

"You're wanted on deck, Captain—instantly," replied the dripping machinist.

"Oh, all right, Williamson," and Benson's feet hit the stateroom floor.

A minute later he was above, Hal following only some twenty seconds behind his young chief.

Williamson swiftly told how he had heard the bumping against the hull, and how he had found the cylinder, with a wire connection.

"Gunboat, ahoy!" roared Captain Jack, snatching up a megaphone and holding it to his lips.

The response was prompt. In less than three minutes a cutter, containing an officer, a corporal and four marines, was alongside.

"The first thing for us to do is to take that cylinder aboard the 'Waverly' and investigate it," decided Ensign Foss. "I'll leave the marines here until I get further instructions from the commanding officer."

"Anything happening?" demanded Eph, reaching deck just after the cutter had put off. He eyed the marine squad curiously.

"Just what we're trying to find out," replied Jack.

"It must seem to you that I acted amiss in leaving the deck," put in Williamson.

"But you didn't," retorted Jack. "Had you been on deck you wouldn't have heard that infernal machine bumping against the hull."

"Infernal?" echoed Eph Somers, rubbing his eyes. "Say, have I been missing a whole lot by being asleep?"

The other three told him quickly all they knew of what had happened.

Within five minutes the cutter came back, bringing two more marines and a young second lieutenant of that corps.

"Lieutenant Commander Kimball's compliments, sir," reported the second lieutenant. "He will put in an appearance as soon as that cylinder has been investigated. He has sent me with instructions to see what had best be done."

"I don't believe there's much doubt as to what had best be done," replied Captain Jack, quickly. "Williamson reports having cut a wire that was attached to that cylinder. I think we can find that wire again, and, if we do, we can easily follow it to its other end."

"By jove, that's good enough," muttered the lieutenant.

"Williamson is already wet," proposed Jack. "He can dive again, and see whether he can pick up that wire. If he needs any help, I'll go overboard with him."

"Wait until I see what I can do," proposed the machinist.

This time he dived over the port side of the craft. Three or four times he came up for air, next going, below again. At last, however, Williamson came up, calling:

"I have a part of the wire in my hands."

Lieutenant Foster ordered his marines into the cutter, inviting Jack and Hal also to go with him. They rowed out alongside of Williamson, picking up the machinist and his wire.

"We'd better put your man back on the boat, hadn't we, Mr. Benson?" inquired the marine lieutenant.

"I'm not such weak stuff as that, sir," almost grumbled the machinist. "I can stand a few minutes more in wet clothes, and I want to go along to see where this wire leads."

"Good enough," nodded Lieutenant Foster, he gave the order to row along slowly, while two marines in the bow of the cutter slowly gathered in the wire, at the same time signaling back the direction in which it lay.

Only a few minutes were needed thus to follow the trail straight to the clump of bushes on shore.

"Nobody leave the boat until we have a lantern ready," directed Lieutenant Foster. "We don't want to tramp out the trail of the rascals who laid that mine."

The marine lieutenant himself was the first to step ashore, and Jack Benson was with him.

"Here are the footprints of the rascals," announced Foster, as the two stepped cautiously into the bushes.

"Yes; there were just two of them here, apparently," replied Jack, after studying the prints, and discovering the marks of only two different sizes or kinds of shoes.

"Here's the imprint of a box," added Foster. "Good heavens, the scoundrels had a regular magneto battery, insulated wire and all, for firing that mine from the shore. Mr. Benson, they meant to blow your boat into Kingdom Come!"

"It looks that way," replied Jack Benson, composedly.

On hearing that voice, so even and unaffected in its utterance, Lieutenant Foster looked at the submarine boy keenly.

"By Jove, Benson, you're cool enough to be an admiral," muttered the marine officer, admiringly.

"Why, this doesn't seem to be a joke on me," replied Captain, Jack, smiling back at the lieutenant.

"A joke!"

"It's one on the Secret Service," laughed Jack, quietly. "They are the ones who are supposed to have the job of keeping off spies and all of their kind."

"Yes; this certainly came from the spies, or their friends," muttered Lieutenant Foster. "Jove, but we have a desperate crowd to deal with when they'll go to such a length as this in time of peace!"

"Oh, it may all turn out to be a joke," put Hal, quietly. "Some one may have been doing this to try us out. That metal cylinder may prove to have been loaded with ginger-bread or peanuts. If anyone has been trying a joke on us, then I'm mighty glad we didn't get rattled."

"I reckon we shall soon know just what that cylinder did contain," muttered Lieutenant Foster. "Here's another cutter coming from the 'Waverly,' and I think I make out Lieutenant Commander Kimball in the stern-sheets."

It was, indeed, the lieutenant commander. As he stepped ashore, his face coming into the circle of light cast by the lantern, his features were seen to be white with anxiety.

"We have just looked into the cylinder," he announced, in a low voice.

"We found there enough gun-cotton to blow the 'Benson' into inch pieces. It was a fearful crime to plan."

Jack Benson and Hal Hastings heard, but did not change color. There was no sense in losing nerve over a disaster that had been averted in time.

"The first thing to do, of course," continued Lieutenant Commander Kimball, "is to send instant word to Messrs. Trotter and Packwood. They have a heap of work ahead of them."

"As to our own boat's crew," replied Jack, "I fancy the best thing we can do is to go back on board, since we can't do anything here. One of us will keep watch, and the rest of us can get some of a night's sleep yet."

"Why, yes, if you youngsters can sleep, after such happenings," laughed Kimball.

By this time Lieutenant Foster and two of his marines had followed the trail of footprints as far as the hard road. Here all trace was lost.

"What you want to do, Williamson," declared Jack, as soon as the submarine people were back on their own craft, "is to get into some dry clothes and make yourself a pot of hot coffee. Then get in between blankets for a sleep. I'll finish out your watch."

Nor was Benson alone in his watch, for a cutter from the gunboat, containing a corporal and two marines, beside sailors to row the boat, moved slowly around the submarine at a distance of fifteen or twenty yards.

After the rest had gone below, Captain Jack, hanging over the rail of the platform deck, saw other lanterns gleaming in and around the clump of bushes.

"That must be the Secret Service people, pulled out of their comfortable beds," mused Benson, smiling. "Won't they feel upset at any such thing happening hours after they've arrived on the spot?"

After Eph Somers had reported on deck to take his watch, Jack went below, once more dropping into sound slumber. The smell of coffee and bacon was wafted in from the galley when the young submarine captain next awoke.

"Well," announced Eph, as Jack and Hal came forward for their breakfast, "Trotter and Packwood haven't caught the fellows that laid the mine."

"It doesn't look strongly probable that they'll catch them, either," Jack replied. "I don't believe that the fellows who did that trick are any of the regular spies. For that matter, we now of only three spies here who are men. Drummond is under arrest, and so is Gaston. Neither of them could have had a hand in it. And there were two, so, if M. Lemaire was in it, he had an unknown accomplice. But I don't believe M. Lemaire had any personal hand in laying that mine. I've a notion that he considers himself entirely too high class to go into any mere blasting operations."

"'Mere blasting operations' is good," smiled Hal Hastings, "when we stop to think what those 'blasting operations' might have done for us if it hadn't been for Williamson."

"Anyone taking my name in vain?" demanded the machinist, smiling as he put in an appearance at that moment.

"We're trying to see," Eph explained, "whether we can do any better guessing than the Secret Service men as to the fellows who were kind enough to lay that mine under us last night."

"Got it figured out?" asked the machinist, as he transferred, a generous helping of bacon, eggs and fried potatoes, to his plate.

"For myself," put in Hal, "I'd suspect that fellow Gaston, in an instant, if he had only been at liberty. That fellow has an eye that looks like all the letters in the word 'r-e-v-e-n-g-e.'"

"That's so," nodded Jack, thoughtfully, as he ate. "But we happen to know that Gaston is very safe under lock and key. By the way, fellows, I don't suppose Mr. Farnum and Mr. Pollard have heard the news yet, or they'd be out here on the double quick."

After breakfast Jack went ashore alone, to carry the exciting news to his employers. He found Messrs. Farnum and Pollard in the breakfast room at the Clayton. Both were astounded when they heard the news of the night's doings.

"Who on earth could have put up such a job against the submarine?" gasped David Pollard.

"I don't know, sir," Captain Jack replied. "But I've left Hal on board, in command, and I mean to find out something about this business, if there is any way to do it."

With that he excused himself, rising and leaving the table at which his employers were seated.

Jacob Farnum gazed after his young submarine captain, then whispered to the inventor:

"That youngster has some notion in his head of where to look for the infernal criminals. And, ten to one, his idea is a good one that will bear fruit!"

CHAPTER XX

A BRIGHT LOOK AND A DEADLY WARNING

Jack's employer gave him rather too much credit in supposing that the boy had already worked out the problem of finding those who had made the attack on the "Benson."

As the submarine boy left the breakfast room he felt as much in the dark as ever. The only known spies who were still at large, for some reason known only to the Secret Service men, were M. Lemaire, Mlle. Nadiboff and Kamanako.

"This is rather earlier than either of that pair in the habit of showing themselves," muttered Benson, as the first two names crossed his thoughts. "I wonder whether I could get the least bit of an inkling by going to the jail and talking with Gaston? If I could bluff him into telling me anything, it might be so much gained. I might catch him off his guard, if I could get him angry enough."

Full of this interesting idea, the submarine boy strolled slowly along to the little jail, forming his plans as he went.

Arrived at the jail, Captain Jack found the keeper, as yet, in ignorance of the dastardly attempt that had been made on the submarine boat the night before. He listened, aghast, as Benson told him the whole story.

"Now, I've got a notion that Gaston's crowd are very likely at the bottom of this whole deal," continued the submarine boy, in a low tone. "For one thing, while perhaps nothing much can be done to the other spies, this fellow, Gaston, is in here for a crime which, under the Florida laws, will go hard with him. It means that he'll be locked up for a few years. That may make both him and Lemaire ugly enough to put them up to almost any mischief. Was M. Lemaire here to see the fellow yesterday?"

"Lemaire has not been here at all," replied the jailer.

"Was Mlle. Nadiboff here to see him yesterday?"

"No; she has been holding aloof. With the exception of his lawyer, the only people who have been here to see Gaston were two fellows who came yesterday, about noon."

"Oho!" muttered Benson. "Who were they?"

The jailer turned to reach for a memorandum book.

"I keep the names given by all who come here to see prisoners, so I shall be able to answer you."

"Ah, here are the names. One fellow called himself Leroux, the other Stephanoulis."

"One name French, and the other Greek," muttered the submarine boy, thinking hard. "What did they look like?"

The jailer quickly and carefully described the pair. Jack listened attentively. Then rose, briskly.

"Did you hear any of the conversation they had with Gaston?"

"No."

"If they come again to-day can you lock them up and hold them?"

"If I have proper authority."

"If you get a telephone message from Mr. Trotter, would that be good enough authority?"

"Yes; on that I could hold them long enough to give Trotter a chance to come here and take them or else to get them committed on a regular warrant."

"If you keep within sound of your telephone bell, then, I think you'll have authority within a few minutes," replied Jack, briskly.

"That's a live, hustling boy," muttered the jailer, looking after young Benson through a window, as the submarine boy hurried away.

Before he had gone far, Jack encountered one of the nondescript surreys, hauled by an antiquated nag and driven by a battered darkey, that often do duty as cab in Florida. Poor as the rig was, it offered a chance of greater speed than Captain Benson could make at a walk, so he quickly engaged the rig and was driven to the place where the Secret Service men were stopping.

"You've brought us the only thing like a real clue that we have," declared Mr. Trotter, very frankly, after he had heard Jack's story. "Wait a moment, and I'll have Packwood get busy over the telephone."

Within the next twenty minutes not only had the jail been telephoned to; Packwood also talked with all the nearby railway stations in that section of the country.

"If those rascals can be found," declared Trotter, "I think we shall have gone a long way in clearing up the matter. As you say, the fellow Gaston has more reason than any of the rest of the crowd to want a complete revenge against you."

Then Mr Packwood left to walk through the little town around Spruce Beach, to see whether he could encounter any two worthies who answered to the description of Leroux and Stephanoulis.

Before half-past nine, however, word came that local constables at a little railway town a dozen miles away had arrested a couple of suspects and were bringing them to Spruce Beach. The prisoners had been taken while waiting for a north bound train, and had tickets all the way through to New York.

Then Jack hastened back to Messrs. Farnum and Pollard to report what was in the air.

"By Jupiter, Jack, I knew you had some thing strong in your mind when you left us," gasped the shipbuilder. "But I didn't imagine you'd run down the wretches as swiftly as that."

"We don't yet know that we've got the right hair," replied Captain Jack.

"I'm willing to wager money on it, if it comes to that," retorted Mr. Farnum.

Before noon the two prisoners were brought into Spruce Beach. Trotter and Packwood stopped, in a 'bus with the prisoners, to show them to Jack at the hotel.

"That pair look rascally enough to do any dirty trick," declared Jacob Farnum, in high disgust, as he looked over Leroux and Stephanoulis.

The prisoners were, indeed, "hard hooking." Both were men below average size, with sullen, defiant eyes. Both were dressed roughly, like laborers. Yet, when taken, each had been found to have a considerable sum of money about him.

"We can't make either of the fellows talk, but maybe they will later, when we begin to employ some of the third degree on them," whispered Mr. Trotter to Jack. "My boy, I think you've put us on the real trail. If the jailer identifies them as Gaston's callers of yesterday, we'll know where we stand."

Fifteen minutes later the Secret Service men returned. The jailer had pronounced the pair to be Gaston's callers of the day before. Moreover, the jailer had obligingly locked up the pair until Trotter and Packwood could obtain proper authority for him to hold them. Leroux and Stephanoulis had been placed in cells from which they could not possibly communicate with Gaston, whose cell lay in another wing of the jail.

"As soon as that pair found that, for some reason, their mine failed to explode under you last night," Trotter hinted, "they knew that their game was up. They hurried away and lay concealed in the distance. Then they saw the party from the 'Waverly' hunting on shore, with lantern's, and they took to the woods. That pair of rascals knew how risky it would be for them to try to leave at the local railway station today, so they struck off through the woods on foot making for another town at a distance. The constables who brought them down here say that Leroux and Stephanoulis were a surely astonished pair when they found themselves nabbed. We are getting into a bigger nest of trouble down here than

we expected when we left Washington."

After, the Secret Service men had gone, Jacob Farnum turned as though to go inside the hotel.

"I'm wondering whether there are any letters for me," he said.

"I'll go to the office and inquire," proposed Jack Benson. At the desk he received two letters for his employer, and turned away with them in one hand when his steps were arrested by the sound of a sweet feminine voice at the further end of the desk.

The speaker was Mlle. Nadiboff.

"She looks as sweet and as contented as ever," thought the submarine boy, with some wonder. "Really, she doesn't look as though a care had crossed her path."

"Can you furnish me with a chauffeur, and order my car up?" Mlle. Nadiboff was inquiring.

"I am very sorry, Mademoiselle, but we haven't a single chauffeur that we can spare," replied the clerk, respectfully.

"Then may I rent one of your own cars, with a man to drive it?"

"Again, I am very sorry, Mademoiselle, but all the hotel cars are engaged."

The pretty Russian stamped her foot impatiently.

"Oh, no matter, then," she cried. "I will go to the garage and take out my own car. I know how to manage it."

"I regret very much to have to report, Mademoiselle," replied the clerk, speaking as respectfully as ever, "that one of the hind wheels has been removed from your car."

Mlle. Nadiboff stared at the clerk in amazement.

"Who has dared do such a thing?" she demanded, angrily.

"I am sorry, but I do not know," answered the clerk.

"Then I suppose it would be impossible, even, for me to hire one of your livery rigs?" she continued icily.

"You have guessed right, Mademoiselle."

"Oh, but this is insupportable!" cried the pretty Russian, turning away.

As she did so, she caught sight of Jack Benson for the first time.

"Oh, I would like just a word with you, my Captain," she called softly, moving after the boy, who had started toward the door.

She overtook Jack, resting a gloved hand on his sleeve.

"Do not stop," she urged, softly. "I will keep on with you, out onto the veranda."

In silence Jack stepped outside with her. Mr. Farnum had vanished for the moment, so Benson was alone with his pretty companion.

"Now, tell me, my Captain," she begged, "why it is that I cannot get either my own car, or any other conveyance, for a little drive?"

"I could only guess, Mlle. Nadiboff, and you can do that as well as I," Jack replied, gravely.

"But I desire you should guess for me, my Captain. What do you say?" she insisted, her eyes scanning his grave face.

"At the risk of seeming rude, Mademoiselle, I am not going to be prying enough to make any guesses about your affairs," Captain Benson answered, quickly.

He thought he had gotten out of the matter as cleverly as it could be done.

"Some one is taking altogether too great an interest in my affairs, my Captain. I trust you have no hand in it, for it is possible that interference with my comfort will prove dangerous to the offenders. Yet, pardon me, for I am sure that you, my Captain, would not cause me any uneasiness. Let those who do beware!"

As she let go of his arm and turned to go inside, Mlle. Nadiboff's smile was bright, almost friendly. Yet back of that smile, in her expressive eyes, lurked a look that made the boy start.

It was a look that spoke of deadly things, and Captain Jack Benson had come quite to believe that Mlle. Nadiboff could be not only quite deadly at need, but also equally reckless.

CHAPTER XXI

A FRENCH RAT IN THE CORNER

As Mr. Farnum came around a bend in the veranda Jack hurried to him, handing over the letters. Then he related the little scene he had just witnessed in the office, and described how Mlle. Nadiboff had walked out with him.

"So the little minx was hinting at more mischief to come, was she?" demanded the shipbuilder. "Jack, I believe she's equal to it. Her crowd are anyway, if it's true that Gaston, from his cell in jail, could plan the attempt to blow the 'Benson' last night."

Hal, too, soon came up and heard. He turned anxious gaze upon his chum.

"Jack, old fellow," he pleaded, "I know you're not much given to being afraid of things. But, at least, look out for yourself a bit. Be more prudent than you usually are about yourself. That crowd of foreign spies, having failed and having brought themselves into trouble, mean to have revenge. Any of us are liable, but you'll be the shining mark of all to be picked out."

"There can't be many more of that crowd left at large," laughed Jack, lightly.

"I wonder why the Secret Service men don't arrest Lemaire and the Nadiboff young woman?" asked Mr. Pollard, the last to rejoin the little group.

"Trotter and Packwood must have some good reasons of their own," Jack replied, thoughtfully. "For one thing, they hardly have any evidence that they could use against the pair."

"They could at least drive them from Spruce Beach," retorted the inventor.

"Perhaps the Secret Service men are giving the pair enough rope for their hanging," proposed Jack.

At that moment the two detectives were espied going past in a buggy. They waved their hands to the party. Jack replied by a signal to halt. He and Hal ran down to the road to speak to the detectives.

"If it's a fair question to ask," demanded Hal, "what are you going to do with Lemaire and Mlle. Nadiboff?"

"To tell you the truth, we don't know," Trotter answered. "We haven't anything we could very well fasten on them. But of this you may be sure; our various moves are known to them, and they're on the tenterhooks of anxiety wondering what's going to break loose next. More than that, both are sharp enough to have guessed that it would be impossible for either of them to get away from Spruce Beach, now, without our leave. But we'll have to leave you, now, boys. You've been of so much help to us that I don't mind telling you what we're up to at this moment. We're driving back to jail, and we're going to try to put the screws on Leroux and his Greek companion. If we can make 'em think we've gained new evidence against 'em, they may get scared and begin to talk. If they talk fast enough, they'll begin to tell some truth."

The buggy rolled along again.

"You didn't tell them a word about Mlle. Nadiboff's threats to you," muttered Hal.

"I didn't mean to," Jack replied, simply.

"Why not?"

"Well, for one thing, I couldn't swear that she did threaten me. She may have meant it all for nonsense."

"Yes," mocked Hal Hastings. "That, would be just like her!"

The submarine not being due to go out that day, the chums decided to remain on shore, in order to keep in touch with the march of events. The day was so balmy that Mr. Farnum dropped into a chair on the porch, Pollard occupying the chair next to him. Hal, buying a magazine at the hotel news stand, sat on the edge of the porch, his feet touching the ground. Jack, his mind too full of problems to permit him to read, paced up and down the grounds. Finally he strolled, out past the gate, crossed the road and began to stroll along the shingle of bench.

Jacob Farnum removed his cigar from between his lips long enough to remark:

"As long as the lad keeps in sight, Pollard, it will be worth our while to keep an occasional eye on him."

"And when he goes out of sight—? asked the inventor, slowly.

"It will be high time to call him back. Somehow, Dave, I'm growing uneasy over the boy. I can't help the feeling that he's running into a good deal of danger that's likely to explode under him at any moment, just as that mine was intended to last night."

"It makes one feel uncanny to be at Spruce Beach," growled the inventor, savagely.

"Well, we can't run away," retorted Jacob Farnum, blandly.

"Why not, if we feel like it?"

The shipbuilder laughed.

"Why, Dave, a spirited lad like Jack Benson would be furious over anything that looked like a retreat. He'd be savage. Now, Dave, we can hardly afford to put such a slight on the boy who has had so much to do with our success."

"I suppose not," grunted Mr. Pollard, settling back in his chair.

"The odd part of it," said Farnum, presently, "is, that while we're the center of an international cyclone, so to speak, the rest of the folks at Spruce Beach don't know a word about it. Look at the crowds of folks around us who haven't even a breath of an idea of what has happened, or is, likely to happen. Not a soul around here, except our own few, have any idea that an attempt was made, last night, to blow up that mysterious-looking little submarine craft riding at her moorings out yonder."

"I wonder what the crowd would do, if it did know?" asked Pollard, gazing out curiously over the throngs of pleasure-seekers. "That shows what a dreamer you are, Dave, and how little you know of your own fellow citizens. What would the crowd do? Why, it would change itself into a mob. Mlle. Nadiboff would be hustled off out of town, Lemaire would be lynched, or mighty close to it, and it would be strange if the mob didn't march on the jail itself."

"Then it would never do to let the crowd know all that's happening, would it?" asked Pollard.

Jack, from thinking over the problems that had come up in connection with the spies, had at last let his attention wander to the crowds. Down at the beach hundreds were taking an afternoon dip. Other hundreds were strolling up and down the sands. Children were building sand castles or houses. A good many small boats were out with pleasure parties. Yet many, both grown-ups and children, looked positively bored. They needed excitement.

"How near this crowd came to having something to talk about," muttered young Benson to himself, with a smile. "If that mine had gone off last night, no one at Spruce Beach would have felt dull to-day."

Finding that the afternoon air was making him dull and inclined to gape, Captain Jack turned back from the beach. He sauntered along the road, and was about to cross it, when he heard a sharp snap. It was like a subdued shot.

In the same instant a hissing sound went *pseu!* in front of his face. A distinct breeze, small though it was, fanned his eyes. Then chug! Something landed in the trunk of the tree he was passing.

"That was a shot!" guessed the submarine boy, like a flash, and in the next breath he muttered: "Aimed at me, too!"

Jack pitched forward, falling upon his face. If one shot had been fired, another might be as soon as the unknown marksman realized that he had missed.

Several people, near by, fancied they had heard a shot, and turned, curiously. Then, as soon as Benson was espied lying on the ground a rush was made in his direction.

At that moment Hal Hastings happened to be looking over toward the beach. Like a flash he was up and away, his magazine falling from his lap to the ground.

"Now, what on earth has taken Hastings off like that?" demanded Mr. Farnum, looking around in surprise. "There are other people running, too. Come along, Dave!"

Hal shot his way through the rapidly gathering crowd. He reached Jack Benson just as the latter leaped up, laughing.

"Why all this excitement, just because I stubbed my toe against a dew-drop and fell?" demanded Benson, laughing.

"Weren't you shot?" gasped Hal.

"If I was, I'll make the rascal prove it," asked back Captain Jack. "But, now you mention it, I think the tree *was* hit."

Jack turned and looked the tree trunk over at about the height of his own head from the ground.

"See here," he remarked, laying a finger on a small perforation in the bark, "I think a bullet, or something of the sort, went in here."

"We'll soon find out then," proposed Hal, whipping out his jack-knife, opening a blade and beginning to dig. The crowd grew in size. Messrs. Farnum and Pollard had great difficulty in forcing their way through.

After some time spent in patient work Hal dug out a steel-jacketed bullet, short and of small calibre.

"You want to find the man with a weapon that bullet fits, and then make it warm for him," advised one man in the front rank of the crowd.

"Why?" queried Captain Jack, coolly, examining the missile, then dropping it carelessly into his pocket. "Some fellow fired an accidental shot, very likely, and is at this moment the most scared man at Spruce Beach. What's the use of jumping on anyone just because he had a moment of carelessness?"

"That's right, young level-head!" nodded another man, approvingly.

Messrs. Farnum and Pollard hung back somewhat. They were near enough to hear and see, and they had their instant suspicions. But the crowd knew nothing of the spy outrages, and it was not necessary to inform strangers.

So, within a few minutes the crowd broke up, straying off in quest of something more interesting. The submarine party kept on up to the hotel porch.

"That was a revengeful move, pure and simple," declared Jacob Farnum, in a low voice.

"Of course," assented Jack. "It's going to be something of a task though, to find out, for certain, just who fired that shot."

Even as the four stood there on the veranda a door opened, and M. Lemaire, faultlessly attired for an afternoon stroll, stepped out.

"Ah, good afternoon, gentlemen," was his unconcerned greeting, as he recognized the quartette.

This French spy had evidently dressed himself with a good deal of care. He carried himself with much precision and lightly twirled a natty cane.

"Pardon me, monsieur," spoke Jack, stepping forward, and looking past the Frenchman; "is that one of your friends down the road?"

As the Frenchman turned to look, young Benson swiftly and adroitly took his cane from him.

Like a flash, his eyes full of fire, Lemaire heeled about, then leaped at the young submarine captain.

But Hal Hastings stepped between them so neatly that the Frenchman collided with him instead.

"Hold this fellow a moment, please," requested Captain Jack. "I've found something interesting."

Hal Hastings grabbed Lemaire's right arm. Jacob Farnum instantly possessed himself of the other. David Pollard sprang forward so that he could take a hand, if need be.

Captain Jack stood holding the spy's walking stick, ferule end upward. It was a rather long, slender-looking ferrule of steel. But what interested young Benson most was that he had found that the ferrule was hollow.

Quickly the submarine boy examined the rest of the cane.

"Release me! Hand that stick back to me!" hissed the Frenchman. "Oh, some one shall pay for this unpardonable outrage!"

But Hal and Mr. Farnum only gripped the spy the more tightly.

"I believe I've found out something," announced Jack, in a low voice. "Wait a second or two."

He had come upon a concealed spring near the head of the cane. Stepping to the edge of the porch, the submarine boy pointed the ferrule end at the ground, then pressed upon the spring.

A sharp, though not loud report followed, and a bullet plowed into the ground. There was a flash at the end of the ferrule, though but a barely perceptible amount of smoke.

"So, M. Lemaire, you carry a pistol cane, that uses smokeless powder and shoots steel-jacketed bullets?" inquired Jack, turning to the prisoner, who, white-faced, stood gnashing his teeth in helpless rage. "I wonder if the bullet Hastings dug out of the tree trunk will be found to fit this weapon?"

"You miser-r-r-rable dog!" screamed Lemaire. "Thief! Liar!"

"Oh, keep cool about it, do," urged Jack, smilingly.

"What's this?" demanded Trotter, suddenly appearing on the scene. Packwood was just behind him.

Jack swiftly told what had happened, and what he had just discovered, at the same time passing the cane to the Secret Service man.

"Lemaire, I guess you'd better come with us, for safe-keeping," advised Trotter, dryly.

"You ar-r-rest me?" snarled the Frenchman.

"Oh, yes; if you insist upon a name for it."

M. Lemaire's face looked uglier than Jack had ever dreamed it possible for a man's face to look. As Hal and Farnum let go his arms the spy took a quick step toward Jack Benson.

"Stop that!" commanded Trotter, sharply, leaping to grab the spy.

"I only want to say one word to this young scamp!" hissed Lemaire. "I will not hurt him."

"You can wager he won't," added Captain Jack, clenching his fists and watching the other alertly. "Let him speak to me, if he wants."

Trotter thereupon halted, though he watched the Frenchman with lynx-like wakefulness.

Lemaire, however, merely leaned forward until he had placed his lips close to one of the young submarine captain's ears.

"See here," hissed the spy, "hold your tongue about everything, and make sure Gaston and myself are released. Else, no corner of the earth will be a safe place for you. You can find no place in the world where you will be safe from destruction—unless you get us out of this one bad fix!"

CHAPTER XXII

GALLANT, EVEN TO THE FOE!

"You may have him now," announced Captain Jack, ironically. "I reckon he has spoken his piece."

Trotter's answer was to leap upon the Frenchman, pinioning his arms behind him. Packwood snapped handcuffs over the prisoner's wrists.

"Here is the bullet that Hastings dug out of the tree—the one that was probably fired at me," added Captain Jack. "And here is M. Lemaire's cane-pistol. You can see whether the bullet fits the cane."

Trotter took them, with a swift, admiring look at Benson's cool, handsome face.

Then, guiding their prisoner, the Secret Service men moved off hastily, for two or three hundred beach walkers had just discovered that something exciting had happened, and were hurrying forward.

Lemaire was forced into the buggy and driven rapidly away. Once out of sight the Secret Service men turned, driving straight for the local jail.

Before anyone in the excited crowd could ask what had happened the submarine people had vanished.

These four hurried to a room that Mr. Farnum had reserved while they remained at Spruce Beach.

"What was it that rascally Frenchman whispered to you?" demanded the shipbuilder.

Jack promptly repeated the threat, whereat Mr. Farnum's face grew decidedly grave.

"The worst of it is, Jack, I think the fellow not only meant the threat, but has the connections necessary to carry it out," said the ship builder, slowly. "I am quite prepared to believe that these spies work in large groups, when necessary. I am beginning to think that it will be wise move to get you way from here—in time."

"That would give Gaston a fine chance to go clear," retorted young Benson. "I am a very important witness when his case comes up."

"You are also a very important young man for our submarine company," replied Jacob Farnum, "so important, in fact, that I don't want to have you put out of this world through any of their plots for revenge."

"But don't you see, sir, that, if I run away from here, the fellow Gaston is very likely to be liberated?"

"Let him go, then," urged Mr. Farnum, though it was plain that he spoke reluctantly.

"It's just what I won't do, sir. I wouldn't be a good citizen if I should allow a criminal to escape justice just because I was, afraid to stay and testify against him," argued Captain Jack.

"I admit the force of all you say," assented Mr. Farnum, slowly. "Yet, if I should find, after thinking it all over, that it will be best to instruct you to leave here quietly, you won't refuse to obey, will you?"

"Yes," declared Jack Benson.

"What? It would be the first time you ever balked at orders, then."

"But this is different, Mr. Farnum. I refuse to obey any order that will tend to defeat the ends of justice."

Jacob Farnum winced at that statement of the matter. He had been anxious only to save Jack from the attempts of a dangerous crowd.

"Jack is right," broke in David Pollard, decisively.

"When he puts the case in that way, I don't dare say that he isn't," admitted the shipbuilder. "At the same time, I can't bear the thought of the lad being butchered to gratify the grudge of any of the rascally crew that we've offended here at Spruce Beach."

A slight, rustling sound at the door caused them all to wheel about. Jacob Farnum's eyes beheld a slip

of white paper lying on the floor, just inside the door. Jack Benson saw it, also, but he sprang past the paper, pulling the door open.

Around a turn in the corridor the submarine boy heard the sound of fleet footsteps.

Jack pursued, but could find no one, and the sound of moving feet had also ceased. As soon as he was satisfied that he could not catch the prowler, the submarine boy returned to the room.

"Do you see this?" asked the shipbuilder, holding out the slip of paper.

"Another warning, I suppose?" Benson ventured.

"Yes; and it shows that you are being followed and watched. Something worse is almost certain yet to happen."

Jack took the slip of paper, reading these printed words:

"You have been fairly warned. Are you going to be a fool? Obey, or—"

That was all. The meaning of the words was plain enough, but Jack, with as cool a smile as ever, folded the slip, dropping it in one of his pockets.

"This will interest Trotter," he remarked.

"There is no use whatever in advising you, suppose?" asked the shipbuilder.

"If these threats were directed against you, would you cringe from them?" demanded the young submarine captain.

"Of course I wouldn't," replied Farnum, a sudden flash lighting his eyes as he spoke.

"Then why should you expect to see me turn coward?"

"I won't say another word about it, Jack!" replied the shipbuilder, gripping his captain's hand. "I have dreaded to see you go down under the mysterious assaults of these scoundrels. I have hated to see a boy come to that harm while serving me. But I realize, now, that it would hurt you worse to run away than it would to stay and face any kind of punishment or even death itself."

"That's the talk, sir," nodded Hal. "And no one is going to harm him, either. There are too many of us—if we keep our eyes open."

That "if" covered a wide field of possibilities. Not one of them could foresee all that the ingenuity of the enemy would provide in the way of danger.

To quiet his own agitation Jacob Farnum had recourse to a cigar. He lighted it, smoking with a very solemn look on his face.

"What's all the excitement, I wonder?" muttered Hal, presently.

The distant sound of running feet, then cries came to their ears, though none in the little party could distinguish the words.

"There's some big excitement on. Come along," urged Jack, reaching for his cap.

"Humph! We've had excitement enough to last reasonable people for a long time," grumbled the shipbuilder, but he, too, sprang for his hat.

Ere they had run far through the corridor they encountered other guests fleeing.

"What's the matter?" called Jack.

"Fire in the south wing," called back one man. "We don't know, yet, whether the hotel is doomed."

Just then the fire alarm bell of the hotel began to sound loudly in all the corridors.

That brought the remaining guests on the run, some appearing not completely dressed.

As the rushing throng began to thicken at a door on the ground floor the sound of a whistled of clanging gongs was heard without. The Spruce Beach fire department was responding to the alarm.

Captain Jack bounded out. Hal kept close at his chum's heels while Messrs. Farnum and Pollard came along less fleetly.

Through half a dozen windows on the second floor of the south wing flames now leaped, while the smoke curled up in dense clouds. This wing was built wholly of wood, and was doomed, even though the rest of the hotel could be saved.

Jack halted, at last, Hal bumping into him.

Some of the firemen were hauling hose from a cart, while others were attaching an end of one length to a fireplug. A hook and ladder truck was hauled to the scene, its crew standing by ready at need.

Whish! Two four-inch streams struck the flames, yet seemed only to feed them to greater fury.

"We can't put that blaze out, men!" roared the local fire chief. "Turn the streams against the main building and stop the blaze from spreading. Let the axe crew follow me!"

Swiftly a couple of long ladders were unlimbered and placed close to the main building. The fire chief and his men scaled these with agility and tried to fight their way into the rear of the blaze.

Jack stood scanning the windows on the third floor, just above the present belt of fire. Then, through one of the windows on the upper floor he saw a sudden red glow thrust its way.

"The fire is eating through to the top," he turned to explain to Messrs. Farnum and Pollard, who had just reached the boys.

"I think they'll save the main building, however," returned Mr. Farnum, as the ringing sound of ax-blows reached them and the heavy streams of water were carried after the wielders of the axes.

"I hope everybody is out, up there in the wing," uttered Hal, glancing in that direction.

As if in answer a window was suddenly raised with frantic haste.

A face, a figure appeared there, framed by the sill and sides. Then a red tongue of flame shot up in the background, illumining the face of a terrified woman.

"Why, it's Mlle. Nadiboff!" gasped Jack Benson.

The pretty Russian shouted down appealingly, though her words were drowned by the crackling of the blaze and the lusty strokes of the fire fighters.

"Quick! We must get a ladder up there!" shouted Jack, turning back to the truck. "We can't let a human being be burned before our eyes."

But there were no firemen at hand. They had followed their chief. Hundreds of citizens stood about, but they needed a leader.

"Come on, men!" roared Jack. "Help me off with this longest ladder."

A dozen pair of hands reached for it at once. Off came the ladder with a bound, while other men pressed up to aid.

"Right up to the sill of the window where that woman is!" shouted young Captain Benson. Up went the ladder, exactly in place, while a score of voices shouted:

"Get out on the ladder and come down, young lady! Can you?"

As if in answer, Mlle. Nadiboff was seen suddenly to reel backward as though overcome by the smoke that poured up at her from the floor below.

"Where are you going?" shouted Jacob Farnum, hoarsely, as the submarine captain threw off his jacket like a flash.

"Up there—of course—to help her!" Jack shouted back at him, as he leaped at the rungs.

"It's the only thing a man can do," admitted Farnum, hoarsely. "Good luck to you, Jack!"

CHAPTER XXIII

"GOOD-BYE, MY CAPTAIN!"

The first part of the climb was easy.

Unmindful of the cheers that followed the submarine boy raced up the ladder.

Then he struck the belt of heavy smoke. Flames, too, leaped out at him. He went through that zone of red with all possible speed, yet swift as he was, he felt as though he were being roasted.

Then, at a greater height, the boy was forced to close his mouth, barely breathing, for the smoke surrounded him. He felt as though he were stifling, but he kept on.

Up on the sill the watching crowd below saw him. Then Jack Benson leaped inside.

Ah! He could breathe, here, just a bit more, though the smoke had followed him.

At the further end of the room, by the door that opened upon the corridor, the flames were eating their way up through from the floor below. There was a red barrier there that shut off any hope of retreat by the corridor.

Yet these things Jack Benson saw only as his gaze swiftly swept the room.

Mlle. Nadiboff lay in an unmoving, unconscious heap on the floor, some ten feet back from the window. She was in evening dress, as though prepared to descend to dinner.

"She can't go through the line of fire in that rig," muttered Jack, even while his head reeled from the weight of smoke on his lungs.

Furiously he sprang at the bed, snatching off the blankets. These he threw on the floor, rolling the Russian woman up in them.

Then he bent over to lift her. Ordinarily he could have performed the task with ease, for his young arms were strong. But now, three-quarters strangled by the smoke he had inhaled, Jack fairly tottered, with the insensible human form in his arms, back to the window:

As he stepped out upon the ladder Jack vaguely heard the cheers that volleyed up at him.

To most of those below it looked as though he were moving easily. But Hal, waiting on the rungs of the ladder, just below the fearful belt of smoke and flames, saw differently at a glance.

Holding firmly to his burden, Jack started down carefully, but as swiftly as his quaking knees would permit.

"Come along! Steady with you!" bellowed up Hal Hastings, as he fought his way up to his chum.

An instant later Hal growled out

"Let her go. I have her—safe!"

Hal was just above the smoke belt, and his own head was reeling, now. Tongues of flame leaped out at them all. Speed alone could save them from one of the most painful of deaths.

Down through the belt they moved. As they neared the ground willing hands reached out to catch them.

"Pull those blankets off the girl! They're afire," shouted one man, and was obeyed. Mlle. Nadiboff, after the blankets had been stripped away, was carried off, still unconscious though safe as far as fire was concerned.

The clothing of both the submarine boys had caught and was smouldering. Both Jack and Hal submitted to being thrown on the ground and rolled until the last spark had been extinguished.

"Bring milk—a lot of it, for these young men," ordered a physician who stood in the crowd. For Jack and Hal, on their feet again, leaned almost helplessly against Farnum and Pollard. Their lungs were so filled with smoke that both boys felt as though they could never breathe again.

When the milk was brought, however, and forced down their throats under the doctor's orders, they found that this somewhat oily fluid brought back a good deal of the missing power to breathe. After a while both boys began to move about again. Yet both felt a strange feeling of oppression and weakness.

"For the rest, your feelings will simply have to wear off," the physician told them. "You'll be all right

in time. And it was a fine, manly piece of work that you both did."

After nearly an hour of stubborn work the firemen saved the main building, though that southern wing was practically destroyed.

When the danger was over hotel discipline asserted itself once more. News was passed that the belated dinner was ready, and the lately excited guests filed in for their meal, though many complained of a loss of appetite.

Neither Jack nor Hal felt like eating then. They sat by Messrs. Farnum and Pollard, though the submarine boys contented themselves with sipping more milk.

"That was one way of answering the enemy's threats," laughed the shipbuilder, in an undertone.

"We don't know that Mlle. Nadiboff was in any way connected with the threats," replied Jack, in an equally low tone.

"She belongs in the enemy's ranks," observed David Pollard, dryly.

As the quartette were leaving the table one of the negro waiters stepped up to them.

"De lady dat was brought down outah de fiah done wanter see Marse Benson in de parlor," announced the waiter.

"Mlle. Nadiboff?" inquired Mr. Farnum. "Then I guess we had all better go in Jack, I'm going to keep you in my sight."

As they entered the parlor the submarine people saw three or four women standing about a sofa on which lay the pretty Russian.

At sight of the newcomers the Russian signed to the attendants of her own sex to raise her, and then to withdraw. Jack went forward to the sofa, his friends taking seats on the opposite side of the room.

"Pardon my not rising, my Captain," begged Mlle. Nadiboff, as Jack Benson left his friends to go forward and greet her. "I find I have not my full strength yet."

Since she offered her hand, Jack, under the circumstances, took it simply, then released it. He stood before her in the uniform that had suffered in the fire.

"I am told that you, my Captain, nearly lost your own life in saving my less than worthless one," continued the Russian woman. "It was a strange thing for you to—considering. Will you believe me when I tell you that I greatly respect your courage and your manhood?"

"Yes," bowed Jack. "Though it was nothing but a sailor's easy trick."

"You would make little of it, would you, my Captain?" smiled Mlle. Nadiboff, plaintively. "True, you risked much for a life that has been worth but little. Still, I sent for you to do more than assure you of my appreciation of your generosity."

As she spoke, the young woman thrust one hand into the bosom of her dress. She drew out a little envelope which she held in her hand for a few moments.

"You have been threatened, my Captain?" she whispered, looking up at him.

"Oh, ye-es," assented Captain Jack Benson, shrugging his shoulders.

"And by very desperate people."

"So far," smiled the boy, "they have injured only themselves."

"Yet you do not know how far their vengeance can reach."

"Nor shall I lose any sleep thinking over it," Captain Jack replied, looking down at her with his baffling smile.

"Your enemies had one trick prepared for you," whispered the Russian, "that you might have found it hard to meet."

"Yes?"

"Of course you do not suspect it, but we have even one of the waiters here—a worthless, reckless

black—in our pay."

"It may have been he who thrust the paper under our door before—before the fire?" ventured Jack.

"It was," nodded Mlle. Nadiboff, seriously. "And it was the same waiter who, on receiving this envelope from me, would have mixed the contents with the next cup of coffee served you in the dining room of this hotel. But I am overcome by your generosity, my Captain. Take this envelope—and do not place what it contains in your coffee."

Though Jack Benson may have started inwardly, his hand did not tremble in the least as he reached out and took the envelope, which he dropped into one of his pockets.

"Thank you, Mademoiselle," he said, simply.

"There is nothing about me, my Captain, that you can admire," spoke the Russian woman, sadly. "I have not led the right kind of life. But I have just that grain of good in me that enables me to admire one as fine and manly as I have found you to be. You have given me my life—a worthless one, at best. So I give you your life—and may you make as splendid use of it as you have started out to do. And now, good-bye, my Captain. You cannot continue to know such as I."

Despite what he knew of this dangerous woman, Jack Benson felt himself touched.

"What is going to become of you, Mademoiselle?" he asked. "Will you be dragged down in the snares that have entrapped your confederates!"

"I do not know. How could I know?" she asked, looking quickly up at him. "Yet, if my accomplices escape, and find that I have served you, my Captain, do you know the forfeit they will exact?"

"Your life?" whispered Benson.

"Yes!"

"Then, if I can, I am going to help you to escape them," promised the submarine boy. "Yet that can happen only on your most solemn word—given, pardon me, in a moment of absolute honesty—that you will never again play the spy, for the secrets of the United States Government."

"Oh, I will promise that," replied Mlle. Nadiboff, quickly. "Yet I hardly need to. After what I have done, just now, no one in my peculiar line of work would ever trust me again. I shall be shunned, hereafter, if not destroyed, by those who have worked with me."

"I shall do my best to get you safely away from Spruce Beach," promised Jack Benson. "Have you more to say to me, Mademoiselle?"

"Nothing, but good-bye, my Captain."

She held out her hand. Once more Jack took it, bending low over it. Tears shone in her eyes, but Jack did not see them, for he turned, going back to his friends.

Not until they were well away from the parlor did Jack Benson offer any account of the interview that had just taken place.

"Let me have that envelope, then," requested Jacob Farnum, gravely.

"What are you going to do with it, sir?" Jack asked, as he passed it over.

"Do with it?" repeated his employer. "I'm going to take it to the nearest druggist, and find out what the stuff is."

"We'd better take this latest news to our friend Trotter," suggested David Pollard.

"By all means," nodded Farnum. "And I'll meet the rest of you there."

The little house wherein the Secret Service men had taken up their headquarters was not far away. When the inventor and the submarine boys rang the bell Mr. Packwood admitted them.

"Step right into the next room," advised Mr. Packwood. "You'll find some one there you know."

As the submarine folks entered the room they saw Trotter seated at a table on which were writing materials. At the other side of the table standing very erect, and in a very respectful pose, was the Japanese, Kamanako.

CHAPTER XXIV

CONCLUSION

"Good evening, honorable gentlemen," said the Japanese, turning when he heard the new arrivals entering.

"Mr. Kamanako is going to leave us," announced Trotter, with a smile. "He goes north to-night. Here is the slip of paper, my boy, that will take you past any meddlesome inquiry. But it is good only until midnight, so I advise you to be sure to catch to-night's express."

"I shall, and thank you, honorable sir," replied the Japanese, bowing.

"Then I won't detain you any longer, or you may miss your train."

Once more the Japanese bowed, then turned to Captain Jack Benson.

"Honorable Captain," he said, "I had pleasure to show you something about jiu-jitsu. You did me honor to show me most excellent thing you called American strategy. I shall not forget it."

With bows to the others Kamanako quickly took his leave.

"We had nothing very strong on which we could hold that fellow, so we had to let him go," declared Mr. Trotter, after the outer door had closed. Then he added, with a sigh: "That's the worst of catching spies, under such laws as we have in this country. Rarely are we able to punish them as they deserve."

"He won't come back, will he?" asked Jack.

"Not for a while, anyway. We have made the fellow nervous, and he will give us a wide berth for a considerable time."

"Why don't you hit all these people the hardest kind of a blow?" demanded young Benson.

"I wish I knew how to," sighed Trotter.

"Then spoil them with too much publicity," proposed the submarine captain. "Let the whole country know all about them and their records, and just how they look."

"If I could! But how am I to do it?"

"Why, there's a writer here at Spruce Beach," Jack continued; "a man named Hennessy. Let him write all the facts of this whole story, or such of the facts as you want made public. Let Hennessy have the photographs of this spy crew. He can print the yarn in his newspaper and in some magazine, and can use all the photos. Then these people will find themselves so well known that about all of them value as spies will be gone."

"By Jove, but that's a clear-headed idea," muttered Trotter, rising from his chair. "It will do the trick, too. Where is this man, Hennessy?"

"Stopping at the Clayton, sir."

"Packwood, will you go over and get that reporter?" asked Mr. Trotter, turning to his associate.

In the next minute Jack was telling Trotter of the fire-incident and the envelope that Mlle. Nadiboff had given him. By the time the submarine boy had finished his recital Jacob Farnum hurried in.

"That stuff," he reported, "is morphine sulphate, and the druggist says there was enough of it to take you clear out of this world and into the next."

"Hm! That Nadiboff woman!" muttered Trotter. "She has been as dangerous as any of them, and yet it is hard to be rough with her after her one act of gratitude to you, Benson. I could see that she went north on the train, of course, but she'd be liable to suspicion and punishment by some of the members of the gang of that infernal Gaston. He has yet other men, I suspect, who may be watching the trains further on, and Mlle. Nadiboff, after saving you, Benson, from their latest death trap, might run right into their vengeance. She ought to be gotten away from here by some other means."

"She can be—by ship," hinted Jack, quietly.

"Let me see," mused Trotter. "Yes; that can be done, if you want to take some trouble. At about

eleven to-night the Savannah freight steamer, bound for Havana, will pass by about a dozen miles out. You could pick her up by watching for her searchlight. Do you feel like sending Nadiboff to Cuba, in that fashion?"

"If it suits her, we'll do it," Jack replied quickly enough.

"It may be very bad for her if it doesn't suit her," replied Trotter, grimly. "Well, hurry along and see if you can do it. Drummond and Miss Peddensen are going north to-night, also."

As the submarine party left the house they met Packwood and Hennessy coming along.

"I think you'll get as good a news story as you can want to-night," said Jack to the reporter. "You remember, Mr. Farnum promised you one before the tip was given to any other reporter."

Hennessy expressed his thanks warmly, and the quartette hastened on to the hotel. Captain Jack had little difficulty in seeing Mlle. Nadiboff in the parlor. When he explained to her the plan, she gladly accepted.

"You will not believe me, my Captain," she smiled, wearily, "but I am wholly through with spying. I shall never again disgrace my womanhood in that way."

Owing to the fire Mlle. Nadiboff was not burdened with baggage. She carried her evening dress in a new dress suit case bought by Hal at one of the stores. In going away she wore a plain gray dress and dark brown jacket purchased from one of the maids at the hotel. Mlle. Nadiboff's jewelry and money, with which she was well supplied, had been in the hotel safe, so that she left with the means of pursuing her journey in comfort.

"It is a whim of mine, my Captain," cried the Russian, gayly, as they left the hotel, "but will you give me your arm down to the shore?"

"Gladly," Jack agreed.

They took a shore boat and went out to the "Benson." While Captain Jack helped the pretty visitor aboard Hal hastened below to bring her up a chair.

"You have your wish, at last, Mademoiselle, to visit this craft," Jack laughed, then added, gravely: "I am sorry, indeed, that I cannot invite you below."

"I have lost my desire to see the interior of the boat," she replied, with equal gravity.

A start was made in plenty of time. Gayly the "Benson" bounded out over the waves, as though even that grim little steel craft of war could appreciate the fact that its dangers were over.

In time Captain Jack picked up the Havana bound freighter by the rays of her searchlight, and moved on out to intercept her. He signaled that he had a passenger to put aboard. The steamship lay to, lowering a side gangway, and the "Benson" ran neatly in. The transfer was made.

Just as she was helped over the side Mlle. Nadiboff placed her hand in Jack's.

"Good-bye, my Captain," she said, sadly.

"Good-bye, Mademoiselle," answered the submarine boy. "And remember that you are done with the spies."

"Forever! Again, good-bye, my Captain."

As both craft moved off on their respective courses Captain Benson saw a little white handkerchief fluttering at the freighter's stern rail. As long as it could be visible over the waters that handkerchief fluttered. "I guess the little Russian must have tied her handkerchief there," observed Eph, dryly, and Captain Jack smiled; while Jacob Farnum turned to whisper to the inventor:

"Dave, our youthful captain has the greatest respect in the world for a woman, but he'll never be made a fool of by one of the wrong kind."

Henceforth, as long as she remained at Spruce Beach, the submarine craft was wholly unmolested and avoided by spies. Gaston, who turned out to be the real leader of one party, instead of M. Lemaire, was sentenced to prison for assault. Leroux and his Greek accomplice confessed to the attempt to explode the mine under the "Benson," and were sent to the penitentiary. There, also, journeyed M. Lemaire, for a long term, on account of his all but successful shot at Jack Benson.

With the exception of those sent to prison none of the spies have as yet been heard from.

For a considerable time the "Benson" remained at, or near, Spruce Beach. Hennessy's articles attracted great attention to the craft. The Navy people were charmed by the new capabilities shown by this latest of the Pollard submarine boats.

Later the submarine boys were destined to turn their attention to new and thrilling work with submarine craft And now came most stirring times that put their grit, intelligence and resource to the hardest kind of tests.

These newest happenings will be related in full in the next volume of this series, which will appear under the title: "*The Submarine Boys' Lightning Cruise; Or, The Young Kings of the Deep.*" The reader of this new volume will find a rare treat in store for him!

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